



HFMA response to draft outline service specifications for the network contract direct enhanced service

Who we are

The Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) is the professional body for finance staff working in healthcare. For 70 years it has provided independent support and guidance to its members and the wider healthcare community.

It is a charitable organisation that promotes the highest professional standards and innovation in financial management and governance across the UK health economy through its local and national networks. The association analyses and responds to national policy and aims to exert influence in shaping the healthcare agenda. It also works with other organisations with shared aims in order to promote financial management and governance approaches that really are 'fit for purpose' and effective.

The HFMA is the biggest provider of healthcare finance and business education and training in the UK. It offers a range of qualifications in healthcare business and finance at undergraduate and postgraduate level and can provide a route to an MBA in healthcare finance. The association is also an accredited provider of continuing professional development, delivered through a range of events, e-learning and training. In 2019 the HFMA was approved as a main training provider on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and will be offering and developing a range of apprenticeships aimed at healthcare staff from 2020.

Our response

Our members are supportive of primary care networks (PCNs) and welcome the move to better integrate care for their populations and support general practice. However, there are concerns that the breadth and implementation speed of the proposed service specifications could undo the good work seen locally to build these relationships and destabilise primary care further.

As the professional body for finance staff working in healthcare, our response focuses on the financial implications of the draft outline service specifications for PCNs. PCNs cannot have confidence to deliver the service specifications without certainty around the funding model to support them.

Funding of services

The engagement document suggests that PCNs will be fully responsible for funding the delivery of the service specifications from the existing funding streams identified, through core funding and participation payments. This is creating concern and threatens the positive support of the PCN model. Further clarity is needed of the other organisations and funding streams which will contribute to the achievement of the service specifications, such as existing CCG and local authority funding for the services that are identified.

Workforce costs

Finding the workforce continues to be a concern, with many systems worried about destabilisation through PCNs 'poaching' staff. It is noted that the engagement document addresses this through suggesting alternative employment models, however the shortage of some skills remains a problem.

Where staff have been employed, further clarity is needed about how the costs of employment will be met. The additional roles reimbursement scheme will enable 70% of the employment costs to be reclaimed for most roles, with the other 30% to be met through PCN funding. However, this does not consider the other costs of employing staff such as accommodation and travel costs. These non-pay costs are estimated to add another 20% to the cost of employing a member of staff, significantly outweighing any participation funding received.

There is also a query around the funding which will cover estates and IT costs for the additional roles. For example, core general practice IT equipment is funded by NHSE/I; will this arrangement also cover the wider workforce in a PCN?

Investment and impact fund

Further clarity is needed on what the investment and impact fund will cover and how PCNs can access it. The outline specifications currently suggest that access will be dependent upon successful implementation of a service specification, awarding funding retrospectively rather than supporting the development of the service.

Contact

If you would like to discuss any of our comments in more detail please contact Sarah Day, policy and research manager, sarah.day@hfma.org.uk.