CQC

what you need to know

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FEATURE

Richard Harris¹ at the British Dental Association sets out all you need to know about CQC inspections

Just over a year ago, the CQC changed the way in which they assess dental practices. Can you briefly outline what the main changes were?

Essentially, I think it is important to realise that under the new system the CQC is still looking at more or less the same subjects as it did previously. There used to be 16 (of the 28) outcomes which could be inspected during a visit and these have now been compacted into 11 new fundamental standards. However, that's not all. These fundamental standards have then been grouped into five key questions and it is these questions that the inspectors need answers to, to establish whether a practice is compliant or not.

What are these five key questions?

These five key questions ask if the service provided is safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. In order to secure answers to these questions, there are Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) which should give answers to satisfy the key questions.

Lost? Well, let's walk through one. Under the 'Is it safe?' key question, one of the KLOEs is 'What systems/processes are in place to ensure that all care and treatment is carried out safely?' Now, we think – and it can only be an opinion – that you might look at 'managing risk', where staff know what actions to take in the event of an emergency, and 'controlling/preventing infection', where all clinical staff are aware of the infection control and decontamination requirements.

How can a practice best prepare for an inspection?

We have an advice publication, *CQC – safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led*, available to all BDA members (check with your principal), which breaks the key questions down into manageable chunks and lets you establish to what extent you meet them.

Although the advice publication is accessible to all BDA members, the 170 associated editable policies and procedures are exclusively available for BDA Expert members. These allow you to change a template to fit your practice's circumstances and are updated whenever legislation or regulations change.

We also produce a 'What to expect from an inspection' booklet, again available to all members, which details the timescales and what might happen on the day. There will, more than likely, be two inspectors and the visits seem to be lasting around four to five hours.

Reading through the booklet and checking whether you do most of what we suggest would certainly stand you in good stead ahead of any inspection.

If any issues are identified by an inspection, what should the practice do?

After the inspection you will be given feedback on what was found; it is an idea to listen carefully, as you may be told to do something which – if you do as instructed – might not necessarily appear in the final report.

If there has been a breach of the regulations, you will be told and, hopefully, given a steer as to how you might rectify it, although the CQC says that is not its role; it checks for compliance, but does not give advice on how to do it.

You will normally be sent the draft report within three weeks and this is the opportunity to check it for factual accuracy and to challenge anything you do not agree with.

**BRITISH DENTAL
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Richard will be available to talk to BDA members and non-members about compliance issues in the Advice Zone at the British Dental Conference and Exhibition (www.bda.org/conference), Manchester, 26-28 May. You can also listen to his talk on 'CQC: what is it up to?' at Speaker's Corner on Thursday, 11.30.

You may also be interested in John Milne's (National Dental Advisor for the CQC) talk about the 'CQC: what to expect when we inspect', in the Personal Development Theatre at the Exhibition on Thursday, 11.00.

Unfortunately, issues cannot be unseen, so if it happened on the day, but does not normally, the CQC cannot remove it from the report, as it is a snapshot of the practice on the day the inspection was undertaken.

Bearing in mind there will be two people in the surgery for about five hours each, they are probably going to find something; most practices have been given something they 'should' do. This will appear in the report and should be done 'over time'. However, if there is a 'must' in the summary, this means you have breached a regulation and that has to be done within the next few weeks normally (there are a few that are so serious that practices must address them immediately).

BDA Extra and Expert members can talk to our Compliance Team on 0207 7563 4567 or email compliance@bda.org if they have any queries with, or want a comment on, their draft reports.

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¹ Richard has worked at the BDA for more than 16 years in total. For many years he worked with the General Dental Practice Committee and, after a brief stint elsewhere, as the first point of contact for members with Care Quality Commission (CQC) issues