



Winter 2007/08

## Foreword

Dear Colleague,

Dentistry has been well up the Minister's agenda during September and October. In September, the Minister announced £4.4 million additional funding for health service dentistry, which has been extremely welcome and a large part of this newsletter details the areas on which this funding will be spent. October saw the Minister launch Northern Ireland's first salaried dental service and we will continue to look at ways of improving access to dental services in 2008.

By now GDP's will have received the first half of their practice allowance and those practices which are health service committed will have noticed a substantial increase in the amount they have received, up from 5% in 2006 to the current level of 11% and indeed feedback from the profession has been very positive. We have deliberately targeted the additional funding at dentists who have remained committed to the Health Service and will continue to look at other ways of supporting these practices.

Vocational training & general professional training is critical to the future supply of well trained dentists for the service and it is encouraging that the Minister has given substantial additional funding to these schemes. We are indebted to David Hussey and Neale Armstrong and their team at NIMDTA for the very quick way in which they have been able to react to the new funding and put in place a package of developments which will make our scheme the best in the British Isles.

Cross infection control is always high on dentists' agenda and no more so than at present. New guidance will be issued by the Department of Health in the new year in a document called HTM 01-05 which will require further improvements in the field of cross infection control. We have been planning for this well in advance and have secured an extra £1.5 million to help dentists with these changes. We are grateful to our colleagues in Health Estates who have spent much time putting advisory information together and have also set up a helpline for dentists seeking further advice. See article on page 3 for further information.

I hope you all have a peaceful Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year,

**Donncha O'Carolan**

Acting Chief Dental Officer  
December 2007

## Minister Announces £4.4million for Health Service Dentistry

On September 17, 2007 Health Minister Michael McGimpsey announced an injection of £4.4million into Health Service dentistry to address the problems of access reported in parts of the province.

In a statement to the Assembly, the Minister said,

*I strongly believe that people who want Health Service dentistry should be able to get it. That is far from the case in too many parts of Northern Ireland today. It has become clear to me that the additional £2million funding announced earlier this year, though undoubtedly significant, has not proved sufficient to stop the movement of dentists out of the Health Service.*

*I am therefore pleased to be able to announce a substantial package of additional measures.*

The measures announced by the Minister are:

- An additional £2 million recurrent in Practice Allowances; over and above the £2 million already announced in this financial year
- £1.5million to help dentists meet the increasing costs of complying with cross-infection control standards
- £500,000 for Vocational Training allowances for trainers willing to take on new graduates
- £400,000 is being allocated to Boards to address the problem of equity of access to Health Service dentistry, to enable them to grow the salaried dentists sector to plug gaps in Health Service provision

The Minister explained that the additional funding for Practice Allowances would be directed towards those practices committed to providing Health Service dentistry to the full range of patients, including adults who pay for their treatment.

Mr McGimpsey continued,

*I very much hope that the significant investments I have outlined will encourage dentists not only to come into and stay in the Health Service, but to come back to it where they have currently opted for private practice.*

*I cannot accept a situation where there remain geographical pockets within Northern Ireland where dentists have ceased to provide Health Service dentistry, or provide it only to patients who are exempt from charges.*

*I am determined to provide fair and equitable payment for Health Service treatment of patients in Northern Ireland.*

## Extra Practice Allowance

The Minister, Michael McGimpsey, announced an overall recurrent increase in the Practice Allowance of £2m, with all of the funding going to Health Service committed dental practices.

This is in addition to the £2 million announced by Paul Goggins in February 2007. This allows the Department to further address the issue most often raised by dentists - that of the difficulties they face in overhead costs. Health Service committed dental practices have, therefore, seen their Practice Allowance raised from the 2006 figure of 5% of the practice's Health Service income to 11%.

This means that these practices will now be getting, on average, an annual Practice Allowance of £29,600.

Non-committed Health Service practices will continue to receive 4% of their health service gross income, which currently averages out at £8,634.

The criteria for a committed Health Service practice is outlined in the SDR as a practice which has an average gross per dentist of £50,000 and an average list size of 500 patients per dentist (100 of these registered patients must be fee paying). An analysis of the practice allowances paid to April 2007 shows that 361 out of 366 practices which undertake health service work were paid a practice allowance. Of these practices 243 (67%) were paid at the committed rate while 123 (33%) were paid at the lower rate. The practice allowance is paid to a designated practitioner within each practice, normally the practice owner. Payments are paid automatically every 6 months provided the practice has informed the CSA of the designated dentist to whom the allowance should be paid.

## Vocational Training Funding

The £500,000 included in the Minister's Health Service dental finance package will be used in a variety of ways to provide additional funding for dentists who wish to become trainers.

The funding will allow for three new allowances to be paid:

1. **Quality Assurance Allowance:** £10,000 per year; this grant will be paid to trainers on the vocational training scheme and general professional training scheme. Trainers will be required to successfully complete the assessment of their appointed trainee using those assessment tools as defined by the postgraduate dental dean, and comply with other quality assurance systems as defined by the postgraduate dental dean. £4,000 will be paid in first quarter and £2,000 paid in each subsequent quarter (N.B. GPT trainers will be eligible for this allowance for each year of the 2 year scheme).
2. **Postgraduate qualification allowance:** £1,000 per year; this allowance will be paid to those trainers who hold a postgraduate qualification which is recognized by the postgraduate dental dean. The postgraduate dental dean will hold a list of approved qualifications which can be paid through this allowance. Trainers must hold the qualification at the start of the training year and produce documentary evidence if requested
3. **Charter Mark allowance:** £1,000 per year; this allowance will be paid to those trainers who hold an accredited charter mark/quality mark as agreed by the postgraduate dental dean. The postgraduate dean will hold an approved list of schemes/charter marks covered by this allowance. Trainers must hold a valid certificate (or other validatory evidence) of the recognized scheme at the start of the training year which must be produced on request.

Full details of the allowances are outlined in Determination IV of the SDR.

It is hoped that the additional funding will attract more dentists to apply to be trainers. At present there is funding for 40 training places (36 Vocational Training; 4 GPT) but in this current training year only 30 trainers have been appointed. This has meant that 10 of our graduates had to leave the province in order to undertake their mandatory training (see further article on page 3 by Neale Armstrong, Adviser on General Dental Practice, Vocational Training).

## Minister Moves to Improve Access to Dental Services

On October 3, 2007 Health Minister Michael McGimpsey launched Northern Ireland's first salaried dental service at Dalriada Urgent Care in Ballymena.

The service offers dental care for patients who are unable to access health service dentistry in the Northern Health and Social Services Board area. The Board hopes to recruit further salaried dentists.

Mr Michael Donaldson, Consultant, Dental Public Health, Northern Health and Social Services Board, said

*The new Salaried Dental Service based at Dalriada Urgent Care (DUC) is the first of its kind to be offered in Northern Ireland. It is designed to provide access to Health Service dentistry for patients who would not otherwise be able to receive it.*

*It has been running very successfully since the beginning of the summer and we have plans in the coming months to operate a similar service from two other sites in the Northern Board area.*

The Western Health and Social Services Board has also identified a need to recruit six salaried dentists to address access problems in its area, and both Boards are actively considering where and how best to recruit, bearing in mind the comparative lack of new dentists in the local labour market.

*'The new Salaried Dental Service based at Dalriada Urgent Care (DUC) is the first of its kind to be offered in Northern Ireland'*

Michael Donaldson, Consultant, Dental Public Health, Northern Health and Social Services Board

The Minister has made the funding available to resource these new posts, up to £400K. Similar proposals have been submitted to the Department for approval from the other two Boards to address the identified shortfalls in Health Service dentistry in their areas.

## Cross-infection Control Funding

In January 2005, an audit of decontamination procedures and processes was completed across all health service dental practices. The audit was followed by a comprehensive training programme for dental teams across Northern Ireland and this training programme was complemented by a bespoke cross-infection control manual and CD-ROM, which has been distributed to dental practices. The audit highlighted the following priority areas:

1. Amalgam separators
2. Chart recorders for autoclaves
3. Independent water bottles
4. Dedicated rooms with sinks and extraction ventilation for washing and sterilisation of instruments
5. Washer Disinfectors
6. Single use instruments

Points number 1 to 3 were considered to involve relatively minor financial resource implications and also to be achievable in the short term and to this end the QJS funding over the past 2 years has been targeted at these areas. Boards report that most, if not all practices, have now complied with these three priority areas. It was recognised that the areas highlighted in points 4 to 6 would be more costly and logistically more difficult to achieve in the short term but nonetheless needed to be addressed.

Representatives from the Department, Boards, Health Estates and the Dental Hospital met in September 2006 to discuss how to progress these remaining priority areas. This culminated in a workshop in February 2007 where a 10-point action plan was drawn up. It is the

intention to implement this plan within the next 3 - 5 years. The main points emerging from this plan were:

- introduction of washer disinfectors
- quality water supply
- improved surgery layouts
- use of vacuum autoclaves
- appropriate testing of decontamination equipment
- procurement of equipment

A further policy driver is the development of HTM 01-05 which will set government guidance for cross infection control procedures in dental practice. It is expected that HTM 01-05 will be published in early 2008 and from sight of the current draft it is clear that the emerging themes are consistent with the priorities in our action plan.

Further resources needed to be identified to implement the action plan and the Department has allocated an additional £1.5 million (non-recurrent) this year to effect the priority areas within the plan. These priority areas are:

1. Washer Disinfectors & Reverse Osmosis Water Plant;
2. Surgery layout (including additional instrument storage)
3. Vacuum Benchtop Steam Sterilizers (Type B)
4. Additional sets of dental instruments

It is our intention to implement these priorities in a phased manner over a 3-5 year period. We cannot be more precise on this time line at the moment as the speed of implementation will depend on the ability of the supply houses to provide the new equipment and the availability of testing services.

A letter was issued to the four Health and Social Services Boards on 13 November 2007 outlining the details of how dentists can apply for this funding and contains further detailed information on the four priority areas described above. In addition Health Estates Agency has developed guidance to help General Dental Practitioners to develop bids pertinent to those areas covered by the additional funding together with equipment specifications. This information is available on the Health Estates website at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hea> (select **Dental Decontamination** from the menu on the left). The website also includes contact details of Health Estates staff that will be available to provide specific advice concerning decontamination processes and equipment specifications.

If you have any problems in accessing the Internet, the advisory documentation can be provided on a CD-ROM by contacting Health Estates at:

GDP Advisory  
Room D4  
EP Admin  
Health Estates  
Stoney Road  
Belfast BT16 1US  
028 90 523724  
[epadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:epadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Future Quality Improvement Scheme funding will continue to be targeted at our cross infection priorities over the next 3-5 years and dentists should consider their likely QJS allocation over the coming years when planning the necessary changes to their practices.

## Additional Funding for Vocational Training Welcomed

Neale Armstrong writes for NIMDTA

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency recently welcomed the additional financial support for Vocational Training and General Professional Training as announced by the Minister in September 2007 as recognition of the importance placed on the role of Trainers to support the newly qualified young dentist.

As a result, additional funding of up to £12,000 per training year is obtainable to appointed Trainers to the schemes commencing in August 2008. This is in addition to the current annual training grant of £8694 (£4347 for GPT). Up to 12 additional CPDA sessions are also obtainable through attendance at designated NIMDTA approved training courses and conferences such as the Chicago Mid-winter Conference or the BDA Annual Conference.

NIMDTA has recently launched the 2008 recruitment campaign and is seeking 36 practitioners for Vocational Training and 4 practitioners for General Practitioner Training, who are enthusiastic about training and education.

Are you a supportive employer?

Could you commit to the development of a young dentist?

This is a challenging, but rewarding role that is supported by a dedicated team committed to education and training. Training courses to prepare and assist with the training role are offered to enhance personal skills and to provide continuing professional development.

For further details contact the Advisers at NIMDTA on 028 90 400009 or email [neale.armstrong@nimdta.gov.uk](mailto:neale.armstrong@nimdta.gov.uk)

# Dental Nursing Student Placement

The GDC, in conjunction with the National Examining Board, has made some additions and modifications to the National Certificate in Dental Nursing curriculum. As a result of this, all candidates will have to complete a Record of Experience which covers all procedures and a Case Study focusing on one treatment session from the following:-

- Surgical Procedure
- Restorative Procedure
- Provision of a fixed or removable prosthesis

This is limited to 1000 to 1500 words.

The GDC has also specified that training should be carried out over a 45 week period, Further Education College course programmes are based on a 36 week period. Rosemary Girvan from the Belfast Metropolitan College is looking for support to facilitate this implementation.

Student placements take place on Monday and Fridays throughout the academic year, the College proposes to continue the placement programme through July and August, Monday to Friday to comply with the 45 week ruling.

## Here are some points to note:

- The practice needs to be a General Practice to cover course curriculum
- The practice will be expected to host the student on weekdays, during normal working hours for 6 to 8 weeks
- The students would be participating in, as well as observing, clinical procedures
- The GDP will need to sign off the student's Record of Experience
- The College will cover each student's indemnity
- A member of College staff will mentor and monitor the student's progress, attendance etc. [ssheard@belfastmet.ac.uk](mailto:ssheard@belfastmet.ac.uk) is the contact for more details on this.

If you are interested in supporting the programme, contact [rgirvan@belfastmet.ac.uk](mailto:rgirvan@belfastmet.ac.uk) or phone 028 90 265037

## Dental Branch Annual Report

The Dental Branch annual report has been published.

As with previous years, and in line with Departmental guidance, there will be no hard copy of the report.

It can be downloaded from the Dental Branch website at:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/dental/dental-pubs.htm>

## Service Level Agreement for the Community Dental Service

The Corporate Plan for the CDS was published in September 2006 and defined the priority business areas for the service. It was therefore important that the service level agreement between Boards and Trusts reflect the priority areas within the corporate plan.

An analysis of the existing Service Level Agreement between the four Boards and the legacy Trusts revealed a lack of consistency, and in some cases significant gaps, in the services that were commissioned. There had been an ongoing exercise to develop a regional Service Level Agreement which captured the main areas of business and at the same time allowed for local variation. The reorganisation of the Trust structures was a further driver to develop a regional Service Level Agreement.

The regional Service Level Agreement has now been finalized after consultation between the four Health and Social Services Boards, the CDS and DHSSPS. This Service Level Agreement details requirements in relation to;

- The range of services
- Data requirements
- Business plans
- Staff
- Training
- Governance

The SLA will be piloted across the Trusts in 2008/09 and amended if required for future business years.

## CDS Review

The project to implement the recommendations from the Review of the Community Dental Service has been temporarily suspended. This decision was taken by the steering at their last meeting on 1 October 2007. Despite our best efforts it has not been possible to recruit a project manager to oversee the project. The uncertainties surrounding organizational changes in the HSC has further compounded the situation.

The DHSSPS is looking at other options to take this important piece of work forward, taking into account the changing circumstances of the primary care salaried dental sector and new roles within that sector.

We hope to update you in the New Year on any new developments.