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Joanne McCartney AM
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
31st March 2008

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24 APR 2008

SECRETARIAT

Dear Joanne McCartney,

Re Teething Problems – a review of NHS dental care

Hammersmith and Fulham PCT Chief Executive Mike Wood, has asked me to respond to your letter on his behalf.

Thank you for providing the PCT with a copy of the aforementioned London Assembly Report. I would agree that any financial disincentive to regular attendance at a dentist should be removed, and that this may be best addressed through the addition of extra charging bands. I am keen that that this does not lead to a proliferation of different bands as that could make the patient charging system unduly complex.

In regard to the specific recommendations that you highlight:

Recommendation 2

I would agree that a London PCT network should be set up to enable PCT's to share best practice. We have one that operates at an (old) sector level, which has been an extremely useful resource. PCT's have a scarcity of expertise in commissioning dentistry and resources and good practice need to be spread wider than local networks.

Recommendation 3

I would agree that PCT's need to publicise local NHS dental services and entitlements. There is a potential concern amongst certain PCT's in London, where growth has been at the lower end of the national scale, that publicising services will lead to a large growth in demand particularly from outside PCT areas, that cannot be met. However your report suggests that the lack of information about dental services (and the costs of treatment for those whose incomes are just above the exemption thresholds) leads patients to delay seeking treatment.

I agree with the idea of a helpline, and the PCT is currently tendering for a 24 hour service that will provide healthcare advice as well as access to unscheduled care appointments, GP appointments, home visits , community services and dental services.



POSITIVE ABOUT
DISABLED PEOPLE

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Chief Executive : Mr Mike Wood
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Recommendation 4

I would agree that the PCT should ensure that all NHS dental practices display information about the costs of treatment and who is exempt from charges, and promote the low income scheme. This is currently implemented through routine practice visits.

I apologise for responding slightly outside the timeframe that you required.

Yours sincerely



Miles Freeman

Associate Director of Commissioning

Cc Mike Wood Chief Executive