

Home Oxygen Services (HOS) Re-procurement

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Why does the current contract have to be re-procured?

Home Oxygen Services (HOS) in South Central are currently provided by Air Liquide. The contract is between Air Liquide and the Department of Health (DH). The current contract has been extended by the Department of Health until March 2012 by which time a new contract needs to have been agreed through a formal re-procurement process.

When does the current contract end?

The current contract ends on 28th March 2012. A new supplier, Dolby Vivisol, has been awarded the new contract. There is a detailed transition plan to manage the transfer of people receiving Home Oxygen to the new supplier. There will be letters and phone calls to inform users and their carers what is happening and whether there are any changes to the service that will affect them, for example how to order new supplies. The first of these letters will be sent out in August 2011

How was the tender process managed?

The tender process has been managed by a Project Team Chaired by a Respiratory Consultant and with representatives from local PCTs and user groups. This group reports in to the Regional Respiratory Programme Board and to PCT Cluster Chief Executives. The contract details were been drawn up by the Department of Health which also set out the tender process.

What is the timescale for moving to the new contract?

The tender process for PCTs in South Central began in April with the selection of the Preferred Supplier being decided in July 2011. This will now be followed by detailed planning for the transfer of services which will take place in early 2012 in time for the start of the new contract at the end of March 2012.

What changes will come with the new supplier?

The current supplier will work closely with the new supplier and PCTs to carefully manage the transfer. The project timetable includes six months for planning and managing the transfer of services to ensure patients receiving Home Oxygen Services do not experience any disruption to their oxygen supply. PCT Home Oxygen managers who understand the needs of the patients in their locality will also be closely involved in the transfer process.

Who is the new supplier?

The new supplier is Dolby Vivisol. A year ago Dolby Medical Home Respiratory Care Limited became part of the Vivisol group of companies. Dolby Medical Home Respiratory Care Limited had been providing specialist medical products, training and service support to the UK for over 45 years. Vivisol is one of the leading European companies in the field of Home Care Services. Dolby Vivisol holds the contract (for the third consecutive five

year renewal period) for the provision of Home Oxygen Therapy Services throughout Scotland.

Will there be problems with service continuity during transition between the current and new contracts as happened last time?

This time the process will be managed by a South Central Project Team Chaired by a Respiratory Consultant and with representatives from local PCTs and user groups. The project timetable includes six months for planning and managing the transfer of services to ensure patients receiving Home Oxygen Services do not experience any disruption to their oxygen supply. The project team will ensure there is close communication between PCT Home Oxygen leads and all stakeholders including carers and users of Home Oxygen.

It is important to note that unlike last time, there is no major change to the way services are delivered.

Why are PCTs tendering for the contract now when they will soon be replaced by GP / Clinical Commissioning Consortia?

The contract has to be re-procured by March 2012 and the Department of Health had already advertised the tender and received initial submissions from Suppliers when the new GP / clinical commissioning consortium plans were unveiled.

The Government has recently consulted on the future structure of the NHS. The precise structure will not be known until new legislation has been passed by Parliament. In the meantime it is sensible to continue with the planned timetable so that a new contract is in place for when the current contract ends. PCTs will continue to manage the contract until any new arrangements are in place.

Why are different regions doing this at different times?

A phased transfer is intended to ensure there is a smooth and controlled changeover in a similar way to the UK changing to digital television signal by using a phased approach. This will minimise risk by reducing the number of people affected at any one time and also enable regions to learn from others experience.

Will the HOOF process be the same?

The HOOF format will be changing for all referrals under the new contract i.e. from March 2012. It will be a two part form, the first part for patients who have not been formally assessed for oxygen e.g. palliative care and cluster headache patients. The second part of the form is for patients who have been formally assessed for oxygen in a Home Oxygen Service Assessment and Review (HOS-AR) service.

The new contract will now put responsibility on the prescriber to stipulate the equipment required and guidance to all prescribers will be available in the form of a Good HOOF Guide, published by DH which will be available by November 2011, to all primary and secondary care prescribers (where applicable) which will give advice on how to fill in the new HOOF.

The HOOF process of faxing to the supplier will remain the same, however the fax number may change –if it does referrers will be notified well in advance of the change taking place

Will delivery times remain the same?

The delivery times for re ordering will improve with deliveries available on Saturdays the standard installation time frame of 3 days will stay the same.

FAQs for Patients and Carers

How will this affect patients?

Patients should see little or no difference. As the contract has been awarded to a new supplier, all patients will be contacted and any changes explained to them. If there are any necessary changes to equipment these will be undertaken at a date and time agreed in advance with the patient and the PCT Home Oxygen Lead.

Is this about saving money?

No. The current contract has to be re-tendered and cannot be extended further. Whenever this type of contract is retendered it is good practice to review the specification to ensure it reflects best practice and is cost effective. Clearly in the current financial climate cost will be a consideration but the Department of Health is confident the new service will cost no more than the current contract. The new contract is designed to ensure NHS patients receive a continuously improving Home Oxygen service that also offers best value for money.

Will the quality of the service remain the same?

The new contract has an enhanced service specification. Benefits include:

- Patients will be able to change their address without needing a new Home Oxygen Order Form (HOOF)
- A HOOF will no longer be required for holiday orders
- Improved Contact Centre Response times
- Patient requested refills to be supplied the next working day
- Installations available on Saturdays
- Improved processes for electricity reimbursement to ensure more accurate payments to patients
- Patient orders will be delivered in full
- Better information will be available to support electricity payments
- Testing of working smoke alarm in patient's home
- Follow up call for all patients two weeks after installation
- Next day delivery service will make it easier to plan

Will patients be able to keep their current HOS equipment?

Some patients may have equipment changes, others may not, but if equipment changes are required patients will be contacted and the changes explained at least a week in advance.

Will the contact number for the call centre remain the same?

If the contact number for the call centre changes all patients will be informed well in advance. Even though the supplier will change, it is possible that some of the staff, such as the delivery engineer and contact centre staff, may not.

Will my electricity costs still be reimbursed?

Yes - Patients will still be reimbursed for the electricity used by their concentrators. However, the timing for payment may change – if this happens patients will be notified before their payment schedules change. There will be better information to support electricity payments.

Is there anything I need to do now?

There is no need to do anything to ensure you continue to receive your oxygen. You will be notified in plenty of time before any changes occur.

What if I have any questions? Who do I ask?

Your local PCT website and Home Oxygen Lead will be your main point of contact. An enquiry e-mail address will be included in any communications sent to patients.

The British Lung Foundation's website will also have information about the possible changes to home oxygen supply www.lunguk.org

The Air Liquide call centre will also be able to provide information and to answer any queries you may have.

Updated 15th August 2011

PATIENT LETTER

19th August 2011

Dear

Home Oxygen Services – New Supplier

We are writing to let you know about changes to the oxygen service in your region. Following a tendering process the current South Central Home Oxygen Services contract with Air Liquide (Homecare) Limited will transfer to Dolby Vivisol at the end of March 2012.

Both companies are working together with the NHS to make this change as safe, simple and easy as possible for patients and their carers.

Dolby Vivisol has been providing specialist medical products and services within the UK for over 45 years and also currently holds the contract for the provision of Home Oxygen Therapy Services throughout Scotland.

The change of supplier will not affect your day-to-day supply of oxygen and there is nothing you need to do. Even though the supplier will change, it is possible that some of the staff, such as the delivery engineer and contact centre staff, may not and these people will be able to tell you all about the new contract and the proposed improvements to the service.

To ensure continuity of services there is an initial exercise where information about your use of oxygen will be shared with your local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Home Oxygen project lead. This is to check for accuracy and to support the transfer of your information to the new supplier. If you have any questions about this data transfer please call Sue Channon, project lead on 07768 888 252.

Please continue to call the usual number 0500823773 for all your oxygen requirements. We will advise you in good notice if this number is going to change or if there are any changes that affect you.

Please be assured that we are committed to ensuring you receive the best possible service.

Yours sincerely

[INSERT HOS LEAD NAME]