NHS Dentistry Boost in Yorkshire

S pending on NHS dentistry in Yorkshire is set to increase over the next two years by more than £6m, which is expected to increase people using NHS dentists by about ten per cent by 2010.

Although £1.9m was ploughed into dental services in Richmond, York, Scarborough and Harrogate last year, moves to the private sector meant fewer patients could see an NHS dentist, North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (PCT) is therefore expanding NHS dental provision, with £4.6m the following year, especially in areas such as Richmond, Selby, Northallerton, rural Harrogate, Pateley Bridge, Whitby and Ryedale.

The PCT also wants to re-commission NHS dentistry in Leyburn, Northallerton and Pateley Bridge where some dentists have announced they are set to reduce NHS provision. In March 2006, 53.7 per cent of the adult North Yorkshire population was using NHS dental care along with 74.8 per cent of children. In March last year, it fell to 52.8 per cent for adults and 73.5 per cent for children. Jane Marshall, director of commissioning and service development, said although the proportion of the population accessing NHS dentistry was slightly above the England average, the downward trend was a concern, which would be addressed by the PCTs commissioning plans. She said: ‘The scale of investment required to bring about improvement in access to NHS dentistry and orthodontic services is considerable.’

The GDC confirms registration

The General Dental Council (GDC) has confirmed that dental professionals have to be registered with the body, whatever their job titles. Titles such as dental nurse, dental surgery assistant, dental technician and dental technologist are protected by law, so if a title is used which misleadingly implies registration of the GDC, there is a risk of prosecution in the courts.

Unregistered dental nurses and dental technicians are effectively outlawed by GDC standards which make it clear that registrants – dental professionals who are literally signed up to the high standards set in the UK for their profession - must employ and work with appropriately registered people.

If a registered dentist or dental technician employs someone to work as a dental nurse or dental technician, they have a duty to ensure that the employee is registered or in training. If they don't, they risk losing their own registration.

Transitional arrangements that were in place for two years, which allowed existing dental nurses and dental technicians to register on the basis of experience, are now closed. This means that men and women who are working as dental nurses and dental technicians can no longer apply for registration on this basis.

GDC director of operations, Edward Bannatyne, said: ‘You have to be registered or in training to work as a dental nurse or dental technician. If you don’t call yourself a dental nurse or dental technician, but you do the work of a dental nurse or dental technician, then whoever employs you risks a GDC fitness to practice investigation and is putting their own registration at risk.

‘The time to register under transitional arrangements that recognized existing experience is over. To be a dental nurse or dental technician, you must register or be in training. It’s as simple as that.’

For information on registration as a dental nurse or dental technician, visit www.gdc-uk.org, email GDCregistration@gdc-uk.org or call 0845 500 7794.