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## Dental Practitioners Association Welcomes Extended Protection for NHS Dental Budget

The DPA, the association which supports and represents dentists in general practice, has welcomed the announcement by Ann Keen MP Minister for Health, to extend ring-fencing of the dental budget for a further two years until April 2011. From April next year Primary Care Trusts and Local Health Boards had the right to reallocate money from the dental budget to non-dental projects. This extension will now provide substantial safeguards against PCTs plundering the dental budget for an additional two years.

Since 2006 Primary Care Trusts have had a duty to provide dentistry to an extent that is 'reasonable'— however dentists are worried that this is capable of wide interpretation and means much less than the comprehensive service that the public expects.

DPA Chief Executive Derek Watson said "Ring-fencing is a welcome safeguard for the budget as a whole but Primary Care Trusts will still have the right to start commissioning dental services actively in April 2009. For individual dentists there remains the risk that they will be 'constructively dismissed' from the NHS by having their contract values set below the cost of providing dentistry to a reasonable standard in their practice."

### Notes for Editors

A new NHS dental contract introduced in April 2006 has cash-limited the NHS dental budget while giving greater powers to Primary Care Trusts to direct NHS dentists, but leaving them with the business risk of establishing practices. Dentists are reducing their dependence on the NHS due to the widening gap between the terms and conditions available on the NHS and privately.

The Dental Practitioners Association was established in 1954 and supports and represents dentists in general practice on terms and conditions in the UK.

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