

MP welcomes 'Light at end of Dentist Tunnel'

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Released by: ANDREW TURNER

"Isle of Wight MP Andrew Turner has welcomed Wednesday's announcement of additional money for dental services on the Island and the prospect of more dentists by Christmas and a new practice by next summer.

Speaking as the Board of the IW Primary Care Trust considered a report of an independent review into dental services on the Island, Andrew Turner said,

"At last there is light at the end of the tunnel as far as Islanders' access to NHS dentists is concerned. And not a moment too soon.

"The Prime Minister promised in 1999 that everybody would have access to an NHS Dentist within two years. He broke that promise, and insulted Islanders by telling them that providing a dentist in Southsea is 'enabling access to an NHS dentist'. It has been a real struggle to get Ministers to take this issue seriously, but in November last year junior Health Minister Rosie Winterton at last conceded to me that people should not have to travel off the Island to see an NHS dentist.

"She visited the Island earlier this year and promised a review. Now the review has reported it seems that the Department of Health is admitting that we have been underfunded. It's a great pity that they couldn't have solved the funding problem earlier.

"But the real problem is more than shortage of money – it's shortage of dentists! So I am pleased at the efforts which have taken place to recruit in Poland and hope that the Polish dentists will be established here as soon as possible."

END

Follows: Andrew Turner's steps to improve the supply of NHS dentists on the Island.

November 2002

Representatives of the Local Dental Committee told me of an increasing shortage of dentists. David Crawley, of the Primary Care Trust, told me that he was hoping to open new dental surgery with two dentists the following spring.

Spring 2003

Denbigh House practice, Ryde, opened, but lists were quickly filled as dentists were leaving the NHS faster than others could be recruited.

9th September 2003

I took part in a parliamentary debate on dentists, in which I quoted the experience of a Freshwater family travelling to Southsea to see a dentist, as recommended by NHS direct.

10th October 2003

David Crawley told me of the schemes he has put forward to the Department of Health to provide more dentists.

November 2003

Mr Crawley told me:

'The Department of Health counts the Island amongst the twelve most challenged populations in the UK and are very supportive. They will give us money but we have to develop an action plan to get it. ... We will also be working with them on recruitment and they will provide us with some specialist help in this area.'

9th December 2003

Raised issue at Health Questions when Rosie Winterton, MP, a junior Health Ministers, said that she hopes that the local action plan drawn up by the Isle of Wight Primary Care Trust will help improve dental services on the Island.

3rd March 2004

Miss Winterton stated that a dentist recruitment package had been produced, that she understands that people should not have to travel off the Island for treatment, and that priority should be given to children.

May 2004

Review continues of dental provision on the Island.

September 2004

Mr Crawley announces efforts to recruit dentists in Poland and extra funding over 2 years to alleviate problems of delivering NHS dentistry on the IW.

<http://www.islandmp.org/press/press20040929.asp>