

Capacity and Patient Choice

The new Secondary Care Contract and Slot Availability in Choose and Book

The new NHS contract for hospital trusts specifies that providers must ensure sufficient appointment slots are made available on Choose and Book to meet the demand from primary care. Further there is a section on principles which includes the following statement:

"The contract will enable patients to choose where they are referred for elective care, and providers will be paid by commissioners according to Payment by Results rules for the work they do. Providers will be expected to manage their capacity flexibly to accommodate the choice of provider that patients make."

The following schedule in the new contract covers the main points that relate to the use of Choose and Book in Secondary Care:

SCHEDULE 3B: PATIENT BOOKING AND CHOICE

7. The overall objectives for booking patients appointments with providers is that the GP or other referring practitioner:
 - 7.1. Offers the patient a clinically appropriate choice of provider; and
 - 7.2. Ensures that the patient is in a position to agree a mutually acceptable date and time of appointment with the service of their choice using the Choose and Book system as a secure method of referral and electronic booking.
8. In order to achieve the overall objective, both commissioners and providers must:
 - 8.5. Ensure that "Sufficient appointment slots" are made available on the Choose and Book system. "Sufficient appointment slots" means that patients:
 - 8.5.1. always have access to the provider of their choice; and
 - 8.5.2. can always choose between at least two separate appointment dates with reasonable notice and within a period consistent with national DH policy.
9. In order to achieve the overall objective, commissioners must:
 - 9.3. Regularly review capacity available on the Choose and Book system to ensure "Sufficient appointment slots" are available on the system
10. In order to achieve the overall objective, providers must:
 - 10.2. Regularly review available capacity across all commissioned services to ensure that Sufficient slots are made available on the Choose and Book system using a Directly Bookable System unless an exemption has been agreed with the Department of Health..