Vetting and barring scheme under review

Home Secretary withdraws scheme pending a ‘fundamental remodelling’; dental groups ‘wait with interest’

A vetting scheme for all dental professionals changing jobs or starting work for the first time has been put under review by the new government.

The Vetting and Barring scheme, aimed at protecting children and vulnerable adults, has been criticised by many as disproportionate, overly burdensome and unduly infringing on civil liberties.

It was announced last year that from July 2010, any dental professionals who were changing jobs or starting work for the first time would need to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and that by 2015 all dental professionals would need to be registered with the Vetting and Barring scheme. However, registration with the scheme has been postponed.

Home Secretary, Theresa May said: “The safety of children and vulnerable adults is of paramount importance to the new government.

“However it is also vital that we take a measured approach in these matters. We’ve listened to the criticisms and will respond with a scheme that has been fundamentally remoulded. Vulnerable groups must be properly protected in a way that is proportionate and sensible. This redrawing of the vetting and barring scheme will ensure this happens.”

Children’s Minister, Tim Loughton said: “Protecting vulnerable children is a top priority. Any vetting system should not be a substitute for proper vigilance by individuals and society. At the moment we think the pendulum has swung too far.”

The scheme was devised in response to an enquiry into the 2002 Soham murders which called for better information sharing. It was designed to protect children and vulnerable adults by preventing those who pose a known risk from gaining access to them through their work.

Within the meaning of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the delivery of dental care is a ‘regulated activity’; therefore it was proposed that all those delivering that care must be registered with the ISA in the long term.

Head of standards at the General Dental Council (GDC), Janet Collins said: “We will watch with interest the review into this scheme by the government. We will make sure registrants are up to date with any changes which affect their obligations under the scheme, as well as what information the GDC is obliged to share with the ISA.

“We’d also like to remind dental professionals the GDC expects all registrants to be aware of the procedures involved in raising concerns about the possible abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults.”

Susie Sanderson, chair of the British Dental Association’s Executive Board, said: “We hope that the announcement of the halting of the proposed vetting and barring regulations signal a fresh approach to regulation that puts patient care before bureaucracy.”