

Meeting the challenge of NHS Dental Reforms: Your Essential Guide

Balancing the need for efficient and effective dental services with the drive to offer a truly people-centric patient experience is at the heart of the new commissioning landscape.

As dental practices take ownership of marketing their services to local people – often ‘in competition’ with neighbouring practices – they’re looking to increase patient numbers and find new ways to absorb the additional demand. So how can commissioners help practices work smarter to meet these new challenges? Our work in the heart of communities underlines some practical tips to help shape a new approach to delivering dental services:

1. Use a blended ‘whole system’ change approach

It’s vital to move away from ‘silo’ thinking. Interweaving methodologies like **LEAN Systems Thinking** with social change (using behavioural science methodology) enables organisations to develop a new paradigm of change which delivers increased performance AND supports citizens at their greatest point of need. We’ve coined the phrase ‘**SOChange**’ (Social Change + Organisational Change) to encapsulate this innovative approach.

2. Harness patient insight

To provide patients with the best possible experience, it’s essential to understand, create and communicate in a way which resonates, motivates and inspires them to use the services and see themselves as participants in their **dental health**. In tandem, understanding how systems and processes are currently designed and how these need to be developed is essential for optimising future service delivery.

3. Create a vision for the future

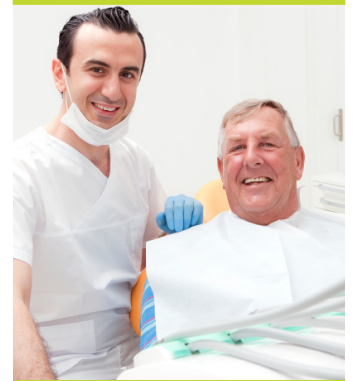
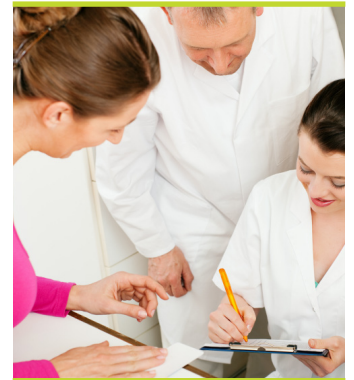
An effective way of bringing all the insight together and consolidating the findings is hosting a ‘visioning event’ with a practice team(s) and their stakeholders. This empowers organisations to create a vision of what good looks like in terms of the processes and systems in the future. And because practices take ownership of their vision, this adds sustainable value and enables individuals to see the role they’ll play in delivering the vision.

4. Work in partnership

Building lasting relationships with staff and stakeholders is integral at every stage and aligns with **the NHS Network’s** mission to promote intelligence-sharing and collaboration. Their buy-in will underpin new, more productive ways of working, and help calm fears that they’re being judged or new arrangements are being imposed on them.

5. Test, refine and test again

Working to the principle that we need to do things ‘with’ people – and not ‘to’ them – co-creation sessions are a powerful way of testing initial ideas with patients to better understand how they’ll be received. Consistently refining and adjusting the offer is crucial to meet their ever-changing needs.



Of course, demonstrating cost savings is a thread which runs throughout. In fact, we’re currently looking at a ‘risk and reward’ model to maximise patient satisfaction, while ensuring dental practices are lean and efficient. That way, activities are self-sustaining and in effect, pay for themselves.

If you’d like to know more about some of the specific projects we’ve been involved in, and how this approach could work for you, contact Rachel Stamp (rachel.stamp@icecreates.com / 07979 906065.)