

From Barry Cockcroft
Chief Dental Officer for England (Acting)

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Gateway Ref: 5977

Information: All NHS dentists

Dear Colleague

All of you working in General Dental Services (GDS) will now have had some time to absorb the details of your new annual contract value and most Personal Dental Service (PDS) dentists will shortly receive similar information from their Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

Regulations governing both GDS contracts and PDS agreements were laid before Parliament on 9th December 2005. These regulations came into force on 1st January 2006 for the agreement of contracts and on 1st April 2006 for the provision of services. The regulations governing the three banded system of patient charges have also been agreed and will come into force on 1st April 2006.

Now the new dental contracts and system of patient charges has been approved by Parliament, the focus over the next few months will be on dentists and PCTs to work together to agree new contracts. Your Local Dental Committee (LDC), which remains the statutory representative body for GDS dentists, has an important role to play in local discussions. The British Dental Association's recent guidance to LDCs usefully highlighted the local support they should make available to all dentists who wish to agree a new NHS contract. I hope all LDCs will be able to engage constructively with their PCT and provide sensible advice to local dentists whenever it is requested.

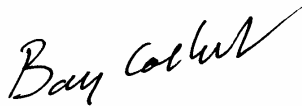
To ensure that you are able to continue providing NHS services from April 2006, it is essential that you agree a new contract by the end of March at the latest. We strongly recommend, however, that you agree your new contract by 28 February to ensure that the new NHS Business Services Authority (which takes over the functions of the Dental Practice Board) can guarantee continuity of payments over the transition period.

I want to turn finally to the review of salaried dental services. The proposals for reform were outlined in 'Creating the Future – Modernising Careers for Salaried Dentists in Primary Care'. We have now agreed that NHS Employers (the body

that represents PCTs, NHS Trusts and other NHS employing organisations in England) will take forward negotiations with the British Dental Association to agree a new structure of pay and conditions for salaried dentists in England, with a view to implementing from April 2007. This builds on the recommendations of the Department's review of salaried primary dental care services and the positive responses to consultation.

I know that for some of you the move to local commissioning may be challenging. But I am convinced that the financial guarantees for dentists – and continued access to the NHS pension scheme - are a sound basis on which to take forward local commissioning. The profession is being offered much of what we have long requested – an end to the treadmill, an enhanced role in oral health promotion and preventive work, and increased clinical discretion. This package will re-establish dentistry in the mainstream of the NHS and greatly benefit the dental profession.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Cockcroft". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Barry Cockcroft
Chief Dental Officer for England (Acting)