Earl Howe takes on role as minister for dentistry

Ministerial portfolios finalised; Earl Howe takes on dentistry with exception of fluoridation; new government releases coalition plans

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Frederick Howe has been appointed as the new dentistry minister by the coalition government.

As the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Quality, he will also be responsible for NHS Constitution, NHS Commissioning Reform, Primary Care, Medicines, Pharmacy & Industry, NICE, Research and Development, Innovation and Finance and Review of Arm's Length Bodies.

Earl Howe has been opposition spokesperson for Health and Social Services in the House of Lords since 1997. In 1995, he was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, a post he relinquished at the 1997 General Election.

Following the General Election of 1992, he was Parliamentary Secretary (Lords) at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food.

The other members of the new ministerial health team are Simon Burns, Paul Burstow and Anne Milton. Ms Milton will have the responsibility for issues regarding fluoridation.

He added: 'Together, we will build an NHS in which the patient shares in making decisions; where quality standards are evidence-based and form the basis of the design of services and their management; and where the objective is consistent improvement in the outcomes we achieve, so that they are amongst the best in the world. We will create a more integrated public health service at the heart of healthcare policy and we will offer support, security and services to those in need of personal and social care'.

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government have revealed their full agreement in a document entitled The Coalition: Our Programme for Government. The 50-page document summarises government policy aims across all departments, including the NHS:

It says The government believes that the NHS is an important expression of our national values. We are committed to an NHS that is free at the point of use and available to everyone based on need, not the ability to pay.

We want to free NHS staff from political micromanagement, increase democratic participation in the NHS and make the NHS more accountable to the patients that it serves. That way we will drive up standards, support professional responsibility, deliver better value for money and create a healthier nation.

In terms of dentistry it states that: He will introduce a new dentistry contract that will focus on achieving good dental health and increasing access to NHS dentistry, with additional focus on the oral health of schoolchildren.

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