

Sheffield PCTs

Briefing Notes on Orthodontic situation – July 2006

For use in response to letters or for emailing to enquirers

The budget for dental services was devolved to PCTs from the DOH on 1 April 2006. The local PCTs have agreed contracts with dentists and orthodontists based on the past earnings of their practices. Sheffield has seen almost a doubling of a number of orthodontists in the last 3 years which has meant a similar increase in the number of children being treated.

- The funding received locally is having to be devoted to completing the treatment of children under care and until this peak of activity is over fewer new cases can be started.
- It is likely to take 12 - 18 months to complete the treatments for these children and free up capacity to take on new cases. However, this does vary between orthodontic practices, depending on how far their growth has progressed towards a stable balance between new and existing cases.
- One further change from April was the national adoption of the index of orthodontic treatment need (IOTN) as a way of assessing the need for NHS orthodontic treatment. This index has been used in hospital orthodontic services for more than 10 years as a way of deciding on case priorities. The scale runs from 0-5 with 5 being the most complex. The cut off score for NHS dental treatment is 3.6 and at the moment all cases above that score are eligible for NHS treatment.
- It is appreciated that a number of patients will have been referred and reviewed in the last two years but have not yet started active treatment. Whilst the great majority will fit the criteria, a small number may find that they are no longer eligible. The PCT is setting up an appeals scheme for cases where the patients or parents feel that their child should be treated under the NHS, in spite of the change in criteria.
- The PCT is working with the orthodontists to determine how many new cases they can take on in the coming year and therefore how long the waiting lists will be. We will also be agreeing with them which cases should be given priority, for example, where the start of treatment needs to coincide with the key stages in the child's development.
- Sheffield is very fortunate in the number of orthodontists we have and this increase in capacity and therefore cases is unprecedented nationally. We hope that we can maintain an appropriate capacity in the future and attain a reasonable balance between funding, capacity and demand within the next 18 months.