

PROCESS FOR HANDLING QOF QUERIES IN SCOTLAND

Aim

The aim of this process is to ensure that, as far as is possible, there is consistent advice given in response to any query about the Quality and Outcomes Framework (hereafter known as “QOF Queries”). It is also necessary to avoid a burdensome bureaucracy and infrastructure for data capture in order to monitor and check every bit of advice given at every level. Therefore, this process describes general rules and principles to be followed where advice is sought and/or given. Quality assurance processes are being developed to add to these rules and principles.

Summary

Level One (NHS Boards)

Practice sends query to Board Lead contact for resolution from agreed guidelines/ existing FAQs. Where there is uncertainty or this is not possible, query escalated to Scottish level.

Level Two (Scotland)

Board (or national body) escalates query to Scottish QOF queries portal at nationalgmsprog@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Response agreed by Scottish Government (SG) and Scottish General Practitioners' Committee (SGPC) in consultation as needed with QOF Queries Reference Group. If UK implications, escalated to Level 3.

Level Three (UK)

SG, in agreement with SGPC, sends query to NHS Employers secretariat for UK QOF sub-plenary. Resolution is agreed by GPC and UK Governments.

Posting of responses

Responses to Level 2 and 3 queries will be posted on the Paymodernisation website as soon as possible after resolution, including interim responses if escalated.

Level 1 query responses will be posted as agreed by QOF Query Reference Group.

General Rules

Level 1 (NHS Boards)

1. Queries should, in the first instance, be directed to the most appropriate (usually most devolved) level. Typically this will be to a local NHS Board (**Level 1**).

2. **NHS Boards will nominate an individual who will act as Lead for this process.** Although this will be a named individual, the process may be facilitated by a Team with one contact email address, to ensure continuity in the event of absences. The critical pathway will be controlling the receiving/processing of queries and for feeding back responses timeously. An agreed protocol should be developed at Board level to suit local needs and/or circumstances. NHS Boards should aim to resolve local queries within 14 days. Each Board's contact details for QOF queries will be posted on the Paymodernisation web site for information.

3. Where possible, and appropriate (ie the query can be answered from agreed national QOF guidance and existing FAQ websites agreed by SG and SGPC), queries should be resolved at Board level. NHS Boards should, if necessary, use established networks, most notably the GMS IM&T Facilitators' Group and IM&T Clinical Leads, to discuss and agree which guidance/ previous FAQ is most appropriate to the query and/or if this query needs to be escalated.

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NHS Boards are expected to use the Lead contact as a single route by which queries are escalated to Level 2. A template has been designed for this purpose and this will be made available to Board lead contacts.

4. NHS Boards will also decide whether to suggest that a response to a query, even when resolved at Level 1, is of sufficient importance or likelihood of repetition to be posted on the QOF queries page of the Pay Modernisation GMS web site. If so, the Lead contact will send it to the Scottish QOF Queries portal for a final decision on posting of such queries.

5. It is very important that NHS Boards develop a system to track significant queries and responses, including escalation to higher levels, to monitor workload, consistency and accuracy to ensure governance of this process.

Level 2-Scotland

6. If the query cannot be resolved by NHS Boards as above, e.g. where interpretation beyond the precise wording of the national guidance is needed or where the guidance does not cover the content of the query, it should be escalated for consideration at Scotland level (**Level 2**). This should also be done in the case of uncertainty about interpretation.

7. Queries may also come in directly at Level 2 for consideration at Scotland level from bodies other than NHS Boards, for example through the Pay Modernisation Team, Practitioner Services Division, SCIMP, SGPC, ISD, QOF Reviewer Training Team. . Those queries from Practices received through the Scottish QOF Queries portal will be re-directed in the first instance back to the appropriate Board's system.

8. All queries escalated to **Level 2** will be routed through a single Scottish QOF Queries portal managed by the GMS Pay Modernisation Team, and must be in writing, using the template referred to in paragraph 3.

9. It is expected that queries will be answered within 20 days of receipt either fully or with a progress report. Responses will be fed back to the sender electronically using the original query template.

10. Queries at **Level 2** will be dealt with through a process involving the Primary Care Division of the Scottish Government (SG), Scottish General Practitioners Committee (SGPC) of the BMA and the QOF Queries Reference Group. Some queries will be re-directed to the appropriate body such as PSD, ISD. Final responses will be agreed between SG and SGPC before posting on the Pay Modernisation website.

Level 3 (UK)

11. Where a query is deemed to have UK-wide implications, it will be escalated from level 2 to the UK QOF review sub-plenary group for resolution (**Level 3**). Responses will then be posted on the web site as above. Some level 3 queries will be devolved back to Scotland for resolution and dealt with through the process for Level 2.

Information for Practices and Posting of Responses

12. Responses, including interim responses, at levels 2 and 3 will be posted on the Paymodernisation website, along with selected FAQs from Level 1.

http://www.paymodernisation.scot.nhs.uk/gms/natref/qual_def/faqs_index.htm

13. Information on this process for Practices will be available though the same website and will also be disseminated through the PSD newsletter, including alerts to new FAQs.

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