

The Health Foundation's GP indicators review

How can measures of quality in general practice be made better to improve care?

Terms of Reference

General practice has a unique place at the heart of the NHS, and is highly supported by the public according to longstanding surveys. International comparisons also show that primary care across the UK performs well on many aspects of quality.

While these are the headlines, more detailed information about the quality of care provided by general practice is variable in quality, incomplete in scope, and lagged relative to real time. This is despite the fact that information on patient care collected in general practices is among the most fully computerised relative to other developed nations. All of this limits the usefulness of the data to support general practitioners to make improvements, patients to make more informed choices about the practice to register with, commissioners to hold practices to account for the quality of care provided for NHS funds, and regulators to assure against standards.

There have been several pieces of work examining how existing data collected in general practice could be developed as indicators of quality of care, and given gaps, what might be priorities for future development. But this has not been brought together and considered across a number of purposes, for example to support general practice to improve, to inform the public, or to aid public accountability.

The Government is asking Dr Jennifer Dixon at the Health Foundation, working with NHS England, the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health, to lead a short independent review to:

- Take stock of the current metrics available on different aspects of the quality of care in general practice and whether they can give a valid picture of the quality of care
- Identify the main purposes for which metrics can be developed
- Consider how information could be complemented and developed in future to give a better picture of the quality of care, including identifying any gaps, for the main purposes identified
- Consider the extent to which current information might be used to give meaningful information about specific population groups: people over 75; people under 75 with long-term conditions; maternity, children and young people; mental health; and the generally well
- Draw on best practice from the NHS and other comparable health systems
- Engage with professional and patient stakeholders, and the Department's arms-length bodies to ensure that the recommended approach to metric development will be meaningful and credible to patients and professionals.

The review will need to work closely with a second independent review on the metrics to assess the quality of care commissioned by clinical commissioning groups for their populations.

The independent review will report by end of September 2015 and will be published by the Health Foundation.

The Government is committed to improve transparency of activities across health and care. This independent review is intended to inform thinking of how this might best be done to improve the quality of care for patients and accountability for public funds.

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