

News release



26 January 2005

VIEWS ON DENTAL SERVICES

A visit to the dentist may not be everyone's idea of a good time. However, dentists provide an essential health care service. The Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC) has been invited to contribute to the development of a new primary dental care strategy and is keen to hear the views of people who use dental services in the Southern Area. The role of the SHSSC is to act as the voice of people who use health and social care services.

One concern of the SHSSC is that whilst people are generally happy about the service they receive from dentists, more remains to be done in relation to preventing dental decay and ensuring that everyone is registered with or regularly attends a dentist.

A recent DHSSPS survey of public attitudes to health and personal social services showed high levels of satisfaction with dental services. The vast majority (96%) of survey respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from their dentist. However, the survey also showed a decrease of 6% in the use of dental services over the past 12 months (67% in 2003 compared with 61% in 2004).

More concerning is the state of our children's teeth. In spite of a number of excellent initiatives, dental registration of children aged 3-5 years is running at less than 69% in the Southern Area. In some cases decay has got so bad that in 2003, there were 1,644 cases requiring a general anaesthetic to extract teeth.

As part of its involvement in the development of the new 10 year strategy, the SHSSC is carrying out visits to community dental facilities and talking to communities about their usage of dental services and barriers to using services. If you would like to share your views with the Council, this can be done by contacting the Chief Officer on 028 3834 9900 or e-mail: reception@shssc.n-i.nhs.uk

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 :

Mrs Stella Cunningham, Chief Officer. Tel: 028 3834 9900

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