

Primary Care Web Tool - FACTSHEET

What is the Primary Care Web Tool?

The Primary Care Web Tool is a website of practice identifiable statistics on individual practices, and by CCG and NHSE London Areas, (South, North & NC/NE). It displays a wealth of data on demographics and “performance” indicators that range from QOF results, clinical outcomes and prescribing habits, to patient access and satisfaction ratings- and everything in between. This data on individual practices is compared to national and local averages.

Why is it important to me?

It is important you access this tool and regularly review the information about your practice on it because you can be sure that the NHSE Area Team - and your CCG - is keeping a close eye on it to monitor your practice’s performance. The Primary Care Web Tool is used by them to flag up “poorly performing” practices and is part of a suite of measures used by the Area Team and the CCG to further their responsibilities to improve the quality of general practice.

What data is displayed about my practice?

The data is of two categories. There is the General Practice Outcomes Standards (GPOS) data and General Practice High Level Indicators (GPHLI) data. The measures used in each have recently been updated and changed by NHSE and so we advise you strongly to regularly access the Primary Care Web tool to check the changes. A scoping exercise is underway at NHSE to change GPHLIs from being refreshed on an annual to a quarterly basis (subject to data availability) so this underlines our message to keep a close eye on the website.

What is the purpose of the Primary Care Web Tool?

The Area Team will use this data when it procures new services, for contract compliance of poorly performing practices, for reducing unwarranted variation between practices and for improving primary care. This is expressed in the “Primary medical services assurance framework”.

Crucially, this is data that will be used to identify “outliers”. These are practices that have triggers that fall either at 1 (level1) or 2 (level 2) SEMs (Standard Error of the Mean¹) outside the mean. The definitions of these triggers have been changed recently and practices with 6 or more triggers are classed as outliers and will signal red flags to NHSE Area Teams and CCGs. A practice with a total of 6 or more points > 2 SEM below the mean is considered to represent underachievement by the practice. In London currently there are a total of 116 practices (out of a total of 1446) in this category. Of these 57 are in the NC/NE area (out of a total of 572); 31 are in the NW (out of a total of 408) and 28 in the south (out of 466).

The data will also be used by CCGs as they have a statutory duty to aid the Area Teams in their duty to improve primary care. Furthermore their performance as a CCG is continuously measured and will depend on the performance of its member practices so there is a vested interest for them in ensuring practice performance is not compromising them.

Who can access the Primary Care Web Tool?

Anyone with an NHS email account. You will need a password but this is easy. You have access to data not just for your own practice but for any neighbouring named practice or your CCG or AT. The website is: <https://www.primarycare.nhs.uk/> And to help you see: <https://www.primarycare.nhs.uk/private/documents/Getting%20Started.pdf>

What are the contractual implications of the data?

NHSE say that the data is an aid to improving general practice and will be used to close practices only as a last resort. The most likely route here for closure is the contractual route in their capacity as service commissioners. The triggers, say the operating policy, (<http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/pms-ass-frmwk1.pdf>) will be the opportunity for the practice to “have a conversation” with the NHSE AT. This means a review and likely a visit from the NHSE Area Team.

NHSE claim that they will be supportive to practices and will offer help but our experience is that there is little in the way of help on offer from the Area Team and this is because they do not have the staff or the people on the ground with local knowledge (or an incentive) to facilitate change in the way that some PCTs did in the past. Our experience is that outlier practices are visited and invited to respond to the individual outlier triggers with an action plan in a very tick box manner and then they are revisited. We have no experience of what happens next as these procedures are so new.

The Area Team will use the Primary Care Web Tool data in conjunction with other intelligence like other clinical indicators, QOF results, appraisals, patient complaints in order to assess service provision and patient safety in cases of concern and in a decision to close a practice. But if you are on their radar because of your Primary Care Web Tool profile this will be a prompt for the process. The role that CQC will play in this is also unclear but it is currently being explored and CQC are likely to be a key player here.

Your Primary Care Web practice profile will be taken into consideration if you want to take over another practice or bid for an NHS contract.

Your profile will also be important for CCGs in their commissioning role and as co commissioning is an ambition for the vast majority of CCGs in London they will be commissioning services from you in the future.