

# Waiting for the pilots

Selected practices have recently embarked on a series of pilots to explore how another new NHS contract might work. Starting months later than planned, these practices are now finding out what life might be like under another regime – or in some cases, not finding out...

It seems that some of these practices are experiencing constant and intrusive PCT inspections to the point that some are already wondering if volunteering for a pilot was a good idea. Others have found that getting any clear information from their PCT on remuneration is nigh on impossible. Doubtless there will be others who have a good experience under their pilot, and who will find their remuneration perfectly acceptable.



News comment

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Other practices, not on the pilot, who remain uncomfortable about the present misguided system regularly confess to thinking of staying within nGDS (at least in part) in the hope that the outcome of the pilots might overcome their misgivings. While those on £35 or even £45 per UDA will be happy to wait until the outcome, others on more down-to-earth remuneration are, in my opinion, living in a dream world.

It is only six years ago that dentists on the PDS pilots found that their working practice and remuneration was good. Unfortunately it was bad for the Department of Health (DH), who saw dentists earning more than intended while the contribution from patients fell markedly. So the new contract bore no relation to the PDS pilot whatsoever.

What is good in the new pilots for dentists in terms of quality of clinical output and remuneration levels is bad for the DH. What is good for the DH in terms of delivering more access to NHS dentistry with restricted budgets is bad for dentists. This circle cannot be squared. Any dentist waiting for these pilots to pull a benign rabbit out of the hat can surely only be misguided. In any case, the pilots have a couple of years to run, followed by evaluation, any subsequent proposal and the actual system changes, buying the DH several extra years. Why keep waiting?