



Cardiff Community Health Council Briefing Paper for the Public Meeting of the National Assembly South Wales Central Region Committee "Dental Services in the South Wales Central Region".

The City and County of Cardiff has 67 Dental Practices of which currently 26 are accepting NHS Patients. With the introduction of the new General Dental Service Contract and the Personal Dental Services Contract Cardiff CHC feels that the NHS Dental provision is at risk due to a number of factors as detailed below.

Please find our comments and views on the introduction of the new contracts and possible areas where patients could be significantly affected. The main problem is lack of guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government to Local Health Boards and Dental Practitioners this situation has been compounded by the tight time scales now having to be met by the latter with less than 4 weeks before the commencement of the new contract.

Dental Charges:

The CHC supports the banding structure as this will ultimately benefit patients, it was felt that an introduction of a fourth band (Check up only) would be a positive move and as previously stated ensure good oral health is continued while providing cheaper entry into NHS dentistry.

CHC members support this proposal as this will directly benefit the public and patients. The CHC does

have concerns with regard to the possibility of dental practitioners leaving the NHS and entering the private sector, this the CHC feels would cause major problems for patients and public taking into account the new General Dental Service Contracts and changes to the charging structure being implemented at the same time the view of the CHC is that the new contract should be given time to bed down and once this has been achieved then change the charging structure.

New Dental Contract

The CHC view is that with the implementation of the new dental contract, new dental charging structures and changes to the community dental service proposed changes could have a destabilising effect on dental service provision; the CHC has concerns that these changes will reduce the public's access to NHS Dental Care.

The CHC is concerned that a number of NHS dentists could move into private practice with the implementation of the new dental contract. The CHC view is that it is important to ensure the Community Dental service provision is stable and is able to meet the demand from patients during this period.

The CHC is concerned that the Welsh Assembly Government has still to issue allocations of funding to the Local Health Boards with less than 4 weeks to the commencement of the new contract LHBs are under significant pressure to ensure that contracts are negotiated and signed by the 31st March 2006. Our understanding is that the Local Health Boards will not have the funding confirmed after the 15th March 2006.

Personal Dental Services (PDS)

Concerns have been raised regarding the limited time allowed for Dental Practices to sign up to the PDS contract which ensures NHS Dental provision however the CHC has concerns that there is no PDS provision in the Cardiff West area while this does not necessarily mean no NHS provision there is a risk associated if no practices in that area takes up the new General Dental Contract (GDS).

The Community Dental Service (Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust) has applied for PDS status however; this is still to be confirmed by the Welsh Assembly Government. This the CHC feels is a major concern in respect of the Community Dental Service being required to fill any gaps in NHS Dental provision.

The CHC has concerns regarding the Daytime and Out of Hours Unscheduled Care service which currently provides a number of dental sessions across the city the lack of funding confirmation is putting this service at risk as staff currently in post will be required to receive the statutory redundancy notice period. Likewise the details surrounding the Out of Hours Service needs to be confirmed with the LHB having to confirm its willingness to continue with the Trust to provide this service and possible delays should this need to go out to tender again staff employed in this service will be required to receive the statutory redundancy notice period.

The CHC is concerned that the guidance issued to LHBs and Trusts regarding Out of Hours by WAG the view of the CHC is that service should be established and running at the time when dental practices relinquish their responsibility for Out of Hours care so patients are not suffer any adverse affects during this period

Orthodontic Provision

This whole area of Orthodontic NHS provision is somewhat confusing with little guidance being available for LHBs and Trusts. Letters we understand are being issued to the public stating they cannot guarantee NHS treatment to children or adults. The CHC is concerned that this situation could lead to no Orthodontic NHS provision within Cardiff.

I trust you find these comments helpful, however, if you wish to have clarification on any point please contact us.

Community Services Review

This review has been underway for some time which encompasses all community services including Dental. The CHC has concerns that until the findings and proposals regarding these services therefore we could be in a position where the Community Dental Service undergoes a change to PDS / GDS then is subjected to a reconfiguration in line with the review recommendations. This the CHC feels will destabilise this service and could lead to staff leaving the service.

Bad Debt Liability for LHB's

Currently Dental practitioners who incur a bad debt in the form of a bounced cheque however, under the new contract Dental Practitioners are able to claim the payment from the LHB who inherit the bad debt, we are unaware of how much bad debt is currently in the system and the affects this will have on LHBs who inherit this from March 31st 2006.

The CHC has concerns over the transfer of bad debts to the Local Health Boards, taking into account that most Local Health Boards are under severe financial pressure, we would ask what additional provision / resources will be made available

to ensure LHBs are able to collect on bad debts and will this add additional risk to the

LHBs to ensure their books balance.

Martyn Jenkins

Chief Officer

Cardiff Community Health Council