

Monopoly fears over merger of dental businesses

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has asked an expanded dentistry business to show how its recent acquisition won't hit the level of services offered to NHS patients.

The CMA opened an investigation into the purchase of Dental Partners Group by Riviera Bidco – the owner of dental practice operator Rodericks Dental.

It was concerned about the potential impact of the merger in the areas of Yorkshire and Derbyshire where both businesses offer NHS or private dental treatments.

It said: "While sufficient competition will remain after the merger in most cases, the CMA found that the merger would raise competition concerns in the provision of general NHS dental treatments, such as check-ups and fillings, in areas within Doncaster and Alfreton.

"The removal of Dental Partners as an independent competitor could lead to reduced choice for patients in these two areas, where the availability of NHS dental appointments is already limited."

The CMA said the businesses accepted the merger would raise concerns in the two areas and said management wanted to work with the authority to find potential remedies.

Riviera was given five working days to formally come up with a plan to address the competition concerns, with the CMA having a further five days to get back – or extend its investigation.

Sorcha O'Carroll, CMA senior director of mergers, said: "Residents in parts of Doncaster and Alfreton rely on accessing quality NHS dental treatment when it is needed –

we're looking at this deal to ensure this can continue.

"It's now for the businesses involved to address our concerns, to prevent a loss of competition in these areas and resolve any need for further investigation."

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