Dentist minister loses seat in General Election

Ministerial Health team decimated by lost seats, lack of clear outcome leaves both dentistry and country in limbo

The minister in charge of NHS dentistry, Alan Keen, has lost her seat in the General Election. Dubbed Mrs Expenses for her role in the MP expenses scandal, Mrs Keen lost her seat of Brentford and Isleworth to the Conservatives.

She and her husband Alan Keen, were investigated by the parliamentary commissioner for standards earlier this year, after they combined second homes allowances to buy an apartment in a development at Waterloos in London.

The rest of the Labour health team also lost their seats, with the exception of Secretary of State Andy Burnham. The Conservative health team managed to keep their seats as Conservative MP for Mole Valley in Surrey and even increased his share of the vote by 2.8 per cent.

He picked up 51,265 votes out of the 54,524 total, a 57.5 per cent share and more than double the number gained by his nearest rival, Liberal Democrat Alice Humphreys.

Sir Paul said he was 'pleased and relieved' at the result. He added: "It shows the support that I have because of the time I have spent working in Mole Valley."

Labour’s Anas Sarwar comfortably beat the SNP’s (Scottish Nationalist Party) candidate by almost 16,000 votes, in Glasgow Central. Mr Sarwar polled 55,998 votes, while Osama Saeed, the SNP candidate, polled 39,357. The 27-year-old worked for more than four years as an NHS general practitioner in Paisley before stepping down a few months ago to concentrate on campaigning.

The General Election with its uncertain outcome has left the country in turmoil with Conservative winning 306 seats, Labour 258 and Liberal Democrats 57.

The Conservatives needed 326 seats to win outright and now the country faces the prospect of a hung parliament.

The Dental Practitioners Association has dismissed the outcome of the election as an ‘unsatisfactory mess’. Derek Watson, its chief executive claimed that dentistry has been plunged into uncertainty and called it a ‘very unsatisfactory mess’.

The British Dental Association refused to comment on the result as it is apolitical. The British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF) claimed that the race to become prime minister was very dependent on a good smile. A national survey from the BDHF found that almost 70 per cent of us think that people who smile have a greater chance of being successful.

The outcome leaves both dentistry and country in limbo. Another poll carried out by the Foundation before the election found that Conservative leader David Cameron was the leader with the best smile, with 58 per cent of people preferring his smile to that of his election rivals.

Labour’s Gordon Brown came in second with 55 per cent while Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg came in third with 29 per cent.

The result of the survey seems to be borne out by the election results.

As Dental Tribune went to press, discussions were still being held between the Tories and the Lib Dems over a power-sharing deal. The Lib Dem team has also been meeting with senior Labour officials to see what a Lib Dem/Labour pact would mean for the country.

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News in Brief

National Smile Month

National Smile Month was launched in the House of Parliament on 15 May, organised by the British Dental Health Foundation, this year’s National Smile Month tagline of TeethTalk aims to highlight the importance of looking after your teeth and maintaining oral health. The official launch was hosted by Parliamentary sponsor Sir Paul Bristow MP. The campaign itself runs between May 16 and June 16 and encourages people of all ages to get involved and talk about their teeth, in the hope of being able to improve general standards of dental health. Chief executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter said: “Getting people to talk about their teeth and dental habits is vital in our goal of improving the state of oral health in this country. We have had a tremendous response to the campaign, particularly in the last couple of years, but we must work harder to ensure this year’s National Smile Month can build on that success.”

Care Quality Commission

From April 2011, all dental practices in England will have to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This represents a significant change for private practices as it will be the first time that they will be formally regulated. The CQC has stated that the aim of the new registration system is to make sure that people can expect services to meet essential standards of quality and safety that respect their dignity and protect their rights.

Professor Nairn Wilson

Professor Nairn Wilson has been appointed leader of the Dental Clinical Academic Group. Professor Wilson is currently the dean and head of the King’s College London Dental Institute at Guy’s and St Thomas’ and King’s College Hospitals, and deputy vice principal (Health) at King’s College London. King’s Health Partners’ executive director, Professor Robert Lechler, said: “I am delighted that we have made further appointments to the positions of clinical academic group leaders.”

Research prize awarded

Dr Maria Beteregui, lecturer in Periodontology of UCL Eastman Dental Institute was awarded the Andre Schroeder Research Prize at the World Symposium of the International Team for Implantology (ITI) in Geneva, Switzerland. Dr Beteregui was commended for her work on ‘The Effect of Experimental Diabetes on Guided Bone Regeneration’.

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