



## NEWS

## QOF “unlikely” to disappear in England but could be slimmed down

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The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) is “unlikely” to disappear in England but could be drastically slimmed down, the vice chair of the Royal College of GPs has said.

NHS England and the BMA’s General Practitioners Committee (GPC) have been engaged in a major ongoing review of QOF, to examine whether to retain, reshape, or phase out the incentive system. Changes to GPs’ contracts were initially expected to be introduced this year, but could now occur in 2019-20 as no agreement was reached for 2018-19. The college and other stakeholders have also fed in to the review.

Speaking at the Londonwide LMCs conference in London on 2 May, Martin Marshall, the college’s representative on the QOF review group, said that it was looking “very unlikely” that England would follow Scotland in completely abolishing the QOF.

But he said the review was considering whether to shrink QOF from 8-10% of practice income to a smaller amount and redeploy freed-up funding to quality improvement programmes. This would give GPs more flexibility to provide focused support in specific areas such as obesity, he said.

Marshall acknowledged that some GPs may be reluctant to see QOF change because of the administrative upheaval and concern

about loss of practice income. But he said practices should consider the merits of reducing the number of indicators, which he argued could reduce bureaucracy and improve patient care.

“I understand those arguments for keeping QOF as it is, but we do have an opportunity to think differently,” he said.

“One of the discussions is whether we should shift QOF to make it a smaller, more focussed set of indicators with incentives attached, but a larger amount of that money going into managing complex activities through quality improvement programmes in a focussed way.

“One year, a practice might start working on childhood obesity, with a range of different partners, in a quality improvement programme, and they just get paid for doing that work. It wouldn’t be a tick box kind of outcome. That seems a much more sensible way of taking the system forward, if GPs are willing to take the shake-up of the system that that would require.”

Richard Vautrey, chair of the GPC, said, “The QOF review is ongoing and will produce a report that could describe a range of options. The report will inform, but not determine, any future negotiations between GPC and NHS England.”