

PCT research unearths mass penalties

NEW statistics uncovered by private dental plan administrator DPAS reveal that almost half (48 per cent) of NHS dentists in the UK face financial penalties which could amount to more than 100 million pounds.

The research was conducted under the Freedom of Information Act by DPAS chairman Quentin Skinner. It is the first of its kind to give a detailed account of the delivery shortfalls of the widely criticised new General Dental Service Contracts (nGDS) following their first year of operation.

DPAS' findings reveal that 48 per cent of NHS dentists have delivered less than 96 per cent of their agreed Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) during year one of the new contracts, the threshold at which PCTs may insist on making a financial recovery to 'claw back' funds. A number of PCTs are known to be in the red, making

financial penalties for dentists all the more likely.

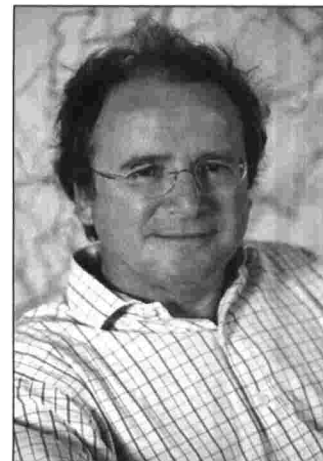
While some dentists may be close to the threshold to be able to agree with their PCT that they can catch up this shortfall in year two (2007 / 08), many are in a much worse position.

The research findings show that more than 11 per cent of dentists were short by between 15 per cent and 25 per cent of their UDA commitment, with a further 11 percent falling behind by a staggering 25 per cent.

"Without doubt, there are NHS dentists all over the country who were so behind in the delivery of their UDAs last year that their cash-strapped PCTs now have no option other than to insist on claw back," said Mr Skinner. "Indeed, we know from anecdotal evidence that some have already started doing so, with amounts being demanded running towards six-figure

sums at some practices."

He added: "For those dentists who have under delivered by four percent, the contract allows this shortfall to be made up by March 31, 2008."



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