

# LDC Conference



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Report of the annual conference of Local Dental Committees, 8 June 2007

## Conference Chair's Report

The 56<sup>th</sup> Conference in Birmingham will be remembered as a political conference. A conference when delegates took stock of where we are now and where we go from here. I made a conscious decision to move the Conference in a political direction. I believed that our profession needed to show its claws and by doing this we ensured that we would never be so badly treated in the future. I also felt that some of our colleagues deserved to hear our outrage on their behalf.

At the conference dinner both my and Clare Short's speeches emphasised the attack on our profession from this Government. Even though Ms Short's speech was almost a continuation of mine, neither of us knew what the other was going to say in advance.

My speech concentrated on the attacks the profession has suffered in particular through the new contract and the changes to our regulatory body, the GDC. The things I said

were opinions I believe needed to be articulated. I also believe that many of my colleagues agree with these opinions but that we are all too busy making the system work to have the time to fight our corner. This was meant to be a line in the sand. I have been gratified by the many colleagues who told me afterwards that they feel exactly the same way as I do but they were glad that somebody had finally voiced their worries.

I also emphasised the way forward for our LDCs is to work together in larger, regional groups to make a bigger impact locally, it is important that we are seen as a professional outfit in our dealings with PCTs, politicians and the media.

Clare Short put these attacks into a larger picture about Parliament's failure to keep a check on the executive and linking the problems we face in dentistry with similar problems in other professions and even relating it to the events that led to the Iraq war.

Ms Short advised us that now is a good time to seek changes to the contract because with a new prime minister taking office at the end of the month there was an opportunity to take advantage of his desire to be seen a new broom cleaning up the previous incumbent's mess.

At the special forum, Andrew Murrison and Normal Lamb told us that we could expect from the opposition parties in the future; one issue they agreed on was that it was unlikely there would be more money for dentistry. It was very clear from talking to them afterwards that they had listened very carefully to what delegates had to say and both left with a different view from when they arrived. It was also obvious that they both wanted to continue the dialogue with us in the future and it was a relief to meet politicians who actually listened to our problems, rather than just telling us how wonderful our working lives are after the new contract.

I would like to thank you all for the privilege of chairing the conference; it has been a great honour. I would also like to thank you for re-electing me to represent conference on the GDPC.



**Henrik Overgaard-Nielsen**  
Chair, 2007

# Opposition parties debate NHS dentistry

In continuing the recent theme of holding a special forum debate at LDC Conference, this year's Chair decided to move away from inviting the current Minister of Health, instead inviting two people who aspire to her job: for the Conservative Party, shadow health minister Dr Andrew Murrison MP and for the Liberal Democrats, health spokesperson Norman Lamb MP.

## The MPs' views

Both politicians spoke about their views of NHS dental services and of how they might be reformed to better meet the needs of dentists and their patients. The MPs were also clearly and forthrightly informed of the views of the profession.

Dr Murrison began by saying that the past year had "been disastrous for NHS dentistry", reflecting on the new contract reforms which had been opposed by the BDA and the Conservative Party. His clear message was that any radical reform such as this should be discussed with the people who know most about it – the professions (dentists and their teams) who provide the services. Dr Murrison was clear that this had not been the case under the current Government, and nor had they properly piloted the key reforms which were implemented – units of

dental activity and banded patient charges.

Norman Lamb focused his comments on the impact the reforms have had on addressing the access problem, using examples from his Norfolk constituency of the exacerbated access problems caused by the recent reforms. Again referring to the lack of piloting, Norman Lamb called for a proper assessment of what there was to learn from PDS pilots and for a focus on providing NHS care for those least able to afford a private alternative. The NHS, in his view, should provide value for money services to those most in need, which this contract had plainly failed to do.

## From the Delegates

Possibly the most powerful part of this special forum was the opportunity for the opposition health spokespeople to hear directly from dentists. Delegates from London and Northamptonshire noted that the crux of the issue was a lack of funding: unless the politicians addressed this fundamental issue, all else was lost. Delegates from North Tyne and elsewhere followed this by noting that, if the budget were fixed, politicians should then be honest about what can be bought – and not bought – for such a limited

sum. Both MPs listened to these comments and, whilst clearly noting limits on public spending, acknowledged the pressures that are present. Delegates also raised issues of funding for endodontic instruments and the principles behind this, associates self-employed status and the issue of who should fund a lay-majority GDC

## Keynote address

Prior to this debate the politicians were present to hear the day's keynote address, from GDPC Chair Lester Ellman.

Lester focused on how accurate last year's Conference delegates had been in predicting the demoralising and destabilising effects of the new contract reforms, whilst stressing that he and his BDA colleagues continued to raise these objections with the Department. It had been a tough year for both dentists and patients and the uncertainty looked like continuing.

Reasserting the demands of GDPC, Lester called upon the Government to end the focus on the units of dental activity as the only measure used to assess dentists' output; to address uncertainty in PCTs' commissioning budgets and to allow business stability by instigating long-term and saleable NHS contracts.

## Regional Groups of LDCs

Stuart Johnston, Vice-Chair of GDPC, spoke to Conference about the revised structure of regional groupings of LDCs. Stuart described how these reforms were to better group LDCs at their Strategic Health Authority level, for the purposes of liaising with SHAs and in the delivery of new advice services from the BDA to LDCs.

# Alternatives to UDAs?

Lester Ellman, Chair of GDPC, introduced a debate on alternative contract measures to units of dental activity (UDAs).

Reflecting that, for the second year running, there was near consensus amongst the profession of the damage caused by the strict reliance of UDAs as a target, Lester opened a debate on what other indicators might be

appropriate for measuring NHS dental contracts.

Delegates reflected the mood of GDPC in that there are no easy answers to this, and whilst it was noted that another destabilising change to the contract was not desirable, delegates spoke of the detrimental impact UDA targets were having on patient care and workload.

It could be speculated that

the variety of suggested alternative supports the case for having a range of contractual methods, based on agreement between commissioners and dentists, and designed to best meet local needs. This is in accordance with GDPC's call for UDAs to be removed as the only performance measure within the contract regulations

## Keeping LDCs informed

A recurring theme of this year's conference was the increasingly important role of LDCs. This is both in representing dentists as local commissioning takes effect up to and beyond 2009, and in communicating regularly with the GDPC/BDA at a central level.

As part of increased advice and support for LDCs in this process, the BDA has recently revived the regular LDC Newsletter, which all LDC Secretaries

should receive. The BDA is also increasing the scope and regularity of its advice to LDCs and is beginning a process of rolling-out training packages to dentists, which will be provided via regional groupings of LDCs.

The BDA has recently distributed advice on local commissioning. The BDA can also provide advice and assistance with issues ranging from levy collection and LDC constitutions to contract tendering.

For more information about this, or to ensure your LDC is on the mailing list, contact [ldctaskforce@bda.org](mailto:ldctaskforce@bda.org)

## Chair for 2008

The Chair of LDC Conference for 2008 is Eddie Crouch, from Birmingham LDC. Eddie will meet with the agenda committee to plan next year's conference and will discuss with BDA colleagues the agenda for LDC Officials' Day on 7 December.

Eddie is also a member of GDPC and represents the West Midlands region on the GDPC-LDC Liaison Group.

You can contact Eddie at [ecrouch9@aol.com](mailto:ecrouch9@aol.com).



# Motions Carried by LDC Conference

**Surrey:** “This conference demands the re-instatement of the right of general dental practitioners to charge patients for wasted surgery time or to receive a UDA allowance for it.”

**Bro Taf:** “This conference demands that in order to improve the oral health of children, the NHS dental contract must increase the rewards for the prevention of dental disease.”

**Rotherham:** “This conference deplores that the new dental contract discourages the care and treatment of patients with high dental needs; and consequently the contract is likely to increase inequality in health and healthcare access.”

**Bexley and Greenwich:** “This conference calls upon the DH to address urgently the need for additional funding resources to enable dentists to carry out root canal therapy under the NHS.”

**Oxfordshire:** “This conference believes that practitioners should not be expected to absorb the additional costs of centrally imposed changes in clinical practice from within existing contract values.”

**Devon:** “This conference is disappointed by the lack of continuity of funding provided by PCTs for VDPs on completion of their training.”

**Avon:** “This conference calls for the DH to ensure all new UK graduates have a fully and centrally funded VT placement and to remove the link between UDA targets and their ongoing placement in the GDS.”

**Suffolk:** “This conference calls upon the DH to censure any primary care trust that does not spend its entire floor-funded dental budget on direct patient care.”

**Bromley:** “This conference believes that one year should be the maximum recall for any dentate patient.”

**Northamptonshire:** “This conference should chastise itself for its part in allowing the DH and Her Majesty’s Government to ride roughshod over the profession.”

**South Cheshire:** “This conference believes that all PCTs should be given the authority by the DH to deduct a statutory levy from all providers and performers in order that the LDCs can continue to function effectively.”

**Bexley and Greenwich:** “This conference calls upon the DH to require PCTs to permit a 10% tolerance in over performance and under performance at the end of each accounting period.”

**Norfolk:** This conference has no confidence in the DH’s handling of the introduction of the new dental contract and has grave concerns over its ability to successfully deliver a ‘fit for purpose’ dental service in the future.”

**Norfolk:** “This conference moves that the continued increase in dental training places in the UK is a waste of tax payers’ money as there is no longer a workforce shortage to address”

**Birmingham:** “This Conference calls on the DH to demand that PCTs not be allowed to reduce the monetary value of UDAs.”

**Birmingham:** “This Conference calls for all Contractors to be offered rolling contracts with a minimum five year term, thus offering a greater degree of stability to their businesses.”

**Enfield and Haringey:** “This conference urges GDPC to press the DH to liberalise the rules governing local commissioning that have rendered the sale and transfer of dental practices virtually impossible in some PCT areas.”



## Election Results 2007

Congratulations to the Following delegates, whowere elected to posts at Conference:

Chair Elect of Conference –  
**Ian Gordon**

Honorary Auditors to the Conference –  
**Mayur Bhatt & Brett Sinson**

Representative to the Conference Agenda Committee –  
**Jane Ainsworth**

Representative to the



GDPC –  
**Henrik Overgaard-Nielsen**

Honorary Treasurer of Conference – **Tim Harker**

Representative to the Board of Managers of the British Dental Guild – **Peter Hodgkinson**

### 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 (and, in the case of the DHST, provocative) 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 Roy McBurnie

During the election process it was noted that, for procedural reasons, Roy McBurnie was not eligible to stand again for election to the Agenda Committee. On behalf of LDC Conference, Henrik Overgaard-Nielsen thanks Roy for his work on the committee. Roy has been a voice of reason, hard working and possesses a huge knowledge of the workings of our conference and he will be greatly missed on the committee. Henrik also wished to thank Brian Skinner for his wise counsel as past-Chair of Conference.

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

The LDC Officials' Day will be held on Friday 7 December 2007, probably in London.

The date and location for next year's LDC Conference has yet to be arranged. If you have any views on a venue suitable for 300 delegates, please contact Conference Chair Eddie Crouch at [ecrouch9@aol.com](mailto:ecrouch9@aol.com)