

Benefits and challenges of the Network DES

The Network Contract Direct Enhanced Service (DES) underpins the role of primary care networks (PCNs) in empowering general practice within the wider NHS and improving the range and effectiveness of primary care services. The DES has benefits and challenges.

Benefits

Significant investment

The five-year GP contract is worth £3.4 billion by 2023/24, of which £2.4 billion will be invested directly into PCNs. By opting out of the DES, practices will lose access to several sources of funding that underpin new service and workforce developments – including the network participation payment element. Any services currently locally commissioned that are covered by a new national specification are highly unlikely to be separately commissioned by clinical commissioning groups.



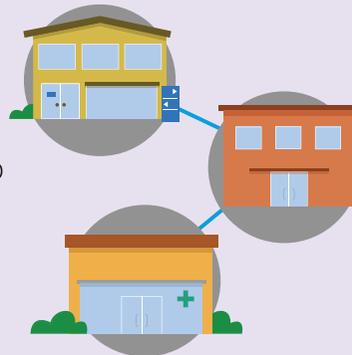
Additional staff

The new contract recognises the need to significantly invest in the wider primary care workforce. The introduction of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme is the most significant financial investment - £1.13 million by 2023/24 on average per network. It will enable PCNs to build a diverse workforce (all funded at 100 per cent) to make general practice more resilient and support the delivery of the new service specifications.



Primary care at scale

The DES seeks to formalise the structure and function of general practice working at scale. It provides a blueprint for a range of services to be delivered, supported by a multidisciplinary workforce, and enables wider partnership working across the health and care system. This provides opportunities for greater innovation to address local health needs.

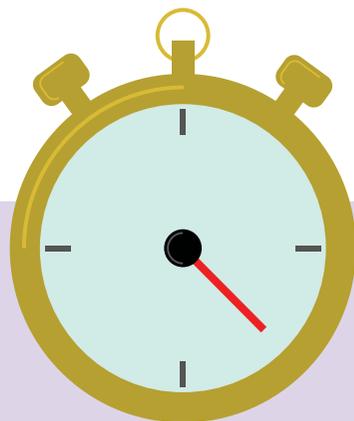


Stabilising general practice

Practices will benefit from access to a wider range of support and resources, making use of the new funding, workforce and new ways of working to shore up practices to deliver the services their population needs.



Challenges



Delivery of the service specifications

Despite changes to the specifications earlier in the year, PCNs still have concerns about the finer detail, how they will be delivered and their ability to continue on the current timescales. NHSEI has assured us that the specifications will continue to evolve as PCNs mature and any changes to the contract will be negotiated through the BMA.

Advancements made during COVID-19

We know the significant efforts that general practice has made during COVID-19 and, where it makes sense to keep them, we must maintain new ways of working. The expansion of remotely delivered services, new workforce roles, support for care homes and wider support for at-risk groups, to name a few, have created a new baseline from which PCNs must move forward.



This is a significant opportunity for primary care, including general practice to be at the forefront of redesigning and delivering a truly responsive service to meet the needs of local populations.

Opting out of the DES could risk general practice, through PCNs, losing influence within the system and nationally, as we move towards a more integrated health and care system.

Read our short briefing to [find out more about the DES](#) ahead of the 31 May participation deadline.