More complaints
The Dental Complaints Service (DCS) has seen complaints increase by eight per cent. The DCS logged 1,647 complaints in December 2008. For January – December 2007, the DCS logged 1,617 complaints, an increase of three per cent over the equivalent period in 2007. The average number of complaints logged since the launch of the DCS in May 2006 is now approximately 32 per week. A breakdown of the type of complaints made revealed that the highest number concerned indirect fillings and restorations. Protesters were the second most popular reason for complaint followed by direct coronal restorations. There were no complaints concerning treatment of patients with special needs.

Health award
Pupils at a school in Halifax in Yorkshire have won a dental health award. West Vale Primary School won the Cute Fruit Plus award, which is given to schools that encourage pupils to eat healthy snacks at break times and throughout the day as well as give children opportunities to eat fresh fruit and vegetables.

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Dental trauma leads to death

A nine-year-old girl starved herself to death after developing a fear of dentists, an inquest heard.

Sophie Waller, from St Dennis in Cornwall, had an operation to remove her milk teeth after she stopped eating or speaking, after cracking a tooth on a boiled sweet.

She refused to go to the dentist to be treated for toothache because her tongue had been nicked on a previous visit to the dentist.

Doctors took the decision to remove all eight of her milk teeth so she would not have to undergo repeat operations and suffer more psychological trauma.

Her parents Janet and Richard, claimed this decision was taken without their consent and left their daughter ‘devastated’.

When she was discharged she continued to refuse to eat any solid food and only took small amounts of yoghurt, fruit and ‘build up’ drinks.

A week later Sophie was so emaciated, her hair was falling out and they could see her spine through her back. She weighed less than four stone when she died.

Parietalistologist Dr Marie-Ann Brundler said Sophie died on December 2, 2005 from acute renal failure caused by starvation and dehydration.

Dr Brundler said she would have expected a health professional to have noticed Sophie’s emaciated state had they seen her before she died.

The inquest heard that although Sophie lost 11 kgs in the four weeks before her death her parents, Janet Waller, a nursery teacher, and her husband Richard, a taxi driver, did not take her back to see a doctor.

They told the hearing they rang the hospital but were told by a nurse not to bring Sophie in as she was now under the care of a community child psychologist.

However Dr Cockcroft criticised the survey and questioned its credibility.

He said: ‘These findings come from an online multiple choice survey that has no statistical credibility. It is ludicrous to suggest that three million people are doing DIY dentistry. DIY dentistry is dangerous and unnecessary. Thanks to our investment of over £2 billion in NHS dentistry, there are now lots of new NHS dental practices expanding and opening around the country.’

Shadow health minister Mike Penning called the survey results ‘a direct consequence of the introduction of Labour’s botched dental contract’.

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Dr Cockcroft condemns survey