Government to decide dentists’ pay and contract values

The coalition government will be making all decisions on NHS dental pay and contract values for the next two financial years, after it told the dental pay body it is no longer needed.

The government has told the chairman of the Doctors’ and Dentists’ Review Body (DDRB), that it will play no role in determining the remuneration of independent general dental practitioners (GDPs) and general medical practitioners (GMPs) in England for the financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

In a letter, Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health, said: “I have decided that, based on the efficiency assumptions to its calculations of contract values amount to a pay cut and isn’t helpful.”

Derek Watson, chief executive of the Dental Practitioners Association, also expressed his concern: “It was announced in the budget that the government has imposed a two-year pay freeze on public sector employees earning over £21,000 a year that have led the government to instruct DDRB not to make recommendations about earnings for GDPs for the next two financial years.

“GMPs are facing soaring expenses and the impact of those on contract values must be properly considered. The BDA will be supplying evidence on this to government that will underline the very real challenges dental practices face. It is important to note that the government’s intention to apply efficiency assumptions to its calculations of contract values amount to a pay cut and isn’t helpful.”

The letter was sent to the chairman of the Review Body, Ron Amy, Susie Sanderson, chair of the BDA Executive Board said: “Dentists are aware of the financial pressures behind the already-announced pay freeze for NHS workers earning more than £21,000 a year that have led the government to instruct DDRB not to make recommendations about earnings for GDPs for the next two financial years.

“The government will make the decisions on any gross uplift, based on the efficiency assumption that we wish to apply and the evidence on non-staff expenses. He added: I have therefore concluded that there is no requirement to ask DDRB to make any recommendations on the need for any earnings or contract uplifts for independent contractor GDPs and GMPs in England.”

The government will make the decisions on any gross uplift, based on the efficiency assumption that the registration figures are robust. “Lifelong registration was also introduced earlier this year and Mr Donald said: “Our understanding is that almost a quarter of a million individuals included in today’s statistics haven’t visited their dentist during the last three years.”

The figures for the number of people registered with an NHS dentist which were recently published by NHS Scotland are not accurate, according to the British Dental Association (BDA). Robert Donald, of the BDA’s Scottish Dental Practitioners Committee, said: “As the Scottish government has acknowledged, recent estimates of the number of individuals registered with NHS dentists in Scotland have included deceased and duplicated patients. Although work to remove duplicate patient records has begun, some patient records are not matched to Community Health Index numbers. Until they are, it will be impossible to have complete confidence that the registration figures are robust.”

Tesco dental practice
Tesco is hoping to become the first supermarket in Scotland to open a dental surgery. The company has lodged a planning application with Glasgow City Council to open a three-chair dental practice at its store in Silverburn shopping centre in Pollok. Figures show south-west Glasgow has one of the worst dental health records in Scotland. About three in four of all children under five in the area have a history of tooth decay and/or dental extractions by the time they start school. Sainsbury’s became the first chain in the UK to operate a private and public dental practice in 2008 in Sale, Greater Manchester. Treatment prices at the Sainsbury’s practice have been kept similar to NHS ones so the practice has proved very popular.

Scottish registration figures
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Drug dealers across Britain are using dental anaesthetics to dilute cocaine supplies. The Serious Organised Crime Agency has warned that dealers are using large volumes of dental anaesthetics to bulk up the cocaine they sell on the streets. Officers are clamping down on the industry as they have seized large amounts of the dental anaesthetics lidocaine and benzocaine. In May alone, officers seized two tonnes of benzocaine, one fifth of the volume used by dentists in the UK each year.

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