

How Bridging Partnerships Work, or not

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Dental Elite's Leah Turner considers **how bridging partnerships work**, and why they might not

It has been common practice to transfer NHS contracts via the partnership route, but recently it has become much more complicated to do so. The reason being that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) plans to take a much stricter stance on whom they will register moving forward. This is to deter what they classify as "bridging partnerships" from taking place; in other words, partnerships that are set up purely to sell a practice.

This is likely to leave several dentists stuck between a rock and a hard place, as the NHS is very clear that a partnership must be registered with the CQC. If the CQC decline to register a partnership on the basis that it looks like it's for selling a practice, what can be done?

Essentially it means that any dentist looking to transfer an NHS contract via the partnership route will need to provide extensive evidence that they're creating a real partnership if they are to secure both registration from the CQC and consent from the NHS. We anticipate that this will place greater demand on dental solicitors moving forward, as it will be up to them to put together the required paperwork that CQC is demanding to prove the validity of a partnership.

We may also start to see a change in mindset because of this, because dentists will need to convey the impression that they're genuinely entering into a professional collaboration with the intention of being in a long-term partnership. If anyone makes it obvious that they're only going through the motions to sell the practice down the line, they won't secure the NHS contract.

How these changes will affect the market and dentists' ability to buy and sell NHS practices is not yet clear, but what we do know is that some CQC inspectors are proving to be stricter than others when it comes to paperwork. We can also confidently say that the CQC and NHS are not working together on this. They are two opposing forces that have no interest in collaborating to make things easier for the profession; and that's worth noting.

With all this in mind, finding an agent that understands the changing market and processes is integral to ensuring a successful outcome. Receive wrong or out of date advice and complications are much more likely to occur, including delays – or worse – rejection from the CQC and NHS.

Dental Elite has years of experience and specialist knowledge of the dental sector, meaning its team can offer an outstanding service in line with the latest market trends and regulations. This includes a complimentary CQC application service – which is also available if you choose to buy or sell through another agent. To find out more, contact our expert team.

Author:

Leah joined Dental Elite in May 2011 and now directs the Practice Sales Consultancy Team. Leah's background prior to Dental Elite was in HR and Recruitment for a Dental Corporate assisting the group to grow from 6 to 40 sites at the time she left. For more information about Dental Elite, visit www.dentalelite.co.uk, email info@dentalelite.co.uk or call 01788 545 900