**Police renew murder appeal**

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The contract will provide access for 17,000 patients

Oasis Dental Care has won a £17m contract to help alleviate the huge gaps in NHS dental care in Northern Ireland. The contract means Northern Ireland should get 58 more NHS dentists.

Health Minister for Northern Ireland, Michael McGimpsey said he has awarded a £17m contract for the provision of additional dentists ‘where they were most needed’.

He claims that the contract will provide access for an additional 57,000 NHS patients.

The first dentists will be appointed first in the areas that need them most and are expected to be in post by the end of the year. The three-year contract has gone to Oasis Dental Care Ltd, which owns and operates 170 dental practices throughout England and Wales.

Mr McGimpsey said he hoped the new contract will ‘greatly ease current access problems’. He added: ‘Oasis Dental Care Ltd will provide 58 dentists, targeted in access ‘hotspot’ areas across Northern Ireland ensuring people can get the health service dental treatment they need. Oasis has extensive expertise and experience in providing dental services to health Trusts across the United Kingdom and the standards they have set are impressive.’

My officials are working closely with the British Dental Association to achieve a new dental contract for all health service dentists in Northern Ireland and look forward to a successful conclusion to this process. However, there are access problems now that I have to address and I am delighted that Oasis will work with us on this.’

The British Dental Association (BDA) gave a broad welcome to the announcement of the award of a tender for 58 new dentists in Northern Ireland as part of the solution to the problems some patients face accessing care.

But the BDA also warned that the 800 dentists already working in Northern Ireland need more support and a new contract that allows them to provide the kind of modern, preventive care they are trained to do.

Dr Claudette Christie, director for the British Dental Association (BDA) in Northern Ireland, called the new contract ‘a welcome step’ but said: ‘However, while this is welcome news, it is not the sole solution to the problems dentists and their patients face.

Also important is that the dentists Northern Ireland does have are properly supported. The announcement recognises both the importance of prevention and the significant cost of providing care. The BDA is currently negotiating a new contract which we hope will support a preventive approach.’

Justin Ash, chief executive of Oasis Dental Care, said: ‘We are delighted to have been chosen to be part of this significant boost to the health of the people of Northern Ireland and are delighted to be working in partnership with the Health Minister and the Health and Social Care Board.

This contract is another re-sounding endorsement of Oasis Dental Care and our ability to deliver excellent health service dentistry.

Plans are already well advanced for the new Oasis practices and we look forward to welcoming new patients from across the province later this year. We will ensure that we keep local communities informed of the progress of the building work and when they will be able to register for treatment.’

The former Western board area will get 16 new dentists – in Enniskillen, Omagh, Strabane and Londonderry. In the former Northern board area, eight dentists are to be located in Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and Cookstown. Bangor/Donaghan, Holywood, Dundonald/Castle reagh, Lisburn/Dummury and Carryduff – in the former Eastern board area - will get 10 dentists. The former Southern board areas of Banbridge, Dun gannon and Newry will each receive funding for two new dentists.

**Dr Cockcroft backs e-learning**

Smile-on’s new e-learning programme ‘complements’ the government’s guidance on improving oral health, said the chief dental officer.

Speaking about the learning resources provider’s two-hour programme, Delivering Better Oral Health, the ‘Prevention in Practice’ CD Rom, Barry Cockcroft said: ‘The learning resource that Smyle on has produced should complement the document itself well and provides dentists with support to practically implement the messages within the dental practice environment.’

He added: ‘One of the things we learnt from PDS (personal dental services) piloting was that most dentists were really keen to work in a more preventive way. We also learnt from the same pilots that most dentists were unaware of what evidence based prevention really was. We were delighted that the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry worked with us to produce such an excellent document in such a short time.’

The Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit, was sent to all NHS practices in England in 2007, by the Department of Health.

Dr Cockcroft revealed that the Department of Health has decided to update and send the hard copy document to all dentists with an NHS contract in June. The ‘Prevention in Practice’ CD Rom has been developed by Smile-on at the request of the Oxford Deanery.

It has had input from members of the team that produced the Department of Health toolkit.

The CD Rom looks at patient self-care and how practitioners can raise self-care issues with patients. This includes oral health messages as well as advising patients on healthy diets, sensible drinking, and smoking cessation.

Users can see actual interviews from a dentist and a dental care professional who have successfully implemented the toolkit into their practice. The programme is for all dental professionals from dentists to orthodontists to hygienists. Each learning programme provides two hours of CPD.

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The police investigation team can be contacted on 028 7055 8955 or 028 7055 8920.
Editorial comment

Seeing the light

A friend said last week that her permanently and happily unemployed friend and her children regularly fly out to Florida for holidays at Disneyland. ‘How she does it when she doesn’t have a job I just don’t know,’ she said. But when she added up her friend’s tax credits, council tax benefits, plus the rest of the frills, it all became crystal clear. Now don’t get me wrong – there are plenty of people out there struggling to scrape by on benefits and deserve every penny and some, but there are also others who are positively living the life of O’Riley. So who’s paying for it all?

High earning go-getters have always been penalised by Mr Brown to some degree, but introducing these new taxes is like saying ‘bring on the brain-drain now’. For getting taxed to the hilt is hardly going to motivate the nation to work hard and build better businesses. Earning £100k in the UK is really not a lot these days – the average family household needs at least this to pay the mortgage, meet spiralling bills and put food on the table. So is having a holiday so much to ask after grafting the hours away day in, and day out in the practice? Apparently so, according to the Chancellor. Ok so he hasn’t said as much but actions speak far louder than words don’t they.

Thatcher’s children were all geared up to work hard and think about earning money and lots of it. She may have taken the milk away, but it didn’t half motivate us to work hard to make sure we earned enough to buy our own pint. But now why bother? For the harder we work, the less we earn. What a wonderful way to kick-start an ailing economy.

House raffle is extended

A dental technician, who put his £490,000 house up for sale in a £25 raffle, has extended the competition for a further three months, following poor ticket sales.

Stephen and Caroline Sicklemore are hoping to sell their £490,000 four-bedroom home in Devon, through a raffle. Tickets cost £25 each and if the couple sell all their tickets, they will get £675,000.

The winner will also get other benefits including their stamp duty paid, legal fees and a contribution towards moving expenses, plus an up-front payment of 12 months’ council tax of £1,760 for the Band E property. The detached Summer Breeze in Dawlish, comes with sea views, split-level design and three bathrooms.

The couple have promised to donate 5.6 per cent of the prize fund, up to £25,000, to Force cancer charity in Exeter. However, the couple have only sold 1,523 of the tickets since the raffle began in January. They have now decided to extend the competition for a further three months to the 24 July ‘to ensure we give the competition the chance of selling all of the tickets’.

People can buy tickets from the couple’s website where they have to answer three questions correctly as part of their entry to the draw.

To find out more, visit website www.summerbreezecompetition.co.uk

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