Dentistry hits headlines early in election campaign

NHS dental services become an early key election topic as the political parties draw battle lines in Reading West constituency

The chief dental officer has highlighted in his CDO update that under the new system, "PCTs can make investments in NHS dental services from their funding allocations in return for an agreement related to improving the quality and possibly the quantity of NHS services." Dr Cockcroft added: "A convenient way to do this is through an amortised loan, and we have published a contract template agreement on the NHS Primary Care Commissioning (PCC) website to make it easier for both parties to do this, where they have agreed that it is desirable and there are funds available." See: www.pcc.nhs.uk/condition-al-grant-agreements

Dental care professionals are being asked to take part in a national survey being carried out by the Dental Programme Board of NHS Medical Education England. One of the primary aims of the review is to assess the contribution that dental care professionals (DCPs) can make to the efficient and effective delivery of primary care services. Information submitted in response to this survey will create a profile of how the broad skill mix of dentists and dental care professionals is currently used, and will provide an evidence base for the working group's report, to be published later in 2010. Participation in the survey is voluntary, and the closing date is 30 April. For more information and to complete the survey, please go to: www.surveymonkey.com/s/skillmix

Campaigning charity The King's Fund has launched a campaign trail as NHS dental services are highlighted in a trip to Reading West. Conservative Shadow Health Secretary Andrew Lansley (pictured) visited the constituency, tipped to be one of the more hotly contested seats in May's general election, at the local Castle Hill Dental Clinic. The aim of the visit, in conjunction with Tory local candidate Alok Sharma, was to hear first-hand the views of patients and practitioners about NHS dental provision in the area.

Speaking at Castle Hill, Mr Lansley said: “It has been made clear that access to dental care is one of the things people in Reading West are particularly concerned about. We are very aware that if we get the right kind of relationship with a dentist where we focus on good dental health and prevention... we can end up with more people.”

Labour candidate Naz Sarkar commented that if he won the seat in May he would scrutinise dentist in the area to make sure no-one was missing out, regardless of their financial situation.

"The Labour Party must not get complacent over the issue of NHS Dentistry. I don’t think dental services are that bad here. Most people are catered for well, but there are pockets that we need to look at.”

The Liberal Democrat Party candidate Daisy Benson said she was more concerned about tooth decay among children in the Reading West area rather than a lack of capacity. She commented: “When I have put the question to the authorities they say there are enough dentists and places for NHS patients.

"But they need to work much more closely with the council to advertise properly and help people get to see these dentists.”

Adrian Windisch, candidate for the Green Party, said: “The idea of the NHS was that all dental health would be free, but that is not the case.

“We would bring back free dentists for all by saving money on scrapping things like nuclear weapons.”

Braemar Finance, a leading direct funder to the dental profession can provide tax efficient finance for all types of equipment.