**Government ‘spin’ continues**

The Tories have accused the government of spin and distortion, after it claimed access to NHS dentists has improved – based on figures from less than one third of primary care trusts.

Official figures released at the end of last year show that 1.2m fewer patients saw an NHS dentist in the two years running up to June 2008 than in the last two years under the old contract.

However Anne Keen, the health minister, told Parliament in December that ‘there is no question but that access has improved throughout the country’.

The minister has since admitted, in a parliamentary written answer, that she based that claim on figures from less than one third of primary care trusts.

The group is expected to focus on four major areas of work including innovative and flexible commissioning, integration of primary care services, developing oral health in strategic health authorities and primary care trust strategies and incorporating patient experience, including access, into commissioning.

The group includes representatives from the NHS Confederation, the Local Government Association and Picker Institute Europe, as well as senior figures from across the dental community such as Dr Susie Sanderson, chair of the British Dental Association’s (BDA) Executive Board and Marina Harris, president of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy.

The Independent Commission, which is expected to report its findings in September, has been established as part of a major BDA project exploring excellence in local commissioning.

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**Oral programme**

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Keeping fit

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Bridge alternatives

Young patients who have lost teeth from accidents and sports injuries benefit from permanent implants instead of a bridge.

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**Chemical leak**

The town centre in Barnsley in Yorkshire was sealed off for four hours and dental staff were rushed to hospital after a fire caused a chemical leak at a dental surgery. The Dental Studio on Peel Arcade in the town centre was cordoned off and shoppers and workers were evacuated after fears that the chemical which is used to develop X-rays was toxic.

A small fire had broken out at the surgery exposing the chemical waste products to heat and causing it to give off ammonia fumes.

A police spokeswoman said: ‘Some of the staff were exposed to the fumes and were experiencing some irritation around the eyes and nose. They were taken to hospital for a precautionary check up but later discharged.’

Fire crews used sand to mop up the chemical and the manufacturer was contacted to collect the fluid.

**Knife robber**

An man armed with a knife robbed a dental surgery in Surry. The robber raided the surgery in London Road at lunchtime on 26 January and escaped with an unknown amount of money. A woman in her forties received slight injuries during the raid and was treated at the scene for cuts to her hand.

The robber is a white man in his 20s, who was seen wearing a grey hooded top.

**Diploma award**

Dr Sarah Glover of the Birdgate Surgery in Pickering, Yorkshire is celebrating after gaining a diploma in restorative dentistry with the Royal College of Surgeons. Dr Glover studied dentistry at Cardiff University and qualified in 1996. Dr Glover said: ‘My special interest in this subject has led me to be able to take referrals from other dentists and patients in the area.’

**House raffle**

A dental technician and his wife are raffling their four-bedroomed house in Devon, with tickets costing just £25. Stephen and Caroline Sicklemore have had their house in Dawlish on the market for £490,000 but after it failed to sell, they have decided to hold an online draw. There is a total of 27,000 tickets at £25 each. The couple have pledged to give 3.6 per cent of the prize fund, up to £25,000, to a cancer charity.

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News in brief

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