

Health and Social Care Bill

The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Bill introduced in the House of Commons in March 2003 will affect every primary care dental practitioner in England and Wales.

For the first time local health organisations will have a duty to provide dental care. It becomes a 'must do' task and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will be judged on how well they carry out this responsibility.

The bill is currently with the House of Lords and will probably come into force in April 2005. On that day it is likely that:

- ◆ PCTs will have a duty to provide NHS primary dental services on their patch
- ◆ contracts between PCTs and GDPs will go live
- ◆ funding will go to practices though PCTs rather than the Dental Practice Board that will be abolished
- ◆ a new patient charges regime will come into force and item of service fees will cease as will the registration of patients.

Charges and fees

With the abolition of item of service payments, patients' charges can no longer be calculated in

relation to dentists' fees. A review group led by Director of Patient Experience and Public Involvement will advise on this but the current exemptions will remain. Dentists and patients will welcome a simpler system and devising one will certainly be a challenge for the review group.

Item of service fees will be abolished along with the Dental Practice Board, which will be replaced by a Special Health Authority. This could see GDPs adopting the same approach as the PDS pilots. Where a recent review found dentists carried out less restorative work and had longer intervals between examinations.

In future, dentists could adopt a preventive approach without reducing turnover and could spend longer carrying out more complex work.

The parliamentary progress of the bill has been slow because while it has key clauses affecting dentistry, it is dominated by the controversial issue of foundation trusts.

With the House of Commons voting for the Bill by a majority of just 35 votes back in July, their Lordships signalled that they would also be using their full parliamentary powers to scrutinise the detail of the Bill.

OFT suggests shake-up for private dentistry

The Office of Fair Trading report into private dentistry, published in March, argued that the market is not working well for consumers and suggested that 'measures to improve the consumer information, to make self-regulation work effectively, and to lift unnecessary regulation should make the private dental market work better for consumers'.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) responded to the report and supported a proposal to lift restrictions on the business of dentistry, including a move to allow certain PCDs to run dental practices.

The DTI saw this move, along with lifting the restrictions on corporate bodies, as ensuring private dentistry is more flexible and responsive to patient needs while aiding investment and freeing up dentists and pcads time to be spent with patients.

However, the BDA argued that there are strong clinical reasons why a dentist who has been trained to diagnose dental diseases should lead the dental team.

The OFT Report was a response to a super-complaint made by the Consumers' Association in October 2001.

The DTI's response to the report also recommended:

- ◆ clearly displaying information on prices to consumers
- ◆ giving patients written treatment plans and itemised accounts for treatments carried out
- ◆ displaying details of what services are available on the NHS
- ◆ ensuring patients know they will be treated under the NHS or privately for each treatment proposed.

news in brief

Top apprentice

Melissa Dowling, a dental nurse from the Integrated Dental Holdings Longton Dental Centre, won the bronze award in the Healthcare Section of the Total People Apprentice of the year award 2002/03. Melissa was the only dental nurse to make the final. The awards are open to a variety of trades and professions.

Chat room opens

The Dental Technicians Association website now has a chat room and noticeboard facility exclusively for dental technicians at www.dta-uk.org, providing an opportunity to share ideas, debate current issues and keep in touch with colleagues.

Visitors to the website will also see other differences on the site, including a news section and jobs on line via Practice People.

Bournemouth bound

The 2004 British Association of Dental Nurses Conference will be held in Bournemouth on Saturday 8 May 2004 and will coincide with the British Dental Conference and Exhibition which is also being held in Bournemouth 6-8 May 2004, at the Bournemouth International Centre.

The BADN and the BDA have negotiated a special offer for all BADN Conference delegates who are interested in attending both events. Details and booking forms for the BADN Conference will be available in the Winter 04 (January) edition of the *British Dental Nurses' Journal*. Details of the British Dental Conference and Exhibition are available on the BDA website at www.bda.org

The Focus Award goes to...



Photograph by SimonRix.com

Calderdale and Huddersfield Community Dental Services not only won the award in the category of excellence in the development of good practice but also saw off winners in four other categories to secure the title of overall winner at the Focus Awards 2003.

Calderdale and Huddersfield Community Dental Services were praised by judges for looking beyond the care provided in their surgery to better the dental health of patients going to hospital in their area.

The Focus awards were organised by the BDA, the Department of Health, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland to recognise commitment to NHS dentistry. For more on the awards see our feature on page 28.

Pictured: Rosie Winterton MP, Minister of State for Health, opens the golden envelope to announce the overall winners, Calderdale and Huddersfield Community Dental Services.



Spot the difference to support Water Bill

The BDA has launched a 'Spot the difference' campaign in support of the Water Bill currently before the House of Commons. MPs will be asked to Spot the difference between the teeth of a six year-old from Manchester and a six year-old from Birmingham.

The Water Bill may prove to be a major victory in the campaign for water fluoridation. The bill includes an amendment that will force water companies to fluoridate supplies in areas where local communities agree.

The Spot the difference campaign highlights the difference between the dental health of those children living in areas where the water contains fluoride and those where it does not. The BDA campaign is part of the drive to allow local communities to choose to have fluoride added to their water supplies.

The bill was debated in the House of Commons on September 8, with Environment Minister Elliot Morley outlining the case for fluoridation. He argued that the amendment in the Bill was essentially tidying up the current law that placed 'too much responsibility on water companies to decide on what is essentially a public health issue when they do not feel qualified to do so.'



Practice Managers turn ten



Pictured celebrating at the BDPMA conference: Vicky Jones, Sally Lumber and Bridget Crump.

The British Dental Practice Managers' Association celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The organisation aims to provide practice managers with guidance and advice in all areas of the business, including training and achievement in qualifications and in encouraging education. The milestone was marked at the BDPMA 10th anniversary conference in Bath. For more information contact 0870 8400381.