

Information for GP practices considering joint working initiative with a non-NHS service provider (eg sponsored nurse, external medicines Optimisation Company)

Practices are approached on a regular basis by non-NHS organisations offering clinical or medicines management services or support. Often the service is offered for 'free' as it is supported by an educational grant from a pharmaceutical company.

As independent contractors GP practices are free to commission services directly from these independent providers, however, there are a number of important points that practices should consider before entering into any initiative.

Responsibilities of the GP practice

- GP practices need to be assured that funding sources which may be attached to any initiatives offered are in line with Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry Code of Practice <http://www.abpi.org.uk>. GP practices should be aware of the ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry.
- Collaboration between the GP practice and a non-NHS service provider should be on the basis of a signed written agreement defining the exact nature of the support provided and the responsibilities of each party, dependent on the nature of the work commissioned.
- Any initiatives commissioned should align to all local and national prescribing guidance eg NICE and APC guidance. There should be no duplication or conflict with medicines optimisation and practice prescribing objectives.
- The GP practice should consult with the local Medicines Management Teams before commissioning any independent initiatives/services to avoid duplication or conflict as detailed above.
- The written agreement must clearly specify the benefits to the NHS, the GP practice and its patients arising from any initiative. The benefits to the non-NHS service provider must also be explicit.
- All agreements must include a 'break' clause, enabling both parties to terminate the agreement at short notice. This should detail the repercussions for both parties should either party break the term of the signed agreement.
- The GP practice must ensure governance mechanisms are in place for any activities where the service provider accesses or uses patient data. These must be in line with relevant governance policies and with the Data Protection Act. Caution should be exercised if there are any requests for aggregated data.
- GP practices should have mechanisms in place to record and declare any funding from external sources eg GP practice register of interests

Please be aware the ultimate accountability and responsibility for any prescribing decisions will always lie with the GP practice.