

PMS Directorate

Focused inspection or comprehensive inspection?

Introduction

The PMS National Quality Assurance Panel has identified a need for greater clarity over how we manage focused inspections and on the differences between focused and comprehensive inspections.

Types of inspection

The main differences between comprehensive and focused inspections can be summarised as:

Comprehensive:

- Covers all five key questions
- Assesses all population groups (GP inspections only)
- Usually announced
- Part of a scheduled programme of inspections

Focused

- Is a follow up to a previous inspection or is in response to a particular issue or concern
- May not look at all five questions (or all population groups for GP inspections)
- May be announced or unannounced depending on the focus of the inspection.

Focused inspection methodology

Focused inspections may be smaller in scope than comprehensive inspections but should broadly follow the same methodology as a comprehensive inspection. This means that a focused inspection can include the use of specialists and the compilation of data packs. The reason for the inspection should determine the scope of the inspection, when to visit, what evidence needs to be gathered, the size of the team and which specialist advisers to use.

Ratings (not relevant to dental inspections)

As a focused inspection does not cover all of the key questions it cannot give rise to ratings where they do not already exist.

Where a provider has already been rated, a focused inspection may result in a change to ratings. If a focused inspection is carried out within six months of a comprehensive inspection then the normal ratings aggregation principles will apply and key question, population groups and overall practice ratings may be amended.

If the focused inspection takes place more than six months after the comprehensive inspection then the aggregation of ratings will usually not take place but the lowest level rating affected by the focused inspection should be amended (i.e. an individual cell in the ratings grid).

Focused or comprehensive?

Broadly speaking a comprehensive inspection under the new approach should be scheduled:

- if a follow up of a previous inspection is needed at a provider that has not had a comprehensive inspection
- if concerns arise at a provider that has not previously had a comprehensive inspection and it is determined that an inspection is necessary.

If during the course of a focused inspection, it becomes apparent that there are more widespread concerns than originally envisaged, the inspector should consider whether it would be appropriate to change the inspection type to comprehensive.

Where possible, this should be done with the agreement of the Inspection Manager.

In these circumstances, the inspector would inform the provider that as a result of the concerns discovered, the inspection would now change from focused to comprehensive and would therefore cover all of the key questions (and all of the population groups for GP inspections).