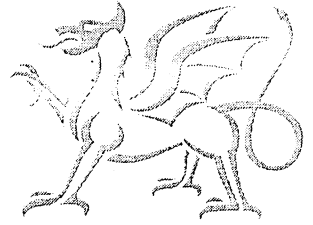


12 OCTOBER 2004

DP 663/03 - 07

Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM
First Minister/Prif Weinidog Cymru



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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Our ref/Ein cyf: MB/FM/638/04

Ann Jones AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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9th November 2004

Dear Ann

I am writing in response to the question you raised about the dental fissure sealant programme in plenary on 12 October.

Since November 2001, we have allocated funding from the Health Inequalities Fund for a dental fissure sealant programme targeted at 6-8 year olds in deprived areas. Dental disease is strongly related to socio-economic deprivation and it was decided that the initiative would be targeted at areas of high need as identified for Communities First, i.e. the 100 electoral divisions with the Worst Index of Material Deprivation (WIMD, 2000). However, the fissure sealant programme is clinically driven and not an integral part of the Communities First initiative.

In consultation with the representatives of the dental profession in Wales we concluded that, for maximum coverage and expediency, the programme should be delivered by the Community Dental Service (CDS) at schools in those areas. The programme, which currently receives £0.5m a year, is now in its fourth year. A total of 255 schools were initially deemed eligible for inclusion in the programme. We have recently provided more flexibility by identifying a further list of schools in pockets of deprivation so that the CDS can extend the programme within their local areas.

An interim report of the initiative has been completed and the programme is currently being further evaluated. Once we have considered the next report from the Welsh Oral Health Information Unit, we will involve the providers and National Public Health Service colleagues in discussions about any future development of the programme. This will allow us to make decisions based on good data and a clear view of the costs and the benefits of any expansion to the scheme.

Yours
Rhodri