

Review of the National Dental Contract in Wales

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Edwina Hart, Minister for Health and Social Services

On 13 November 2007 I announced a review of the dental contract and the establishment of a task and finish group to look at a range of issues to improve the way in which the contract works.

I have today received the Report of the task and finish group, which I welcome, and would like to thank the Chair, Professor Wayne Richards, and the other members of the Group who undertook the review. The Report accepts that the dental contract is broadly a workable system, and that with amendment can be improved with also the potential to enhance oral health. It makes 24 wide-ranging recommendations, some with further work to follow, to increase the effectiveness of the contract and deliver improvements in oral health.

I am able to announce today that I can accept one of the Report's key recommendations, in confirming an extension to the present ring-fencing of dental allocations within LHBs allocations for a further 3 years. The current arrangements were due to end in April 2009 and safeguarding dental resources within LHB dental budgets until at least 2012 sends an important message about protecting existing dental provision.

As to the Report in full, the Group has invested a considerable amount of time and effort in its production, and I am keen that its recommendations should have the widest possible consideration.

I therefore intend that a copy of the Report should be distributed to every dental practice in Wales providing a NHS service, over the summer period, inviting comments on its proposals. Copies of the Review Group's Report will also be made available to Assembly Members and placed on the Welsh Assembly Government website for more general availability.

Once the profession, and other interested groups and individuals have had a chance to consider the Report's recommendations, and comment on them, I will make a further statement to the Assembly in the autumn.