

News release



20 April 2007

DIFFICULTY IN FINDING A DENTIST?

Many people are finding it increasingly difficult to get an appointment with an NHS dentist, according to the Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC). In October 2006, the SHSSC, which represents the public interest in health and social care matters, carried out a telephone survey of dentists. Results indicated that over 50% of dentists in the Southern Area were no longer taking on NHS patients and would only register new patients as private.

Mrs Lynne Cairns, Chairman of the SHSSC, says, "We are very concerned that the delay in agreeing the new dental contract is leading many dentists to give up on the NHS. If it was difficult to find an NHS dentist last October, the situation is much worse now. Many people don't realise that registration with a dentist has to be renewed every 15 months. So if you haven't visited your dentist for some time, you shouldn't assume that you are still on their list. The SHSSC would encourage everyone to register with a dentist and to attend regularly for appointments. We also urge the DHSSPS to speedily negotiate a new

contract for dentists that will ensure that treatment is accessible on the NHS."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- **The Southern Health and Social Services Council is one of 4 Health and Social Services Councils set up in 1991 to represent the views of patients and users of the health and social services. The Council has a total of 24 members, 40% of whom are nominated by District Councils in the Southern Area. The remainder are appointed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety – 30% voluntary/community representatives and 30% are nominees with an interest in health and social care.**
- **Health and Social Services Councils have a right to be consulted by Health and Social Services Boards about and plans for development of services, or where significant changes are being considered. Councils play an important part in representing the views of consumers of services to the decision makers, and provide advice and support to patients and service users in relation to complaints procedures.**

If you require any further information please contact :

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The Council's website address is: www.shsscouncil.net