

Gateway Number: 15285

16 December 2010

Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

Tel: 020 7210 5455

**To: SHA CEs**  
**Cc: SHA Directors of Commissioning**  
**SHA Directors of Performance**

Dear Colleague

### **Piloting Reform of the NHS Dental Contract in England**

I am writing to bring to your attention proposals published today for piloting reforms to the NHS dental contract and seek your help in identifying PCTs willing to host 50-60 pilots around the country

The NHS Operating Framework, published yesterday states that, *“PCTs should continue to commission improvements in access to NHS dentistry, and seek to improve efficiency through effective management of dental contracts to minimise unnecessary recalls and split courses of treatment. They should work with dentists and other agencies to promote improvements in the oral health of children. **As part of the development of a new dental contract, the Department of Health will announce proposals for contract pilots in 2011/12, and seek volunteers to take part. PCTs are encouraged to identify and support potential pilot sites.**”*

Recent national surveys show that two-thirds of adults and children are now free of visible tooth decay; they require a dental service that helps them maintain good oral health, not one that is focused on treatment only.

The Government plans to develop a new national contract based on registration, capitation and quality. It has said that it will develop the new contract in consultation with representatives of the profession, patients, and NHS management. It will pilot the changes before implementing them.

Ministers have today announced their proposals for piloting contract reforms. I am writing to explain the proposals in outline. The publication setting out the proposals can be found at

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_122660](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_122660).

There will be a range of pilots, all of which essentially test ways of remunerating dentists not for the amount of treatment they carry out but for the number of patients they have in continuing care and for the quality of services they provide and the outcomes they achieve.

The pilots will test how to develop a fair relationship between the annual contract value a practice receives and the number of registered patients for whom it should provide continuing care, and how to weight this capitation measure to reflect needs.

The pilots will also help us to test a quality and outcomes framework in dental practice, and to develop and refine the systems which we can use to monitor quality and outcomes.

### **Selection**

The plan is to launch the pilots at the start of the next financial year (2011/12). We will select the pilot sites from among the dental practices that apply, with the support of their local PCT. Guidance on how to apply to take part in the pilots, and detailed eligibility criteria will be available on the NHS Primary Care Commissioning web-site at [www.pcc.nhs.uk/dentalpilots](http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/dentalpilots), where your dental leads will be able to access more detailed information on the pilots and the process.

The Government will assess the lessons of the pilots after a year, but if they are working well, it will consider allowing their extension until the substantive new contract is implemented. After a year, the Government will consult on proposals for the new contract, and for reforms to the patient charging system to fit in with the new contract. The changes will require legislation, and so it will then introduce them to Parliament in a Bill. Subject to the approval of Parliament we would expect to implement the new contract in April 2014.

The announcement of the Government's proposals marks a great opportunity for NHS dentistry to move from being a treatment based service to a national dental health service. I know many dentists will be keen to take part. I also know that the pilots represent another pressure on PCTs, at a challenging time, and I am writing to encourage you to support and encourage them to take part. PCTs that choose to support pilots will receive practical support directly via Primary Care Commissioning (PCC), who are managing the pilots process for us.

I look forward to your support.

Yours sincerely,



**Dame Barbara Hakin**  
**National Managing Director of Commissioning Development**