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What is world class commissioning?

- There has been **little agreement as to the definition of commissioning** in the past. It does not relate to procurement functions only. A useful working definition may be 'the act of committing resources, particularly but not limited to the health and social care sectors, with the aim of improving health, reducing inequalities, and enhancing patient experience'. This definition embraces all UK countries but the processes vary. Commissioning is most evident in England.
- There are tensions in commissioning, particularly within a cash-limited market economy environment, which mean that **commissioning involves making tough decisions and trade-offs**, particularly between individual and population needs/wants.
- Commissioning takes place at **many different levels** according to local arrangements and the specialisation of services. These levels stretch from national commissioning to practices and even to individual clinician activities.
- World class commissioning is a **statement of intent**, designed to raise ambitions for a new form of commissioning that has not yet been developed or implemented in a comprehensive way across any of the developed healthcare economies.
- The world class commissioning programme is a **set of mutually reinforcing policies, development programmes and assurance systems** put in place by the Department of Health in England. The programme describes in detail 11 competencies which have been assessed for each primary care trust.
- World class commissioning will be **robustly performance managed**.
- The world class commissioning programme is a **response to the significant challenge of moving power from providers to patients** or those who act on their behalf. It is backed by resource, commitment and political will. It represents the best chance yet in commissioning's 18-year history of demonstrating that it can make a difference to health outcomes.

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