

LEGGATE &  
ASSOCIATES



5<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a dentist in North Lanarkshire and I wish to make a few points regarding access to dentists and the proposed changes in our contract. I do not want to bore you, so I will keep it short.

1. NHS dentistry requires more funding, properly targeted.
2. Remove certain items from NHS dentistry leaving a "core" service, e.g. no crowns, veneers or bridges on NHS. With these savings increase the fee for the "core" treatments, e.g. fillings, plastic dentures and extractions.
3. 62 Practices have closed their doors to the NHS since 1999. These are dentists who have been unable to sell their practice due to the lack of interest from Associates to purchase them.

There are two reasons for this, firstly why buy an existing practice when the Executive will pay an Associate up to 100,000.00 to open a new practice elsewhere. Secondly, associates see the profit margin for the owner becoming smaller and smaller while the stress/hassle and bureaucratic red tape increase. You will agree this is false economy, because, in the long term the access problem will be exacerbated as more and more practice's close due to retirement of the owner. In the same period as 62 practices closing only 45 opened under the grant scheme.

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Extrapolating these statistics does not make comfortable reading. At a recent dental meeting only 1 out of 20 associates wished to be a practice owner. The solution is to abolish the grants and redistribute the money. There must be incentives to being a practice owner, e.g. increasing practice allowances or commitment payments for owners substantially.

The alternative is NHS dentistry withering and dying.

Yours faithfully

Dr Iain Leggate  
B.D.S.