Regulator admits to backlog in registration process

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has admitted that it will not have completed the registration process for a significant proportion of dental practices who have submitted their forms to the regulator.

In an email sent to practices, the CQC stated: We have received approximately 7,400 valid applications from primary dental care and independent ambulance establishments. We are working hard to have those providers fully registered as soon as possible and some providers have already begun to receive their notices of decision (NoDs) and certificates of registration.

On 1 April, there will be some providers who are still in the final stages of registering. We would like to reassure any provider who has submitted a valid application to us, but has not received their NoD or certificate, that we will consider them to be in process.

Some dentists have been upset by this news, calling for the CQC to put back or even abandon its regulatory plans for practitioner until it is in a position to cope with the workload. One dentist, Dr Simon Thackery, emailed CQC’s Cynthia Bower to share his views on the situation, commenting: As an organisation you are quite obviously not ready for the registration of dentists. Given the tone of emails and communication received from yourselves previously, the penalties for our failure to meet the deadline set by the CQC/Government were nothing short of draconian.

According to the email, your organisation is not going to meet the deadline set. What draconian measures will fall upon the CQC, and you as its head given this admission?

Dr Thackery added: The strength of feeling within the profession at the failure of the CQC to perform its purpose is growing significantly.

A CQC spokesman said: “Many providers may not receive their certificates or Notices of Decision by 1 April because their CRB checks are still being processed. It is a legal requirement for all providers to have a CRB disclosure in order to be registered. The CQC had hoped that PCTs would be able to provide evidence of these for most NHS providers, but this has not proved to be the case.

“While we are encouraged by the work PCTs are doing to try to help us, sourcing confirmation about provider’s disclosures via PCTs is proving challenging. However, more than 90 per cent of dental providers have now applied for registration and we are processing these applications.

“CQC appreciates there are some practitioners in the industry who are concerned about registration and that it can appear daunting. However, providers should be reassured that this system will be an endorsement to many and that it both dentists and patients will ultimately benefit from the process.”

Chair of the BDA’s Executive Committee, Dr Susie Sanderson, said: “CQC registration is a fascio that seems to hunch from one crisis to another, spreading discontent, creating stress and distracting practitioners from patient care. It is disappointing, although sadly no longer surprising, that the process has now been pitched into a new crisis. CQC’s acknowledgement of its shortcomings will do very little, if anything, to placate or reassure dentists. The organisation clearly needs time to focus on the problems it is facing and get the process on track.

“The dental profession in England is engaging constructively with the Government on major changes to contracts and commissioning to help it deliver improvements to patient care. It is important that positive approach is reciprocated. The Government has previously refused BDA calls to exempt dentists from CQC registration and even to delay the process, arguing that it is progressing well. That is clearly not the case. It is time for Government to take action to show that it understands the concerns and halt the development of a crisis of confidence among dentists.”

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