



Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON, WC1H 9HD

Tel: +44 (0)20 7419 5494 Fax: +44 (0)20 7380 1482

Email: admin@dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk

Response to the Government's White Paper: *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* from the Dental Schools Council

Background

The Dental Schools Council represents the dental schools in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and provides a forum to discuss objectives and policy. As the authoritative voice of all UK dental schools, the Dental Schools Council acts as a principal source for informed opinion and advice on all matters concerning dental education and research in dental schools and on relations between dental schools, the National Health Service and other clinical care providers. Although dental schools are part of their respective universities, clinical training is delivered through the NHS, so the relationships between universities and their NHS partners are necessarily close. The models and methods of teaching vary from school to school, giving undergraduates considerable choice, but the final outcomes are common and overseen by the General Dental Council. As the educational provider it is the dental schools who are responsible to the GDC and to Government for the provision and quality of undergraduate dental education.

Most schools are co-located with a "dental hospital" which provides clinical space and facilities for students, but which will also provide a base for NHS specialist referral services. In some cases though, most undergraduate training occurs in primary care. Funding for the academic component of undergraduate training comes from HEFCE, and HEFCE funded clinical academic staff make a very significant contribution to service. Though priorities vary between schools this short submission concentrates on three very basic concepts of importance to all schools.

Commissioning dentistry

The move away from PCTs as commissioners of dental services is a positive one, opening up opportunities for co-ordinated and intelligent dental commissioning. This particularly applies to the integration of commissioning for services and dental education which concern the schools.

- **The move away from PCT commissioning of dental services is broadly welcomed.**
- **The DSC would support commissioning of dental services, and particularly of the integration of service and educational provision, through a specialist dental team at the Commissioning Board.**

Chair:

Professor WP Saunders BDS PhD FDS RCS Edin
FDS RCPS Glas FDS RCS Eng MRD FHEA FHKAM
Dean of Dentistry, University of Dundee

Executive Secretary and Treasurer:

Professor F Fortune CBE, BDS MBBS MRCP, FRCP, FDS
RCSeng, FGDP, PhD, DipEd teachers Med/Dent
Director, Institute of Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London

Service Increment for Teaching (SIFT)

NHS Dental SIFT meets the additional NHS costs of dental education, underpinning the premises and clinical support. At present in England this is delivered through SHAs. In nearly all cases, the Trust receives and handles this money in very different ways depending on local organisation. In some cases the educational provider has almost no say over how this is spent as it is tied into a Trust or Foundation Trust.

- **With the demise of the SHAs, a more consistent and transparent way of handling SIFT would be helpful for schools and improve our ability to plan dental education as efficiently as possible.**
- **Most schools interact with multiple Trusts or service providers to support dental education. The DSC would welcome a process whereby SIFT, DSIFT and MDENT could be paid direct to schools who wish to do this so that they can then directly purchase clinical services from appropriate providers.**
- **Some early confirmation of the new pathway for SIFT would be welcome.**

NHS specialist services and Education.

Whilst education and specialist services are often provided side by side, they are funded differently; a combination of SIFT and HEFCE funding support the education element whilst PCT commissioners pay for clinical services. Despite this, HEFCE funded academics also provide substantial specialist NHS services and take on senior leadership roles. Whatever the model, the schools (universities) are often largely dependent on the host organisation (PCT or Foundation Trust) whose primary concern is with providing patient care rather than education. Whilst students make a considerable contribution to service, expecting undergraduate dental students to meet service targets does not usually sit well with training excellent dentists.

- **Some consideration should be given to alternative models for commissioning dental education and specialist services where these are provided together.**

Professor Jimmy Steele
Dean, School of Dentistry, University of Newcastle

Professor Elizabeth Kay
Dean, School of Dentistry, Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry

On Behalf of the Dental Schools Council

11th October 2010

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