



RCN fact sheet: Clinical commissioning groups April 2013

Introduction

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 includes radical reform of the way that health care is commissioned in England. The Government's aim for these changes is to produce a more clinically-led and patient-focused NHS which is innovative and has reduced administration costs.

The new clinician-led commissioning system involves a number of new types of organisations, which took control in April 2013. This briefing will outline what we know so far about one of these – clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). Please note that the information is subject to change as guidance is being developed.

Please note that the RCN has expressed significant concerns about the current NHS reforms and how the changes to commissioning arrangements will impact on the delivery of patient care. This briefing for members should not be interpreted as RCN support for the wider NHS reforms being introduced.

Background

As part of the reforms, primary care trusts (PCTs) and strategic health authorities (SHAs) have been abolished. In their place is a new system for commissioning. NHS England (known as the NHS Commissioning Board until April 2013) is a national body which has been given a formal mandate to oversee the commissioning of health services in England by the Secretary of State for Health (apart from public health services, which will be commissioned by local authorities).

NHS England delegates responsibility for commissioning most hospital and community health services to a network of 211 clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) – a new type of organisation.

What are clinical commissioning groups?

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are the new organisations responsible for commissioning (i.e. buying in) most health and social care services for the local population.

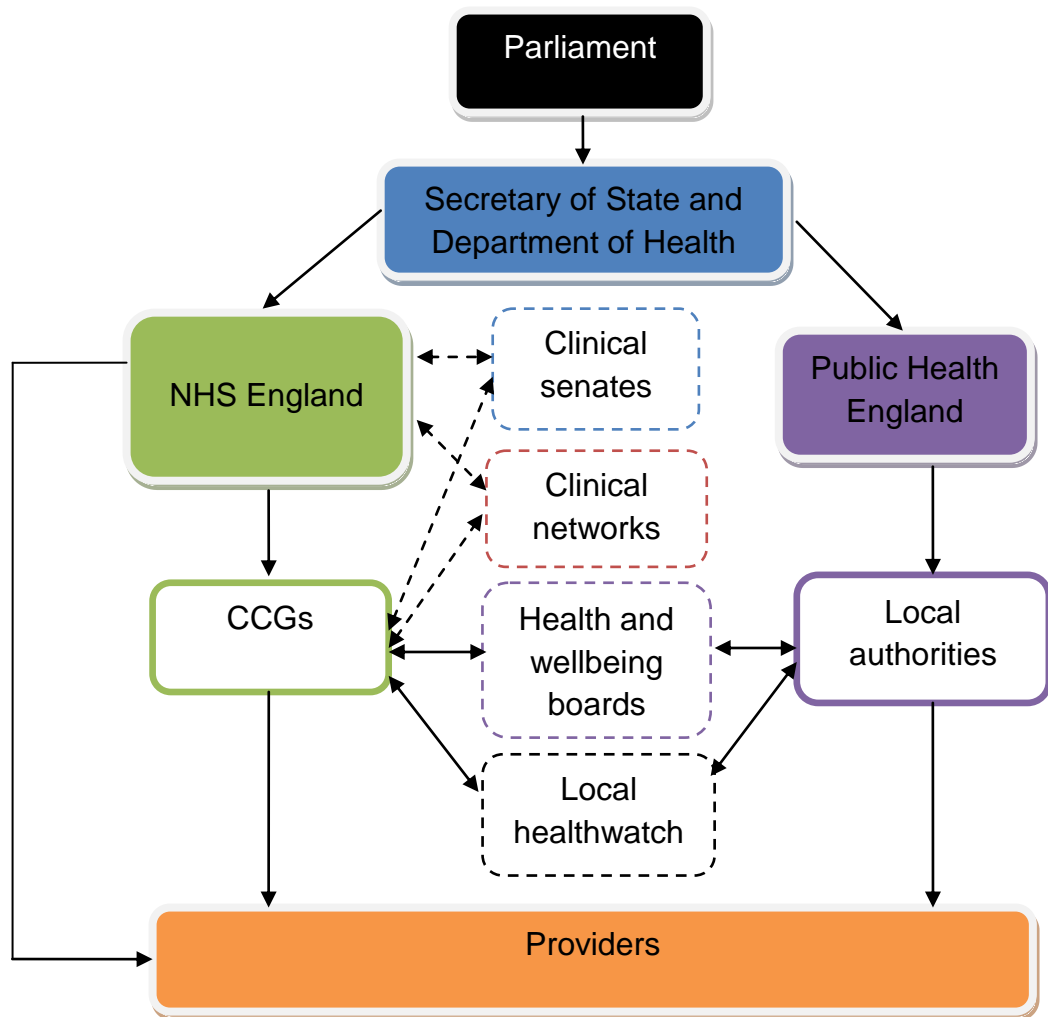
All GP practices will have to belong to a CCG. Individual CCGs will not normally work across local authority boundaries but may work with other CCGs to commission

services over a larger area. CCGs are able to contract other organisations, called commissioning support services (CSSs)¹ to carry out some of the commissioning functions for them. However, final commissioning decisions must be made by the CCG and cannot be delegated.

CCGs are public bodies and are required to hold their meetings in public and publish minutes. They also have to publish details of contracts with health services.

How do CCGs fit into the new NHS structure?

This diagram shows an overview of the main relationships between bodies in the new system.



¹ See separate RCN fact sheet available at www.rcn.org.uk/nhsreform

What services do CCGs commission?

CCGs commission the majority of local hospital and community services, but some services are directly commissioned by NHS England.

New organisation	Services commissioned
NHS England	primary medical services
	dental services
	community pharmacy
	specialised services
	offender health care
	health care of the Armed Forces and their families
CCGs	planned hospital care
	rehabilitative care
	urgent and emergency care
	most community health services
	mental health and learning disability services

Who will sit on the governing body of clinical commissioning groups?

The regulations on CCG governing body membership² list eight statutory roles:

- a chair
- a deputy chair
- an accountable officer
- at least one person qualified to lead the financial management of the CCG
- at least one registered nurse
- at least one doctor who is a secondary care specialist
- at least two lay members.

NHS England has produced guidance on these roles and the attributes and skills needed for them.³

Members are appointed by the CCG (apart from the accountable officer who is appointed by NHS England). The CCG can design its own structure around these core posts, so may have extra seats on its governing body.

There are specific conflict of interest rules for the registered nurse and secondary care doctor seats. The people carrying out these roles cannot be employed in general practice or by a provider which the CCG secures a significant amount of services from. However, a practice nurse or a nurse working at a local provider can hold other seats on the governing body, as long as their interests are properly declared.

² Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1631/pdfs/ukxi_20121631_en.pdf

³ Available at: www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk/files/2012/09/ccg-members-roles.pdf

Who will oversee the work of clinical commissioning groups?

The clinical commissioning groups are overseen by the newly formed organisation NHS England, which makes sure that CCGs have the capacity and capability to commission services successfully and to meet their financial responsibilities. NHS England is an arm's-length body, and took on its responsibilities in April 2013.

At a local level, new health and wellbeing boards⁴ are being set up in local authorities, bringing together representatives of public health, social services, CCGs and the local healthwatch (representing patients and service users) to develop joint strategic needs assessments and joint health and wellbeing strategies. CCGs must involve health and wellbeing boards in developing their commissioning plans. It is hoped that these new boards will encourage integration, reducing fragmentation between services and increasing the coordination of patient pathways.

How were clinical commissioning groups authorised?

Before CCGs took on the responsibility of commissioning, they were authorised by NHS England to make sure that they met certain standards of governance, and that they are ready and able to improve the health of communities. This process took place in four "waves", which were completed in March 2013.⁵

What is the role of nursing on clinical commissioning groups?

As well as the statutory nurse role on the governing body, each CCG must employ a designated nurse to lead on safeguarding children and looked after children. NHS England has written about the value that nursing staff bring to CCGs⁶ at a senior level, and the RCN believes that there is a big role for nursing in the new system. We have produced two guidance documents for CCGs:

- *Nurse membership on clinical commissioning group governing bodies* (www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/467611/ccgs_2.pdf)
- *Clinical commissioning groups – the statutory nurse role on the governing body* (www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/420494/Nurse_leadership_on_CCGs_v3_final.pdf)

The RCN is monitoring the nursing involvement in CCGs to make sure that the profession's expertise is being properly used.

⁴ See separate RCN fact sheet available at www.rcn.org.uk/nhsreform

⁵ For more information, please see the RCN briefing on the authorisation process for clinical commissioning groups available at www.rcn.org.uk/nhsreform

⁶ See the NHS England's briefing note *The importance of nurse leadership in securing quality, safety and patient experience in CCGs*: www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk/files/2012/07/briefing_nurse.pdf

Further RCN reading and external references

- The commissioning section of the RCN's reform site contains guidance on the nursing input to CCGs, fact sheets on the new structures in the reformed NHS and other resources for members:
www.rcn.org.uk/support/navigating_the_new_nhs/clinical_commissioning
- NHS England has developed a number of resources for CCGs, available at:
www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk/resources/resources-for-ccgs