

HOSC Questions and Answers

What are Specialised Services?

Specialised services involve complex treatments or packages of care, often for relatively rare conditions. The services may involve the use of very specialised technology and equipment or drugs delivered by a specialist expert workforce. Some, but not all, specialised services are high cost. To be most safe and cost effective specialised services need to be planned and commissioned using populations of at least 1 million, which is larger than most Primary Care Trusts, with many of the rarer conditions needing much larger planning populations than this. Consequently, specialised services are not provided in every hospital and tend to be found only in larger ones, which perhaps provide a range of specialised services. It is for these reasons that specialised services are commissioned on behalf of the Primary Care Trusts that sit within the boundaries of their strategic health authority.

What is the South West Specialised Commissioning Group?

The South West Specialised Commissioning Group is one of 10 such groups established across England. It consists of the Chief Executives of the 14 Primary Care Trusts in the South West. Each Specialised Commissioning Group is the body that makes decisions about the commissioning of specialised services within its boundaries. The South West Specialised Commissioning Group shares its boundaries with the South West Strategic Health Authority (NHS South West). The population we serve is just over 5 million.

What is the Specialised Commissioning Team?

The South West Specialised Commissioning Group is served by a dedicated multi-disciplinary Specialised Commissioning Team that consists of commissioners, finance and public health experts, administrators and a public and patient involvement/engagement facilitator. The region's 14 Primary Care Trusts plan, commission and procure specialised services through this team.

What is Planning and what does it involve?

Planning a service involves conducting a health needs assessment and comparing how services are currently being delivered with current evidence-based best practice. The views of local clinical experts, voluntary organizations, patients and the public are sought throughout the process so that these are reflected in the preferred model of the service that is described in the 'service specification' that is the end product of planning a service. The 'service specification' is a written description of what a service for the region would consist of.

What is Commissioning/Designation and what does it involve?

Commissioning is the term used to describe the overall process of planning, funding, procuring, and monitoring healthcare services. Designation is a new way of commissioning that has emerged following Lord Carter's review of the

commissioning arrangements for specialised services in 2007 and Lord Darzi's (2008) vision for delivering a world leading NHS (commonly known as 'world class' commissioning'). World class commissioning takes a more strategic, long-term and community focused approach to commissioning services, where patients, carers, commissioners and health and social care professionals work together to plan services in order to deliver improved local health outcomes. In this way, world class commissioning should enable the NHS to meet the changing needs of the population and deliver a service which is clinically-driven, patient-centred and responsive to local needs.

Designation involves reviewing national best-practice guidelines and improving outcomes guidance; identifying relevant stakeholders (both lay and clinical); conducting local risk and health needs assessments; developing a work programme in collaboration with local stakeholders; holding stakeholder events to gain the views and opinions of local clinicians and members of the public at every stage in the designation process; producing an interim report that makes recommendations for how a service should be proceed; seeking approval from the Specialised Commissioning Group (i.e. the chief executives of the 14 Primary Care Trusts in the region) and the strategic health authority to proceed; and asking the 16 overview and scrutiny committees in the region to formally consider the proposal before a final designation report can be submitted to the Specialised Commissioning Group for approval so that the service developments being proposed can be implemented.

A provider's designation status is intended to last for 5 years, after which the situation is reviewed again.

What is Procurement and how is this managed?

Procurement refers to how the Specialised Commissioning Group goes about purchasing goods and services. This includes the contractual agreement that the Specialised Commissioning Group has with providers (e.g. foundation trusts). In total, procurement is a 7 stage process that includes public and patient involvement and competitive tendering to ensure the best value for money:

Stage 1: Publication of Official Journal of the European Union Notice (OJEU) and Initial Response

An advert is placed in OJEU and providers who express an interest within 37 days are sent pre-qualifying questionnaires (PQQ) to complete.

Stage 2: Invitation to negotiate

The invitation to negotiate is a description of what the Specialised Commissioning Group (SCG) wants to commission. It is usually sent the same day as PQQs. Potential providers have 40 days to complete them.

Stage 3: Initial Competitive Dialogue

Shortlisted providers are invited to discuss their bids with a panel. The panel usually consists of the SCG or PCT Director, the SCG Commissioning Lead, PCT commissioner/s, a Public Health Consultant, an independent clinical expert, a member of the public/patient, any other relevant stakeholders.

Stage 4: Continued Dialogue

There are continued informal discussions to move towards commercial and clinical agreement with potential providers.

Stage 5: Designation Visits

Panel members visit shortlisted provider sites to inspect the environment and facilities against pre-set criteria.

Stage 6: End Stage Dialogue

The commissioning team may continue to have discussions with providers to discuss how and when a provider could be ready to deliver the service IF they were designated.

Stage 7: Contract/s are awarded

Contracts are signed and tend to last for a period of 5 years.

How do I find out more about this service issue?

Contact Lou Farbus, Public and Patient Engagement Facilitator on 0117 330 2594/0752 512 3636 or via lfarbus@nhs.net

How do I get more involved in specialised services planning and commissioning?

- Talk to patients
- Talk to the provider
- Talk to members
- Contact PCT
- Internet
- Attend PPE events
- Use SW SCG website