the introduction of this contract been fair on PCTs?

MP: Well again I think you have touched on probably one of the greatest flaws within the contract, which is that it is so compli-
cated to manage and so difficult to work within. There is so much documentation and so much op-
portunity for the PCTs to get it wrong, and when they get it wrong to blame someone else. I can assure you we will pilot the
legislation that comes forward from the Conservatives. We will publish a green paper and white paper and we will work with the
whole industry including hygienists and technicians who are also struggling with the increased leg-
islation that they have to deal with, such as registration. This is so that we can have as simple a contract as possible that protects
the tax payer, but at the same time gives a service.

NK: Can you give me an idea as to how you will make this happen?

MP: Well the key has to be reg-
istration. One of the great scams
that is going on at the moment is people are being fooled into thinking
they are registered with a den-
tist. They haven’t got a dentist; you
and I know that once you’re treat-
ment plan stops, you don’t have a
dentist until the next time your
treatment plan starts, and if the
dentist has used their UDAs they
may have to find another dentist if
they wish to have their treatment
under the NHS. To have people
registered with dentists costs
nothing and I believe that will be
the start of the rebuilding process
we need within dentistry.

NK: Do you think NHS den-
tistry has been poorly funded?

MP: No, I actually think there has been a lot of money gone into NHS dentistry in the last 10 years which has been very, very badly
spent.

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we need within dentistry.
South-west London resident, Anselm Mcleod, 38, had avoided dentists for some time after becoming dissatisfied with private treatment. After getting acute toothache from several dislodged fillings, he rang an NHS dentist and was offered an appointment the day after.

He says: ‘I needed to visit the dentist quite urgently, because I hadn’t had a check-up for over a year, because private treatment had put me off.

‘I changed from private to NHS, partly because of cost. Previously I went to a dental practice for seven years, which gave patients NHS or private treatment. Prices shot up when the surgery went completely private two years ago. But the service was no better, though I was paying more.

Anselm chose an NHS dentist from the PCT website. Although there were no NHS dentists in ‘posh’ Clapham Common, there were many in nearby Brixton.

He says: ‘The NHS treatment I received was second to none. The dentist was very thorough, professional, caring and honest. Each session lasted 25-30 minutes. He took the time to do a good job.

Anselm’s treatment spanned four visits over one month and he felt all the treatment he received was really necessary, with appointments spaced out according to the dentist’s advice. He adds: ‘After I completed the course of antibiotics he prescribed, he asked me a series of detailed questions to check my discomfort level, before deciding on further treatment.

‘He did an excellent job technically and his patient care and consideration could not have been better.’

Anselm also thinks the amount he was charged was ‘incredibly reasonable’ at under £45 for the whole lot. ‘It was reassuring that the NHS dental price tariff is clear and carefully explained to me in advance.’ The dentist also gave him a full ‘hygienist’ treatment, privately, in addition to NHS scaling and polishing.

Anselm comments: ‘It was good to have the dentist himself carrying out the ‘hygienist’ treatment. He said that the NHS regards such treatment as “cosmetic”. But I cannot understand why such a basic, preventative measure, is not included in NHS dentistry.’

He concludes: ‘I would like to get across that I have read much negative press about NHS dentistry, specifically about confusion over costs and inappropriate, rushed treatment.

‘My experience was completely contrary to this. I had excellent treatment from a consummate professional as well as advice on prevention, carried out with a high regard for patient comfort, satisfaction and quality. The dentist reassured me that if anything bothered me not to hesitate to come back, because prevention should always precede cure.’

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**View From The Mouth**

The views of dental professionals are frequently read and talked about. But it’s rarer to get an opinion about treatment from the patient themself. So what is NHS dentistry like from the perspective of the patient on the dental couch? Yvonne Gordon talks to a patient, who was treated at an NHS dental surgery as a new patient.

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