



**PRESS RELEASE**

**22/12/09**

**Dentists reminded that only customers with confirmed appointments can apply for treatment under scheme**

The Department of Social and Family Affairs today reminded dental customers about the changes announced in Budget 2010 to the Treatment Benefit Schemes. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, the Dental Benefit scheme will provide cover for an examination only.

Almost 2 million insured people will continue to be covered for the annual free examination, with some 400,000 people likely to claim for the dental examination in the coming year. It is estimated that some €13.5 million will be spent on the dental examinations in 2010.

Only those patients who by the year end have **confirmed appointments to see their dentists** will have their eligibility considered under existing rules.

Dentists need the permission of the insured person in order to make enquiries on their behalf. The Department will undertake all necessary checks to ensure that the personal data of customers is not used without their knowledge and approval.

In recent days, a number of incidences of dentists applying on behalf of multiple customers, without their knowledge or permission, have come to light. The Department has a number of cases where enquiries from practices have been made seeking approval in respect of hundreds of individuals, including enquiries about deceased people. The Department is following up on these cases and will



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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take appropriate action where it is found that the practice has acted without the knowledge or prior approval of the persons concerned.

All dentists have been written to about the changes to the Treatment Benefit Schemes. It was also pointed out to dentists that their **customers had to have agreed to treatment before an application was made on their behalf**. Any such breaches of the correct procedures will be notified to the Data Protection Commissioner.

Treatment currently in progress, but which will not be completed until after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 will be covered, provided eligibility has been established before December 31<sup>st</sup> 2009.

A spokesman for the Department said "only those patients who have **confirmed appointments** with their dentist **and have their eligibility confirmed** by the Department on or before the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 will have their claims approved under the existing arrangements. Customers applying on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 will have their claim processed under the revised conditions.

Approval for treatment lapses if not commenced within 3 months of the approval date and treatment must be completed within six months of commencing."

**ENDS**

**22<sup>nd</sup> December 2009**