V olunteers are urgently needed to offer dental services to homeless people in London over the festive season.

Crisis - the national charity for single homeless people which started 58 years ago - is looking for qualified dentists, dental nurses and hygienists to help run the dental service at Crisis Christmas this year. The charity wants to build on last year's success when more than 200 patients received dental treatment over the Christmas period.

Shifts run from 8.30am to 6pm from Christmas Eve on Thursday, December 24 through to Tuesday, December 29, with volunteers expected to donate a minimum of two shifts. The service relies on qualified dental health professional volunteers to provide a range of routine dental treatments including checkups, scale and polish and fillings, as well as providing basic dental health advice and education.

Senior dental nurse and volunteer at Crisis Christmas 2008, Bianca Payne, said: “I was immediately affected by the warmth of the place. The dentistry was carried out in fully-equipped vans. There were people everywhere holding steaming hot cups of tea and coffee, engaged in whole-some conversations and having a good laugh. We all worked hard, but had plenty of time to sit down, have a chat with the guests and share stories with the other volunteers. At the end of my three-day stint, I wished my day-to-day work was as much fun as this.”

Leslie Morphy, chief executive of Crisis, said: “Crisis Christmas would be impossible without the time and dedication shown year in and year out, by our thousands of volunteers. They provide invaluable companionship and services to some of society’s most vulnerable people, but also gain much from the experience in return.”

For more details, email: volunteering@crisis.org.uk or apply online at: www.crisis.org.uk/volunteering.■

Fundraising march for mouth cancer

D ental team staff from a Kent practice went on a fundraising walk in order to raise greater awareness about the symptoms of mouth cancer.

Dr Laura Lynch along with two dental nurses from her surgery in Croydon Road, Beckenham, completed the 10km sponsored walk for the Mouth Cancer Foundation.

Money raised from the walk around Hyde Park in central London is going towards helping the charity improve its support for patients and carers.

Dr Lynch, 38, said: “We decided to do the walk as a team as it is relevant to our work, because early detection of mouth cancer is crucial.

“We think that the Mouth Cancer Foundation does a great job of raising awareness about the symptoms of the disease, so we want to support them in any way we can.”

Common symptoms of oral cancer include unexplained bleeding in the mouth, loose teeth, or white or reddish patch-es inside the mouth or lips.

The Mouth Cancer Foundation was established in 2001 as a professional support organisation for people with mouth, throat and other head or neck cancer and their carers and health professionals. It also aims to relieve sickness and raise awareness of the illness among the public in general.

To sponsor Laura and her team visit justgiving.com/Laura-Lynch Association of Dental Implantology Appointee ■

Call centre does it again... and again

D enplan is celebrating once again after out-per-forming national competition and achieving second place in both the CCF European Call Centre awards and the Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service.

The Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service is the biggest ever call centre benchmarking exercise, conducted every six months by independent market research company GfK Mystery Shopping. The study was commissioned by Call Centre Focus magazine and Denplan came in second place for the second year running, with a score of 94.78 per cent. First place went to F&C Investments with 94.95 per cent and third place went to last year’s winners, First Direct, with 91.73 per cent.

The CCF European Call Centre Awards formally recognise professional excellence right across Europe. Now in its 14th year, has become a firmly established annual event. It rewards individuals and companies that have made a real impact over the previous 12 months and Denplan were thrilled to be commended in the ‘Best People Practice’ category. Denplan was ranked as ‘Highly Commended’ at the awards and was pipped to the post only by Cable & Wire-less.

Julia Dawson, Director of Customer Services at Denplan commented: “Both of these customer service accolades are testament to the hard work and dedication by the customer advisory and customer services teams here at Denplan. Everyone here is always ready to meet the exciting challenges facing UK dentistry today. Dentists and patients nationwide also recognise how they can benefit from our winning team, making us the number one provider of dental payment plans.”

Simon Thorpe, Programme Director - Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service added: “Customer service is becoming more important than ever as consumers are more careful about where and how they spend their money. Companies are realising that in order to retain customers during difficult financial periods customer service has to be first class. We would like to congratulate Denplan for their excellent performance. We hope this initiative will inspire other call centres to improve their levels of customer service to reach the standards set by our Top 50 members.”■
Access figures rise

The recently published Scottish Dental Practice Board (SDPB) annual report for 2008-2009 highlights significant gains in access to NHS dental services in Scotland.

The report’s main findings show that the percentage of the Scottish population registered with an NHS General Dental Services (GDS) dentist was 80.1 per cent for children and 61.5 per cent for adults, up from 77.4 per cent for children and 57.2 per cent for adults, at the same date the year before.

The report also reveals that the total expenditure on NHS GDS of treating a child during 2008/09 has increased by £4 from £58 to £62, with the average cost of treating an adult during 2008/09 up £1 from £42 to £43. Analysis of these figures shows that this increase is related to the associated costs of increased patient registration numbers, as well as increased volume of treatment.

The average cost to the NHS GDS of treating a tooth during 2008/09 has increased by £4 from £58 to £62, with the average cost of treating an adult during 2008/09 up £1 from £42 to £43. Analysis of these figures shows that this increase is related to the associated costs of increased patient registration numbers, as well as increased volume of treatment.

General Dental Council reformed

The Department of Health has completed a series of reforms to healthcare regulatory bodies including the General Dental Council (GDC).

The aim of the reforms is to strengthen the focus on public protection in the overall regulation of health professionals, which includes dentists and dental nurses.

The reforms are part of the Government’s programme to make safety and quality a top priority in the care of patients, as set out in the White Paper – Trust, Assurance and Safety.

Features of the reforms include the GDCs move to a fully-appointed council with parity between lay and professional members, in order to ensure that professional interests do not take precedence. New GDC members need to be independently appointed against continued support of the Scottish Government Health Directorate.

“The two components continue to deliver a high quality service to children and adults in Scotland and should be commended. In that regard we now have record levels of patients registered with an NHS dentist in Scotland.”

Irish dentists ballot

Public dentists in Ireland are to be balloted with regard to taking protest action if the Health Service Executive (HSE) makes further cutbacks to the sector.

The decision to ballot members was taken earlier this month by the national committee of the public dental surgeons group of the Irish Dental Association.

Public dental surgeons are employed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to provide free dental services to vulnerable adults and school children. The service mainly focuses on special needs patients, children of medical card holders and children in disadvantaged schools.

The association said cutbacks meant that vacancies were not being filled and that more and more dental surgeons were leaving the service due to difficult working conditions. They said protest action would be taken if the HSE undermined the standards of care available to patients or made unacceptable changes to terms of employment.

The reforms aim to protect patients specific criteria relating to their skills and expertise.

Health minister, Ann Keen, said: “Healthcare professionals work extremely hard to provide high standards of care that patients expect. Regulatory bodies play a vital role in maintaining these standards and ensuring that those few professionals who fall below them are dealt with fairly and firmly. The changes we have introduced will continue to raise professional standards in healthcare and encourage more transparency and high-quality services for patients and the public.”

The newly-appointed GDC consists of eight dentists, four dental care professionals, 12 lay-members and a chairman drawn from the lay or professional membership. Its first meeting was set to take place on October 15.

The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) recently described the GDC as displaying ‘excellence’ and ‘good practice’ in its initiatives. These include focusing on customer service and encouraging dental patients to expect higher standards.

Other regulatory bodies affected by the reforms include the General Medical Council and the Health Professions Council.

Budget cuts are causing controversy

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