

Quality and Outcomes Framework 2017/18 – Relaxation FAQ

The relaxation of QOF aims to free up GPs and practice nurses to direct resource to the areas of greatest need during the winter period where there is a significant increase in demand for their services. Whilst the actual amount of time freed up for GPs and practice nurses as a result of relaxing QOF will depend on a number of factors, the Welsh Government and GPC Wales are confident this initiative will help GPs and practice nurses at a time when they are at their busiest.

Under the measures, practices may discontinue working towards achieving QOF targets up to 31 March 2018. The intention is to ensure that no GP practice loses out financially as a result. Accordingly, for each individual indicator the achievement level reported for 2017/2018 will be compared with the achievement used for payment purposes in 2016/17. For all indicators, except the 2 Flu indicators, the higher points value of the two will be used for payment purposes. The points for all indicators in the Cluster Network Domain will be awarded in full. This will be set out in the revised Statement of Financial Entitlement Directions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why has the QOF relaxation action been taken?

A: The action taken is in recognition of the demand being experienced within general practice due to the current winter pressures across the whole of the NHS. The relaxation of QOF will enable GPs and their teams to focus resource on the areas of greatest need during a period of increased demand.

Q: What parts of QOF are being relaxed?

A: All indicators in the 2017/18 QOF, apart from the two flu indicators, are included in the relaxation arrangements; this includes the Cluster Network Domain.

Q: How will payment be calculated at the end of year?

A: An achievement report will be generated for the practice clinical system as usual. Practices will need to follow the usual instructions from the NWIS primary care team to confirm and submit the report. The report lists achievement at 31 March 2018 for each indicator within the QOF.

- For each indicator, except the 2 Flu indicators, the achievement level reported for 2017/2018 will be compared with the agreed achievement used for payment purposes in 2016/17 (including any adjustment agreed after the year end) and the highest points value of the two will be used for payment purposes.
- For the 2 Flu indicators, practices will be paid according to actual achievement at year end for 2017/18.
- The points for all indicators in the Cluster Network Domain will be awarded in full.

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Q: Will the 2016/17 QOF relaxation affect my payment?

A: No. The achievement points used for payment purposes in 2016/17 will be used to compare with the 2017/18 achievement report points. If a practice has achieved higher points this year, they will receive payment based on that achievement. If higher points were used for last year's payment (2016/2017), then the higher points value will be used. (Due to the relaxation of QOF last year, those points may be based on 2015/2016 achievement.)

Q: What about the Cluster Network Domain?

A: The Cluster Network Domain is part of the relaxation. The indicators in this domain are different to the previous year and full points are to be awarded for all CND indicators.

Q: What QOF point value will be used?

A: All payments will be made at the current years QOF point value of £167.96, irrespective of whether achievement at an indicator level is for 31 March 2018 or the previous year.

Q: How will QOF relaxation affect my prevalence?

A: Prevalence is not affected by opt out, the current years prevalence will be used for payment.

Q: What measures are in place to ensure the integrity of practice reported prevalence?

A: Health boards will be able to compare practice prevalence rates at 31 December with those at 31 March, this is normal practice. Where significant differences are noticeable practices may be asked to explain.

Q: What action do practices need to take?

A: Practices do not need to take any action. There is no requirement to notify the health board of an intention to opt out of QOF.

Q: What are the arrangements for dispute resolution?

A: Any dispute arising out of or in connection with the QOF will be dealt with in the normal manner under Part 7 of Schedule 6 of the National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Wales) Regulations 2004.

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Q: What about practices that have merged during the year, how will their achievement for last year be established?

A: Where two or more practices have merged during the year, health boards will need to take a pragmatic approach to ensure opt out does not cause detriment to the new practice. The NWIS primary care support team will be able to assist health boards.

Q: Will health boards be undertaking QOF practice visits?

A: There are different arrangements that apply in each health board area for QOF practice visits. Health boards will individually decide whether they wish to proceed with their planned programme of practice visits for assurance. The Wales Audit Office is aware of the GMS Contract QOF 2017/18 relaxation.