Is the ‘uplift’ really a pay cut for dentists?

BDA warns that percentage increase may not be all it seems.

The NHS Employers organisation and the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) of the BMA have agreed changes to the General Medical Services contract for 2011/12 for England, Scotland and Wales.

The new contract states that: For 2011/12 the overall value of GMS Contract payments will rise by 0.5 per cent, to support practices in meeting the costs of increased expenses, including pay increases for employed staff with a full time equivalent salary of less than £21,000. This uplift will be delivered in England through a 2.31 per cent increase in the value of a QOF point (from £12.729 to £13.031).

This increase in the value of a QOF point is intended to deliver the full 0.5 per cent expenses increase. There will be no increase to global sum payments or to the value of DESs.

The British Dental Association (BDA) has said however that the Department of Health’s announcement of a 0.5 per cent increase in contract values for general dental practitioners in England for 2011/12 is a pay cut that will negatively affect their ability to invest in patient care.

The BDA demonstrated in its evidence to the Department of Health that expenses in dental practice are increasing sharply, but the BDA has said that their warning has been disregarded.

Dentists are also being asked to implement new best practice guidance for preventing oral disease in children in support of the Government’s aim of reducing levels of oral disease in younger patients. Where it is considered appropriate, parents will be offered the opportunity for their children to have fluoride varnish applied to their teeth.

John Milne, Chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee, said: “The level of this uplift is simply not enough. Dentists across England are working really hard, through a period of uncertainty, to deliver high quality care to their patients.

“They are contending with a growing mountain of pointless bureaucracy and escalating costs on top of the effects of the efficiency savings imposed last year. They need help to address those problems.

“While we support this prevention-focused activity to improve young people’s oral health, the costs of providing the extra fluoride varnish to children have not been recognised by this uplift. The NHS rightly seeks to improve the quality of dental services and to increase the emphasis on disease prevention, but this cannot be done in an environment where not only are dentists incomes frozen, but the continued failure to reimburse expenses puts practices under severe financial pressure.”