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From: Aberdeen Citizens' Advice [mailto:aberdeencab@aberdeencab.cabnet.org.uk]
Sent: 27 January 2004 14:36
To: eric.gray@scotland.gsl.gov.uk
Subject: Comments on NHS Dental Services consultation

This email has been received from an external party and
has been swept for the presence of computer viruses.

My comments come from someone who is very concerned about the poor availability of dental services in the North East of Scotland and the general lack of a pro-active approach to dental health.

The simple matter is that there are not enough dentists doing NHS work. This fact in itself and the fact that increasing numbers of dentists are giving up NHS work in favour of private, tells us one thing. The payments received by NHS dentists are not adequate. However there may indeed be enough dentists in total should they be required to take a certain proportion of NHS patients. I would propose that dentists are not able to practice at all unless they agree to take say 40% of their patients under NHS. (Presumably someone can work out the required % to cover the need) These should not be just children. Parents will not take their children to the dentist even if the children are being treated under NHS, if the adults are not also NHS.

I am aware that Health Boards have the authority to employ dentists directly where a need is identified. My proposal is that the Health Board should be **compelled** to do this as a short term measure if people cannot access an NHS dentist within a reasonable period of time eg 3 months for non emergency cases.

I happen to live in Stonehaven and I am sure you are aware of the situation recently when a new practice opened up. It is absolutely outrageous in this day and age that people have to queue for hour to access a basic service. We all pay taxes and such services should be beyond question - its like something from a third world country.

The proposals to train more dentists are fine but this does not help the immediate crisis - action must be taken NOW to address this. In the longer term there should be more targetting of services to areas of need, but if the Health Boards were compelled to take immediate action this should be less of an issue.

More preventative work should of course be done in nurseries and schools - we need to get people as used to attending the dentist as they get their cars serviced for instance. In the much longer term of course a real difference could be made to our childrens dental health by a change in their diet - and the simple way to make this happen is by providing free school meals to all our children. This if course in another issue but related, and would have the added benefit of improving our heart disease rate, obesity, diabetes etc etc!

I hope these comments are of help.

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