



Primary Care Networks

The policy of establishing Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and using them to deliver new funding to primary care is one which should be simple, but which has given rise to legal and accounting complexities for participants which perhaps were not foreseen by policy-makers.

GP practices and other PCN members are advised to seek specialist legal and accounting support on how best to establish their networks, with a view to avoiding important pitfalls over VAT and access to the NHS Pension Scheme.

PCN Structures

Some advisers are suggesting that PCNs set up a limited company as part of their delivery model. This may not in fact be appropriate just yet (although of course every PCN will have its own particular circumstances which could justify it).

Our view is that a simple structure as possible should be chosen initially, given both the tight timescales and the fact that the rules may change again over the coming year. It is acknowledged that the PCN structure and membership is expected to evolve over the life of the Network DES and practices may find it less burdensome to grow into the developing pathway than deconstruct and rebuild a structure to match the changing landscape.

Ideally, one would be able to “future proof” the PCN by establishing a structure today that works indefinitely - but given the current uncertainties, we are not sure such future

proofing can be done, and establishing a company structure may prove to be wasted effort. The mantra that form should follow function is one which holds true here.

Network Agreement Support

A mandated standard form Network Agreement has been issued by NHS England, and practices will need to sign this **by 30 June** if they want to ensure that the initial £1.76 per patient is backdated to 1 April. The template Network Agreement works well as far as it goes, but key sections have been left blank for networks to fill in, including schedules dealing with governance and decision making, and also financial issues.

It is very important, particularly for lead practices, that the financial provisions are completed, to ensure that the other practices contribute if the lead practices incurs additional costs as a result of its role.

As with any form of joint working, ensuring that the intended working arrangements are accurately reflected in the governance documentation is key to avoiding disputes and ensuring the parties understand the basis upon which they are working.



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How Can We Help You?

VWV offers a fixed price package to support PCNs with their initial setup. This includes the following:

- gathering information on the PCN members and their intentions so that we can advise on or “vet” your chosen or existing structure and ensure it is workable;
- adding the relevant content to the Network Agreement to bring it to a stage where it can be signed;
- ensuring that any employment contracts are structured in such a way as to minimise any VAT payable; and
- advising on data sharing agreements.

We have also been supporting PCNs through face-to-face support sessions and have shaped our services around the needs and concerns of a range of GP practices and providers.

Advice should be taken in parallel from specialist medical accountants, and we can put you in touch if you do not already have the necessary support, or work with your existing advisers. VWV have close ties with AISMA and ICAEW and have been working closely with leading specialists in the sector to ensure a comprehensive and robust approach to developing your PCN.

This work can be completed on a fixed fee (price on application tailored to your circumstances).

For more information, please contact Mark Jarvis or Oliver Pool, or visit vwv.co.uk.

What Others Say...

“They build relationships with their clients, give more attention to the negotiations and spend time addressing any concerns.”

Chambers & Partners

“Delightful to work with, balancing expertise conscientiousness, realism and good humour.”

Legal 500

“We feel totally confident in the advice and service we are getting. We could not ask for a better service. VWV as a company, works very hard to understand our business and to build good working relationships.”

Kate Francis - Air Balloon Surgery

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