



# LDC Conference Bulletin

Report of the annual conference of Local Dental Committees, 13 June 2008

## Conference Chair's Report

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Thank you for the honour bestowed on me to Chair the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

The organisation of the Conference was affected by the unavailability of Ann Keen, and the delayed report of the Health Select Committee, both of which had featured on the original draft agenda.

With the great help of my Conference Committee, we were able to formulate a replacement panel of specialists within the profession to address questions kindly submitted by delegates. I apologise to those whose questions were not chosen, but the idea was to major one topic for each member of the panel. It is an idea that could be repeated and expanded.

Thank you to delegates for backing the continuation of meetings between the CDO and the Conference Representatives. This initiative which hopefully may produce more than the letter regarding LDC levy collection, produced for this Conference, is something I hope can also be developed.

I had asked for motions of a mildly controversial nature to spurn more

vigorous debate, an aspect of Conference that needs revitalising. Sadly too few LDCs submitted such motions, but I thank my friends from Northampton for taking up the baton and producing a motion that required a serious count. Regrettably it demonstrated a divergence in opinion of the new contract, and there now appears to be those still aggressively opposed and those who wish to move on and work with it. Only time will tell if this may cause a problem within the profession.

Whilst the emergency motion regarding a vote of no confidence in the Minister may get headlines, the CDO Barry Cockcroft will think that his job of convincing us all of the contract benefits may be easier after such a Conference.

I enjoyed the pre Conference Dinner and my speech reflected on questions about our political structure both within and outside the profession. Gyles Brandreth certainly lived up to the billing and one needs a thick skin to deflect the jovial abuse he deals out. My comparison to Harry Hill and Kermit the Frog no doubt amused many, and the fact that my speech might be so

controversial that I brought my own Barrister to the Dinner! are just two lines delivered with kind wickedness.

I thank all those who have supported my own legal fight, which after the decision to appeal by the Secretary of State, may be a fight that is far from completion and will pile more pressure on me financially and emotionally.

I look forward to the report of the Health Select Committee as a marker of where the politicians assess this Contract is leading, and how changes can ensure a successful outcome for all dentists and all our patients, we must learn from the mistakes of the past, of which there have been many by us and the Government.

I will long remember the last two years and hope I will continue to contribute to future Conferences, as no one should underestimate the importance of these events for the political future of our occupation and livelihoods.

Eddie Crouch

Chair 2008

# Conference debate and discussion

The 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of LDCs convened in London on 13 June 2008, to discuss local commissioning, NHS dentistry and the Darzi report. But the headline issue was a vote of no confidence in the Minister of Health, Ann Keen MP.

## Emergency Motions

Conference passed an emergency motion outlining the profession's dismay at the failure of the new contract to deliver benefits for patients, and the government's apparent reluctance to address the many problems associated with it. Conference delegates noted the Minister's failure to attend the Conference, and regretted the Department of Health's failure to engage with the profession in rectifying the problems caused by the target-driven, poorly tested contract which it introduced in April 2006.

There was also some debate about whether, in view of the imposition of the new contract, and the Department's apparent unwillingness to engage with the profession, Conference itself had lost some of its purpose. Members felt though that Conference did still have a crucial role to play, both in guiding GDPC in its approach and in providing robust recommendations to the Department. It remained a barometer of local opinion throughout the profession.

Conference therefore passed another emergency motion, in response to some delegates' concerns at its future role, reaffirming its

commitment to engaging with PCTs and patients in developing innovative local commissioning solutions.

## Opportunities for dentists

The day had started with a message of optimism from GDPC Chair, Dr Lester Ellman. Though there were real problems with the current system, Dr Ellman noted, there were opportunities for dentists and LDCs to engage with their PCT to find ways to offer best practice to patients with innovative commissioning. It would be up to the profession to seek out and take advantage of the opportunities which would be presented over the forthcoming years as PCTs looked for ways to offer effective NHS dentistry.

## Question Time

The Conference continued with a Question and Answer session for a panel made up of CDO for England Dr Barry Cockcroft, adviser to the Commons Health Select Committee Dr Paul Batchelor, Director of MPS Educational Services Dr John Tiernan, Challenge founder member Dr John Renshaw, and MD of Rodericks Dr Shalin Mehra.

The panel was asked whether it thought the 2006 contract had failed. Most thought that to an extent it had, with quality of service provided, access problems and the lack of incentive for preventive treatment

being the key flaws. There was general agreement that two years on from its introduction, the system was failing; though some panel members were more optimistic than others about the immediate future.

Panel members outlined their visions for the future of the profession and of LDCs, all emphasizing the importance of local decision making in a decentralised system. It was clear that the relationship of LDCs to their PCT would continue to be crucial in providing services. But there were varying visions of how NHS dentistry might look in 10 years' time. Some panel members foresaw a limited core service, with the majority of treatment carried out under an insurance based healthcare scheme, while others considered there would be greater emphasis on preventive work. To allay concerns about the possibility of a core service, Dr Cockcroft noted that it would be unlikely any government would repeal primary legislation in order to cut funding in NHS dentistry to the level of a core service.

## Reports

Conference also heard brief reports from the British Dental Guild, the Dentists' Health Support Trust and BDA Benevolent Fund outlining their year's work and some of the problems they faced. Dr John Milne gave a presentation on the Darzi Report and the possible implications for dentistry, including polyclinics, rented premises, and out of hours services.

Conference Chair Dr Eddie Crouch reported on the two meetings he and other LDC Officials had had with the CDO in 2008. LDC members had found the meetings useful and had agreed to ask Conference its views on whether to formalise the meetings, with all the implications for funding and formal representation. Conference agreed Dr Crouch's request to continue to hold some regular meetings in 2008 and 2009, when the Conference would be asked at its 2009 meeting to decide whether to take it any further.

#### **Motions**

Conference also had some fifteen regular motions to debate. Predictably, most reflected the profession's

concerns over the new contract. Conference called for reassurances over the 4% tolerance issue on UDA overperformance; on funding to be agreed for a full year without alterations; for reassurances on seniority payments; that there would be no unilateral reduction in UDA values; and rejected PCT involvement in LDC issues. There were also motions covering VDP training and its funding.

## **Chair for 2009**

The Chair of LDC Conference for 2009 is Dr Jerry Asquith, from Hillingdon LDC. Jerry will meet with the agenda committee to plan next year's conference and will discuss with BDA colleagues the agenda for LDC Officials' Day.

Dr Asquith is a member of the BDA's Representative Body and an NHS GDP.



## Motions Carried by LDC Conference

**Emergency Motion:** This Conference has no confidence in the Minister for Health or her ability to deliver a contract for the profession which will both benefit dentists and their practices but above all, patients.

**Norfolk:** This Conference believes that selection of LDC members should be the decision of local dentists and not the PCT.

**Emergency Motion:** LDC Conference gives a steer to GDPC but LDCs also have an active role to fulfill. This Conference must accept the important role it has engaging with PCTs and patients to develop robust local commissioning structures and in sharing good practice.

**Norfolk:** This Conference insists that any changes as to how NHS dentistry is provided compared to the activity year is fully funded to prevent the deplorable situation that occurred with single use endodontic instruments.

**Enfield and Haringey:** This Conference believes a + 4% tolerance for over performance should apply to all PCTs and the Department of Health should instruct all PCTs to refund all patient charges to practice for any excess overproduction above 4%.

**Leicestershire and Rutland:** This Conference opposes reduction in UDA values in order to equalise PCT values without clear evidence of needs assessments showing such action is justified.

**Northumberland:** This Conference requests clarification on seniority payments, and demands that contributions should remain available and returned to those who have contributed and not merged into general payments.

**Hillingdon:** This Conference calls on the Department of Health to allow children and exempt only contracts to continue, to enable these deserving patients to receive the NHS dental treatment they need.

**Worcestershire:** This Conference requests that superannuation details be made available in September and not in February.

**Birmingham:** This Conference believes that practitioners who have the sale of their practice influenced by PCT commissioning, should be compensated to the full at the market price of the practice.

**Surrey:** This conference would like to see national guidelines for PCTs to follow in the timing of contract reviews and responses to GDP queries.

**Dorset:** This Conference demands that all LDC members should be entitled to claim UDAs as a sessional allowance for business meetings with PCTs or LHBs, or any other NHS organisation.

**West Sussex:** This Conference demands that, with the introduction of mandatory registration and CPD for DSAs, the

deaneries provide suitable training and post graduate courses to facilitate this, and that every effort be made to provide such courses at convenient times and locations.



## Election Results 2008

Congratulations to the Following delegates, who were elected to posts at Conference:

Chair Elect of Conference – **Richard Emms**

Honorary Auditors to the Conference – **Esmail Harunani & Brett Sinson**

Representative to the Conference Agenda Committee – **Roy McBurnie**

Representative to the GDPC – **Clive Harris**



Honorary Treasurer of Conference – **Tim Harker**

Representative to the Board of Managers of the British Dental Guild – **Phil Davenport & Mark Haig**

### Help a colleague...

Conference hears every year from the BDA Benevolent Fund and the Dentists' Health Support Trust. But especially in these times of uncertainty for the profession, and in an environment of financial pressure within LDCs, Conference received clear calls for help from these bodies, who speak for colleagues who are in need of help.

Contact the BDA Benevolent Fund at [benfund@bda.org](mailto:benfund@bda.org) or the Dentists Health Support Trust at [Brian.Westbury@mps.org.uk](mailto:Brian.Westbury@mps.org.uk)

## Thanks to Lester Ellman, to Henrik Overgaard Nielsen and to Tony Jacobs

On behalf of LDC Conference, Eddie Crouch thanks Lester Ellman for his term representing LDC Conference on GDPC. This will be Lester's last Conference as GDPC Chair, as he stands down in 2009. Eddie would also like to thank Tony for his three years' service on the Conference Agenda Committee, and Henrik for his year as Chair and further year's wise counsel supporting Eddie in his capacity as Past-Chair.

### \*\* Dates for your Diary \*\*

The LDC Officials' Day will be held on 5 December 2008, at Hotel Russell in central London.