

OUT OF HOURS DENTAL SERVICES: THE STRATEGIC SCENE

From 1 April 2006 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have been responsible for ensuring that an appropriate out of hours dental service is provided in their areas for local patients and for visitors to the area.

Out of hours is not a universally fixed period but refers to services provided outside the scheduled opening hours of a dental surgery.

In order to meet their responsibilities regarding out of hours dental services Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham PCTs have:

- **considered the strategic direction for dentistry as set out in Department of Health papers Our Health, Our Care, Our Say and Choosing Better Oral Health: an Oral Health Plan for England and the implications of the new general dental service regulations and NHS dental patient charges**
- **mapped current service capacity and utilization**
- **reviewed current service provision, and**
- **looked at different models of service delivery**

This consultation document sets out the main policy issues, the current service provision for dental out of hours services, the results and learning from a pilot of out of hours dental services that has been running in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham since October 2005 and our recommendations for how these services should be delivered in future.

There is a response section at the back of the document and all responses and comments on the new out of hours dental service proposals should be returned to Andrea Goring, Southwark Primary Care Trust, Dental Section, 1st Floor, Woodmill Building, Neckinger, London SE16 3QN by 30 September 2006.

The Policy Background

The main issues that came out of the Government's consultation Your health, Your Care, Your Say which resulted in the policy paper Our Health, Our Care, Our Say were

- **easier access to services: rapid access at convenient times with surgeries staying open longer**
- **bringing care to the community: better access to out of hours services and a move to community based centres**
- **better information: making sure people have the information they need and that it is available in various formats-written, internet and telephone. Providing combined services so that patients do not have to contact many different places for advice**
- **a lifelong health programme for everyone: supporting people to improve their health and well being. Providing regular checks and advice and care for ongoing needs**
- **Giving patients more say: choice about which surgery you go to and seeking the views and wishes of patients and service users**

The suggested changes to the provision of out of hours dental services outlined in this consultation document help us to address these issues: firstly, by making the out of hours dental services more accessible to those who need them, and secondly, by giving access to dental services nearer patients' homes, including making them available for longer hours.

The paper Choosing Better Oral Health: An Oral Health Plan for England emphasises that good oral health is central to healthy living and that the advice and support that dentists and other members of the dental team give to their patients contribute to this prime government objective. We believe that a regular patient/dentist relationship with its emphasis on health education and identification of underlying health factors creates a better environment than repeated one-off attendances at an emergency dental service for "fire-fighting" interventions when in pain.

Many of the key factors that lead to poor oral health are risk factors for other diseases so the PCTs would aim to offer a more integrated service where these factors can be raised and discussed in a supportive environment.

The PCTs have a duty to ensure that the dental services they commission have an evidence based preventative approach and that improving oral health is an integral part of the local plans: the ideal delivery for the vast majority of dental services is in a primary care setting.

CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION

There are two established emergency dental services within Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham that provide out of hours emergency/urgent dental treatment for both registered and unregistered (pre April 2006) patients. The services are provided from King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, and Guy's Hospital, London Bridge. These services are staffed by rotas of general dental practitioners (GDPs) and hospital dental staff. Prior to April 2006 GDPs had a commitment to provide out of hours emergency care to their registered patients and most fulfilled this commitment by taking part in the rota of dentists at the emergency dental service. However patient registration and the commitment to provide out of hours care do not exist in the new dental contract and therefore dentists are not obliged to take part in this rota.

Kings College Hospital Service

This operates from the ground floor of the GKT Dental Institute on the Denmark Hill Campus. The opening hours are:

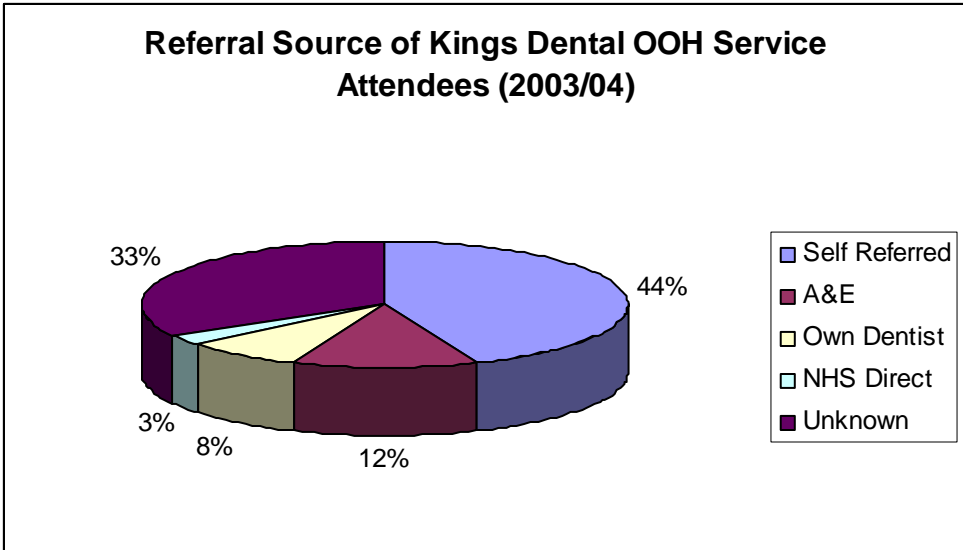
| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6.00pm to 11.00pm | Monday to Friday |
| 9.15am to 11.45am | Weekends and Bank Holidays |
| 6.00pm to 11.00pm | Weekends and Bank Holidays |

Two dentists and three support workers work during the week and two dentists and four support workers cover the weekend. The service capacity is therefore

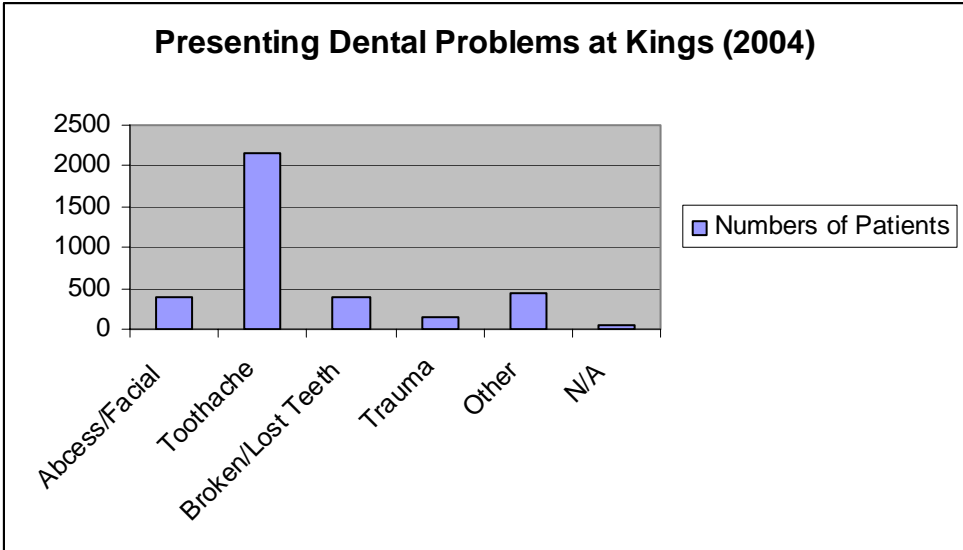
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| Monday to Friday | 8 hours (480 minutes) of capacity each day |
| Weekends and Bank Holidays . | 13 hours (780 minutes) of capacity each day |

The number of attendees on any given day can vary considerably but demand is generally higher on Saturdays and Sundays. On days where attendance is low capacity exceeds demand and the extra capacity is lost. When attendances are high the service operates under considerable strain. Assuming an average patient contact time of 20 minutes the capacity on weekdays is 24 patients and on weekend days or bank holidays it is 36 patients. It is not uncommon for the service to close the doors and ask patients to wait or return another day when experiencing high demand.

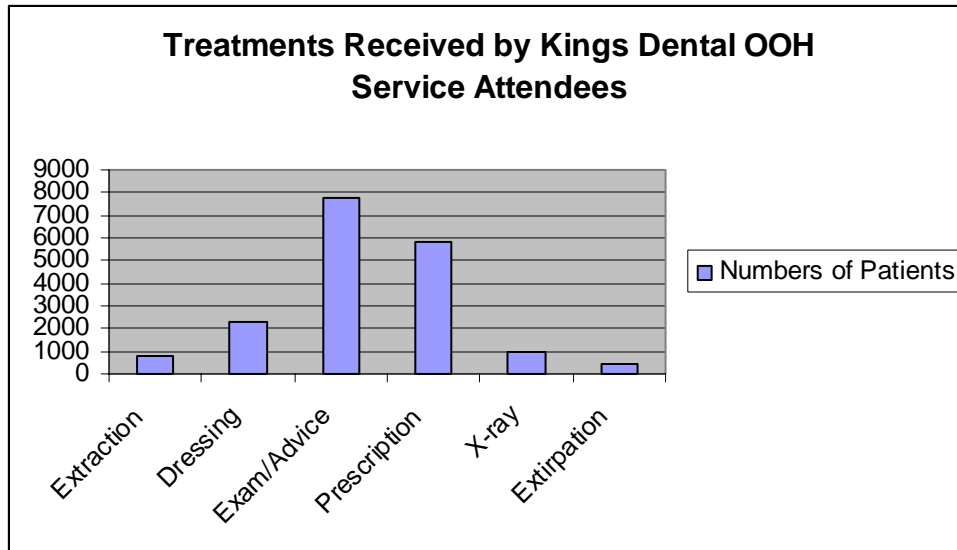
The service operates on an open door basis and the majority of patients attending Kings self refer making demand management difficult.



The patients attending Kings presented with the following dental problems (adapted from Dental public Health Triage Report 2004)



The treatments received by patients attending the Kings dental out of hours service (2003/04 data) are shown below:



In the year April 2004 to March 2005 a total of 10,420 patients attended the Kings service

Guys Hospital Service

The Guys Hospital out of hours dental service operates from the ground floor of Guy's Hospital Tower. The opening hours are:

9.00am to 6.00pm Weekends and Bank Holidays

Two dentists and two support workers work during these periods. The service capacity is therefore:

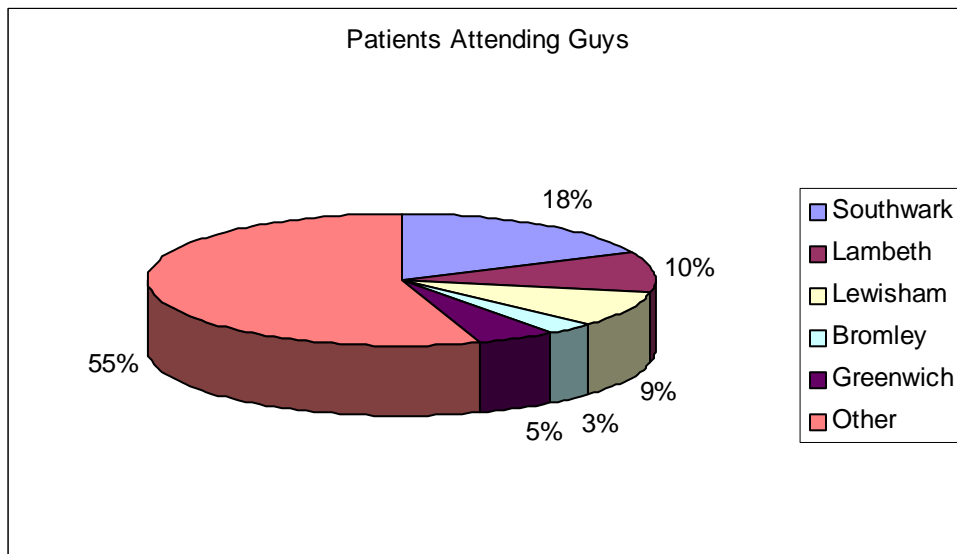
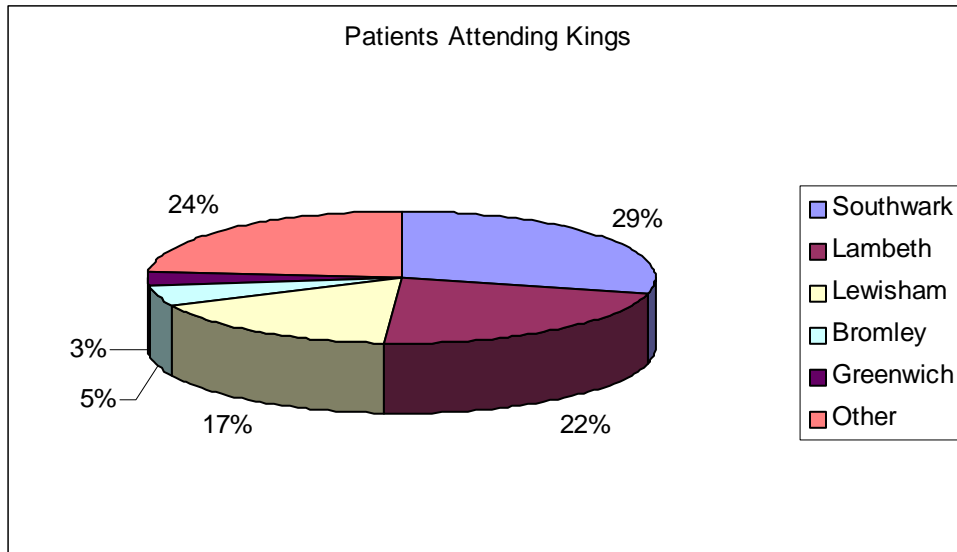
Weekends and Bank Holidays 18 hours (1080 minutes) of capacity each day

Assuming an average patient contact time of 20 minutes the capacity is 54 patients. The attendance in April 2004 to March 2005 was 3,654 patients or an average of 35 per day. This utilization is likely to drop further as the average treatment time falls below 20 minutes.

No data is available on referral sources, presenting problems or treatments administered for the Guys service but it would be expected to follow a similar pattern to that at Kings.

Patient Origin (2003/2004 data)

The following charts show which PCT area the patients attending the Out of Hours emergency service live in:



It can be seen from this chart that nearly 65% of attendees at Guy's come from outside the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham PCT areas.

As funding for emergency out of hours dental services has moved from a non-cash limited national scheme to a cash limited locally commissioned service this has serious implications for the PCTs.

THE EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS PILOT

In order to ensure that appropriate demand management mechanisms could be put in place and to ensure that all patients who need to be seen by a dentist are seen Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham PCTs commissioned a pilot for a new way of providing emergency out of hours dental care

The pilot started on 1 November 2005.

The requirements of the pilot were that it should re-direct patients not in need of emergency or urgent care to a general dental practice therefore allowing the prioritization of patients needing to see a dentist urgently. It was important that any change in service would not have a negative impact on attendances at Accident and Emergency departments.

Patients were encouraged to telephone the NHS Direct dental 'phone line where they were given advice about dental problems or about where to find a dentist near them or if necessary referred to the emergency out of ours dental service. Day time and evening slots were commissioned from general dental practitioners to take referrals from NHS Direct. In order not to cause disruption to other services the existing 'walk-in' service was also available.

NHS Direct operate a 24 hour nurse advice and health information service via telephone, digital television or the internet

A project looking at the Emergency Out of Hours service is being carried out by Dental Public Health consultants to examine patients' reasons for attending the Out of Hours Service. The project will be looking at

- Why attendees use the service**

- **How attendees access the service**
- **How attendees want to access the service in the future**
- **The demographic details of attendees of the service, and**
- **The dental attendance patterns of the attendees of the service**

The key findings of the first stage of this project are set out below:

65% were aware of NHS Direct and 32% had used NHS Direct for advice on a health problem

19% were referred to the service by NHS Direct

Most expressed a preference for telephone advice and a next day appointment with either their own dentist or another local dentist

35% used the service because they were unable to be seen by another emergency dental service

26% could not get a routine appointment with their dentist

23% said their dentist did not do emergencies

Toothache was the main reason for attending

Most had heard of the Out of Hours Dental Service from family and friends

THE PROPOSED NEW OUT OF HOURS DENTAL SERVICE IN LAMBETH, SOUTHWARK AND LEWISHAM

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR OUT OF HOURS SERVICES

- That dental out of hours services are integrated with the local medical out of hours services model whenever possible
- That a form of triage is in place for individuals requiring access to Out of Hours services
- That patients should have access to advice
- That patients should have access to clinical treatment Out of Hours when necessary
- That all patients should have access to the same high quality Out of Hours service

Having considered the changes to the NHS dental regulations, the pattern of use of the current emergency out of ours dental service and the results emerging from the pilot, Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham PCT's are proposing to change the way that the emergency out of hours service is delivered.

The main changes will be:

- closed door triage system (there will be no access to the emergency out of hours service except by telephone triage)
- emergencies/very urgent cases will be directed to an emergency out of hours service at Kings between the hours of 8pm to 10pm, 7 days a week
- There will be no out of hours dental service at the Guy's site
- urgent cases will be directed to a local dental practitioner who will have specially commissioned sessions to take these patients
- patients will be given advice and information over the telephone

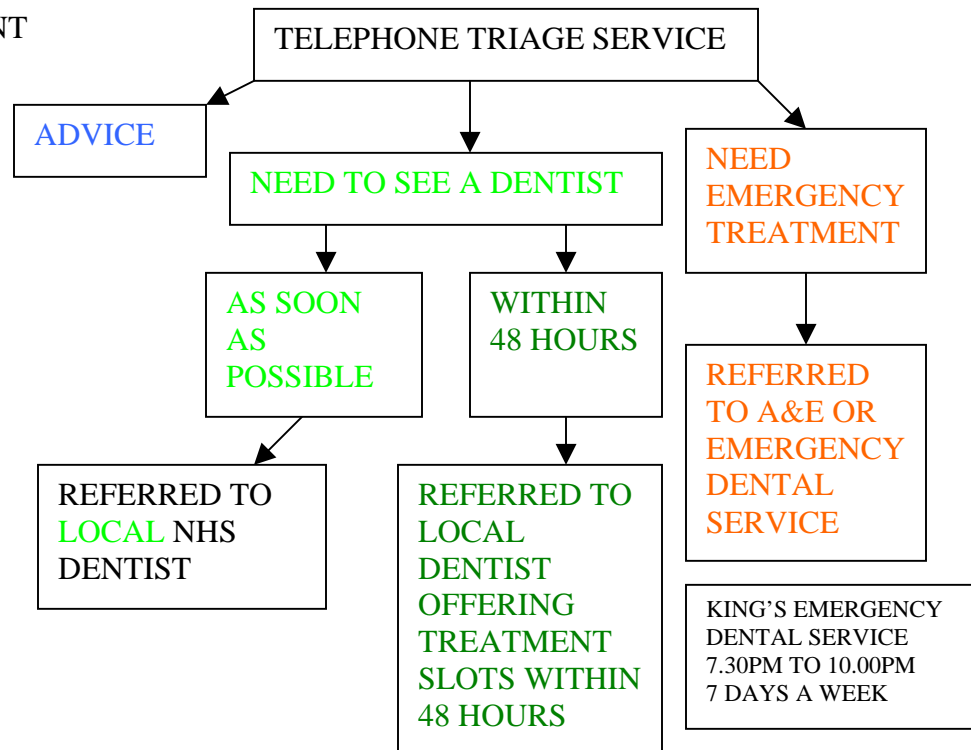
This offers a number of benefits to patients:

- patients needing emergency or urgent treatment will be able to access it quickly
- patients needing routine dental care will be seen by a dentist local to them

- it is hoped that the patient will then build a continuing relationship with the dentist for future dental care
- patients will have access to a wider range of dental treatments than those that can be provided as part of an emergency service
- advice will be readily available without having to attend a specific location in person

A flow chart to show how patients will access services:

ONE INITIAL ACCESS POINT



PRACTICES IN EACH LOCALITY/
NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMISSIONED
TO PROVIDE EXTRA CAPACITY
AND SESSIONS 5.00PM/5.30PM TO
7.00PM/7.30PM

PROPOSED TIMETABLE

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| PUBLIC CONSULTATION | JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2006 |
| PILOT OF NEW SERVICE | OCTOBER 2006 TO MARCH 2007 |
| NEW SERVICE LIVE FROM | 1 APRIL 2007 |

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES

Q: Will I be able to go to King's in the evening and wait for a dental appointment?

A: No. The only access to dental services at King's in the evening or weekends will be by telephoning the triage service number

Q: Will I be able to get urgent dental care if I need it?

A: Yes. And you will have the choice of going to a dentist near where you live

Q: Will I be able to get help if I have toothache in the evening?

A: Yes. The triage service will be able to give you advice and arrange for you to see a dentist.

Q: Why is the service changing?

A: The PCTs need to ensure that emergencies are seen as quickly as possible and that other dental services are more accessible to patients.

Q: Will I be able to get advice on my teeth?

A: Yes, the telephone triage service offers advice and can direct you to a dentist near you

Q: Will it cost me anything to telephone the service?

A: Normal local telephone charges apply. Using the service costs nothing.

Q: Will I have to pay NHS dental charges if I see a dentist?

A: Yes, unless you are in an exempt category (see Annex 2)

CONSULTATION RESPONSE SHEET

PLEASE RETURN TO: ANDREA GORING, SOUTHWARK PRIMARY CARE TRUST, DENTAL SECTION, 1ST FLOOR, WOODMILL BUILDING, NECKINGER, LONDON SE16 3QN

CLOSING DATE FOR RESPONSES: 30 SEPTEMBER 2006

1. Are you responding as an individual
Representing a group

If a group please tell us the name of the group

Have you used the Emergency Out of Hours Dental Service at

Kings YES NO

Guys YES NO

What is your age group?

Under 18 18-25 25-40 41-65 Over 65

Why did you attend the Emergency Out of Hours service?

Couldn't get an appointment with a dentist

Can't find an NHS dentist

I was in pain

I needed advice

My face was swollen/had an abscess

I had an accident and damaged my mouth/teeth

Thank you for answering these questions. They will help us to plan the necessary dental service provision.

Now for your comments on the proposed new system

Are you happy to telephone for advice and to be directed to an appropriate dental service?

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Do you think that accessing a service via a telephone triage will cause you any problems?

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Would you like to have a regular dentist near where you live?

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Do you agree that quick advice on which medication to take and a set appointment within a couple of days is better than queuing at an open access centre?

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Have you any other comments to make on the proposed changes?

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EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS DENTAL SERVICE: ANNEX 1

DEFINITIONS OF EMERGENCY AND URGENT CARE (Taken from Department of Health Factsheet 7)

Dental Emergency Classification

Patients requiring emergency care are those requiring immediate attention in order to minimize the risk of serious medical complications or prevent long term dental complications. Their condition means they are most likely to present in Accident and Emergency departments with:

- Uncontrollable dental haemorrhage following dental extractions
- Rapidly increasing swelling around the throat or eye
- Trauma confined to the dental arches

Dental Urgent Classification

Patients who require urgent care are those requiring attention for:
Severe dental and facial pain not controlled by over the counter preparations
Dental and soft tissue acute infection

Non Urgent Dental Conditions

A number of individuals currently access care from out of hours services who are not in pain and present for treatment regarding non urgent problems. These may include:

- Patients not in pain
- Aesthetic problems (dislodged crowns and bridges)
- Patients with broken dentures
- Patients with hospital referral letters
- Patients requiring permanent restorations
- Non traumatic problems with orthodontic appliances
- Patients who have no significant pathology
- Patients requiring a second opinion
- Patients using EDS as their regular dentist
- Patients requiring surgical extractions (wisdom teeth) and are not in pain

PCTs need to ensure that emergency out of hours dental services are aimed at those individuals with urgent dental need who require advice and/or treatment and are unable to wait until the next available in hours dental service.

EMERGENCY AND OUT OF HOURS DENTAL SERVICES: ANNEX 2

Dental Patient Charges from 1 April 2006

A new banded system of patient charges was introduced on 1 April 2006. The patient will have to pay one of three charges depending on the type of treatment they receive.

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--|
| BAND 1 | 15.50 | Diagnosis, treatment planning and maintenance |
| BAND 1 URGENT | 15.50 | Urgent treatment that is necessary to prevent deterioration in the patient's oral health or address severe pain |
| BAND 2 | 42.40 | Treatment including fillings, endodontics, extractions |
| BAND 3 | 189.00 | Provision of appliances including inlays, veneers, crowns, bridges, dentures and orthodontic appliances |

Urgent treatment that can be provided under Band 1 (Urgent):

Examination, assessment and advice
Radiographic examination and radiological report
Dressing of teeth and palliative treatment
Pulpectomy or vital pulpotomy
Re-implantation of a luxated or subluxated permanent tooth following trauma including any necessary endodontic treatment
Repair and refixing of inlays and crowns
Refixing a bridge
Temporary bridges
Extraction of not more than 2 teeth
Provision of post-operative care including treatment of infected sockets
Adjustment and alteration of dentures or orthodontic appliances
Urgent treatment for acute conditions of the gingivae or oral mucosa and any necessary oral hygiene instruction in connection with the treatment
Treatment of sensitive cementum or dentine
Incising an abscess
Other treatment immediately necessary as a result of trauma
Not more than one permanent filling in amalgam, composite resin, synthetic resin, glass ionomer, compomers, silicate or silicone phosphate including acid etch retention

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR GETTING ADVICE FROM THE TELEPHONE TRIAGE SERVICE

Exemptions from paying NHS patient charges:

Patients who are under 18

Patients who are 18 and in full time education

Patients who are pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months

The patient or their partner is named on a current HC2 NHS charges certificate

The patient is entitled to or named on a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate

The patient or their partner receives Pension Guarantee Credit

The patient or their partner receives Income Support

The patient or their partner receives Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

Please note the following benefits, on their own, DO NOT entitle the patient to help with NHS costs: Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Pension Credit Savings Credit, Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance, NHS Prescription Charge Exemption Certificate.

Patients found to have wrongly claimed help with health costs will face a penalty charge. Routine checks are carried out on exemption claims.