



# Berkshire

## **Any Qualified Provider (AQP)**

Health overview and scrutiny committee engagement briefing  
*September 2011*

### **Introduction**

Any Qualified Provider (AQP) is a national programme to offer patients more choice and drive up standards of care. Patients can already choose which GP to register with and which hospital to go to for tests or treatments. When referred through AQP (usually by their GP), patients should be able to choose from a list of qualified providers who meet NHS service quality requirements, prices and normal contractual obligations. This approach is already in place for routine elective procedures. AQP is intended to address the feedback from patients that choice should also be offered in some of the areas where it has been historically more difficult to do so.

### **Recommendations**

NHS Berkshire would like feedback from OSCs on the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposals we have made for services where choice will be extended through Any Qualified Provider (AQP)?
- Are there other services from the list below that we should be prioritising through this process instead of the proposals?

### **Why are we doing this?**

By extending choice of provider into areas where it has not previously been available, patients will be able to choose, where appropriate, from a range of qualified providers and select the one that best meets their needs. Choice of provider is expected to drive up quality, empower patients and enable innovation. There is also evidence that increased choice leads to greater patient satisfaction.

### **What are the proposals for Berkshire?**

PCT clusters, with input from their populations, are choosing three services from a shortlist of eight selected by the Department of Health where AQP will apply. The changes will be phased in from April 2012, focusing on services that are most important to patients and where choice will have the greatest impact.

The project is at an early stage. These are our current ideas but they are subject to change. The services chosen for AQP in Berkshire are:

- Adult hearing services in the community (audiology)
- Diagnostic tests closer to home (ultrasound)
- Podiatry services

The other five services on the central list are:

- Wheelchair services (children)
- Leg ulcer and wound healing
- Primary care psychological therapies (adults) ('talking therapies')
- Musculoskeletal services for back and neck pain
- Continence services (adults and children)

The PCTs view is that having introduced a new community spinal pathway in Berkshire West this year it does not lend itself to AQP. Equally with a nationally acclaimed service for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies this would also not be a priority for AQP. The PCTs consider leg ulcer treatment to be too closely aligned to district nursing to make this practicable and that continence services, currently managed under a block contract would be better improved through a single formulary for products than through AQP.

### **What is the engagement process?**

An engagement document and questionnaire is being sent to key stakeholders inviting them to respond with their views **by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011**. Discussions are also taking place throughout September at a number of meetings and with all current providers of community healthcare services.

There are a number of ways of contributing to this process:

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57-59 Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2BA  
Email: [ppi@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:ppi@berkshire.nhs.uk)  
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We will provide regular updates as the AQP process develops and we move towards taking each AQP service specification to the market.