



Mary Coughlan TD
Minister for Social and Family Affairs
welcomes end to dentists' dispute

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD has welcomed the acceptance of the Irish Dental Association of an agreement that will protect PRSI patients resulting in the return to a full service .

Minister Coughlan welcomed the IDA's ballot accepting the deal which will result in a full return to the scheme – which means patients will have full rather than the restricted choice of dentist offered during the dispute.

An early review of the dental scheme will be undertaken with an independent chairperson. Should the review result in recommendations with financial implications, such recommendations will not take effect until July 2004.

“The settlement terms mean that the integrity of the dental treatment scheme has been fully protected for PRSI patients.

“I have rejected efforts that would have undermined the dental treatment scheme and led to the introduction of private fees for the full range of treatments. However basic services which were provided free - oral examinations, scale and polish and the treatment of mild gum disease continue under this agreement to remain free, “ said Minister Coughlan.



”I also welcome the agreement of the Irish Dental Association to display a price list of dental fillings – setting out the private patient fee and PRSI patient fee, allowing for greater transparency“ said the Minister.

Basic preventative dental treatment – including examination, scale and polish – will remain free as at present. My Department will pay a ten per cent increase in its fees to dentists and dental treatment fees where relevant will increase by ten percent for PRSI patients. This takes effect from the date of this agreement and includes the increase due last year (2002) and for this year.

PRSI patients earning under €45,000 per annum will face a ten percent increase on all treatments other than fillings which will be charged at the normal private fee less a 15 percent deduction negotiated by me and an increased contribution from the Department which rises from €26.54 to €29.20.

Extractions will cost the patient €12.34 up from €10.67.

Expenditure by the Department on dental benefit in 2002 amounted to 35.1million euro compared to 35 million in 2001.

ENDS

24th February 2003