

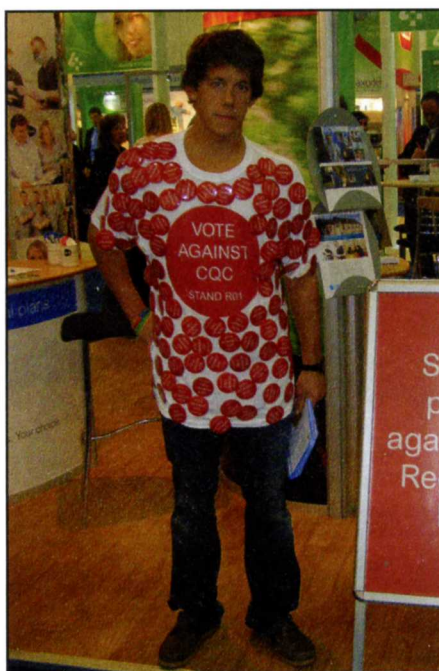
As the Department of Health refuses calls by the BDA to postpone CQC registration, *The Probe* investigates what this means for dental practitioners...

PROVIDERS of dental services across the UK will have to register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) by April 1 2011 after the Department of Health refused calls by the British Dental Association (BDA) to postpone the registration of dental practices.

In a letter to Barry Cockroft, chief dental officer for England, the BDA stated that *the profession has been very exercised about the process surrounding enrolment and registration with the Care Quality Commission and that it feels the requirements are disproportionate and in many respects irrelevant and duplicative*, and asked the DoH to reconsider the April 1 deadline.

The failed request followed a recent meeting between Dr John Milne, Chair of the General Dental Practice Committee at the Association and BDA executive board Chair, Dr Susie Sanderson, and CQC chief executive Cynthia Bower, at which the profession's many concerns were articulated. Following that meeting, the CQC announced that it is quadrupling the number of crown post offices able to verify practitioners' CRB checks (see page 86 for more details).

Commenting on the decision, Dr Sanderson said, "The Department of Health's refusal of the General Dental Practice Committee's demand to postpone CQC registration for dentists is clearly disappointing. The start of the registration process and the problems it has witnessed are a source of anxiety for practitioners who are entering into the process in good faith without even knowing what CQC's charges will be. The confusion around the necessity for CRB checks for dental personnel and where and by whom these have to be authorised is but one example of the chaos which has accompanied the CQC's inconsistent guidance."



DPAS has had more than 1,000 signatures on its petition against CQC regulation

Campaign against CQC

The Department of Health's introduction of CQC under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 has been met with disapproval by a number of other dental organisations such as DPAS, which launched a campaign against the registration altogether.

Whilst DPAS says it appreciates that the CQC is a welcome initiative to areas of health provision that are as yet unregulated, it is encouraging the profession to come together to make the public more aware of the extra cost and the reduced access that registration will bring to dentistry.

Quentin Skinner, Chairman of the organisation, said, "I do not suggest that CQC regulation is not relevant in areas of health provision that have not been sufficiently regulated for the public good. However, dentistry is already comprehensively regulated by, amongst others, the GDC [the GDC regulates individual clinicians, whereas CQC will regulate dental providers]. This duplication of regulation is a cause for concern, not only because it is unnecessary, but it introduces a whole new raft of costs, whilst reducing access to dentistry."

"It is to be carried out by an organisation that knows nothing about the profession of dentistry, and thus could come up with unpredictable judgements that result in extra cost, extra time, less access, and the need for more bureaucrats. This last aspect introduces the whole prospect of double jeopardy, a situation clearly recognised in legal circles as being wholly unacceptable."

The organisation used the recent BDTA Dental Showcase to publicise its campaign, and claims that at the time of going to print it had received more than 1,000 signatures, as well as huge numbers of messages of unqualified support and offers of help.

Skinner continued, "Lone voices are never heeded by politicians, and rarely by the media. No doubt, many dentists will have written to their MPs, but thus far there is no sign of any capitulation. There has been no coverage of this aspect of duplicated regulation, and the implications of this in the consumer press."

"Without a doubt, the argument is more likely to be listened to if it is demonstrably supported by a large number of informed people. Who knows whether this will help to achieve an amendment to the law – we shall see."

Information for providers

It is also claimed by those opposing the new regulations that the dental profession has not been provided with enough information about how dental providers will meet the essential standards, what will be regulated and how this will be done.

However, the CQC explained that the organisation has sent out information to providers of dental care, has been working alongside Associations such as the BDA in creating regulation guidelines and has published documents on its website for practitioners.

A CQC spokeswoman said, "CQC appreciates that applying for registration can seem challenging as it's the first time the dental industry has been subject to this form of regulation. We have been working with the dental sector for some time and have just completed a series of local events where we talked to local providers and listened and responded to concerns and queries."

"Providers only need to apply for registration once. When completed, the public will be able to access more information about primary dental providers and services, being able to see if providers meet the essential standards of quality and safety on our website."

"This will give patients more confidence and more information with which to make choices. This responsive system places the views, experiences, health and wellbeing of people who use services at its centre."

With this in mind, *The Probe* has provided a breakdown of the main facts around CQC regulation to help you get ready for April 2011¹:

- CQC registration covers all primary dental care providers, including NHS and private dentists, and those who work in both sectors.
- To be registered, a provider must show that it is meeting essential standards of quality and safety in all of its regulated activities.
- Essential standards for CQC registration include cleanliness and infection control, including decontamination.
- It is the service 'provider' who must register with the CQC. A provider may be an individual, a partnership, or an organisation – such as a company, a charity, an NHS trust or a local authority.
- Individual practices are not required to be registered in addition to the provider. A provider may be registered to provide regulated activities from more than one location (or practice).
- A provider must register for each of the regulated activities it provides, rather than for each of its individual services, and it is common to need to register for more than one.
- Those activities that are most likely to apply to dentists are treatment of disease, disorder or injury; surgical procedures; and diagnostic and screening procedures.
- Primary dental care providers will register between November 2010 and March 2011.
- A list of the registration status of all providers of primary dental care will be published by the CQC on April 1 2011.
- There is no joining fee for providers that apply for registration before April 1 2011. However, providers will be required to pay an annual registration fee once they are registered.

For more information on CQC registration, how to register and how to comply, visit www.cqc.org.uk/registration. ■

¹ Taken from the CQC's *A new system of registration: Guide for providers of primary dental care services*, published August 2010.