

Information Further to Ministerial Answers

Information further to OAQ35998 issued by Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister, on 5 July 2004

To Jonathan Morgan:

Following First Minister's question on Tuesday, 15 June 2004, I agreed to provide you with some additional information regarding the second offer scheme.

As I mentioned in Plenary, 364 patients are going to be treated as second offers during the period April to June 2004. Of these, 270 are to be treated at Cardiff's BUPA hospital for orthopaedic procedures, with the patients coming from Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust and Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust. I have been informed that there are no patients from Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust receiving orthopaedic treatment in England under the second offer scheme, which was also the case last year.

Of the remaining patients, 10 were treated in Kidderminster by the end of May, and 84 at the Nuffield hospitals for both general surgery and ear, nose and throat surgery. Of those treated at the Nuffield hospitals, 42 are from Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust and 42 are from Swansea NHS Trust. Further general surgery cases are planned for Kidderminster during June.

I hope that this information is of use to you.

Information further to OAQ36005, issued by Jane Hutt, the Minister for Health and Social Services, on 7 July 2004

To Lisa Francis:

Following questions you raised about dentistry in Plenary on 15 June, the First Minister has asked me to update you on the registration of patients at the dental practice in Machynlleth.

When a grant is offered under the Welsh dental initiative, as happened with the previous dentist at the Machynlleth practice, there are conditions attached to funding, one of which is the 'agreed period'. This is usually a tie in of at least five years to NHS work at a set level—or whatever is agreed with the local health board. Due to this, when the dentist left the practice earlier this year, he was required to pay back a proportion of the grant he had received.

As you know, the reopening of the Machynlleth dental practice in May was a direct result of a further Welsh dental initiative grant and the same conditions regarding the payment of grant will apply. Because there had been a period of time between the previous dentist leaving and the new one arriving, there was a requirement for past patients to re-register, which led to the queues reported in the press. There were also various reports circulating at the time regarding registration and the fact that people had been requested to pay a £30 fee. Although complaints of this kind are initially a matter for the LHB to investigate and manage, in light of these stories, Assembly officials contacted the LHB to establish the facts. The LHB has confirmed that a £30 charge was not being requested from patients to register with the new dentist at the practice.

With reference to the previous dentist, who has now returned to the Republic of Ireland, the LHB is not aware of a £30 charge or registration fee being requested by him either. It has suggested that if this were the case it would have found out from at least one of the over 3,000 patients who were registered at the practice. I understand that there have been instances where

dentists have asked for a fee as a deposit against broken appointments and/or future NHS treatment.

Any dentist asking for a deposit against treatment yet to be provided and prior to any clinical examination would have to be careful not to be in breach of regulation 16 of the NHS (General Dental Service) Terms of Service Regulations 1992, which concerns mixing, that is, claiming, for example, that the treatment was not available on the NHS, or regulation 19, which in essence restricts claiming for anything provided under the general dental services or for anything not provided or previously claimed from the dental practice board.

However, parts 12 to 14 of the NHS form FP17, which is used to submit claims to the dental practice board, does allow for patients to promise to pay charges resulting from the NHS Act 1977 and accept that they may have to pay all of the charges before treatment starts. Once this form is signed the dentist has accepted them as an NHS patient and the terms of services apply.

As I have mentioned, the issue of a 'deposit' paid to an existing or current contractor and not utilised for charges or failed appointments is a matter for the LHB, not for the National Assembly. If the LHB feels that the dentist has broken any terms of service, it should take the necessary action and investigate. If the dentist has returned to another country then the registration body in that country could be informed of the outcome of any investigation and it would be a matter for it to take any further action it saw fit. If you have evidence that a £30 fee has been requested, I would be happy to look into the matter further.

I hope that this reply has been helpful.