Small change
A PCT in Cornwall has wasted £50,000 on renting empty, purpose-built NHS dentist rooms over the last two and a-half years.

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BDA fights the good fight

D entists up and down the country are eagerly wait- ing to see if the High Court is going to rule in favour of an appeal by the Department of Health, that gives health bosses the right to terminate dental contracts without cause or notice.

The DH lodged the appeal earlier this year after Eddie Crouch, an orthodontist in Birming- ham, won a Judicial Review which said that primary care trusts were wrong to insert a clause in the NHS dental con- tracts allowing them to termi- nate the contract without cause or notice.

The DH was battling it out in the High Court, against the British Dental Association (BDA) which is backing Dr Eddie Crouch, as Dental Tribune went to press.

A spokesman for the BDA said: ‘The judge has retired to make his decision. We have no idea yet as to when this is going to be.’

The BDA has challenged the legal appeal saying such notice clauses are unlawful and unrea- sonable.

Back in April 2006, South Birm- ingham Primary Care Trust in- cluded a without grounds termina- tion clause in Dr Crouch’s contract.

If the DH wins the appeal, PCTs would have the power to end dentists’ contracts with as little as one day’s notice.

Peter Ward, chief executive of the British Dental Association, said: ‘Effectively the Department is saying that a primary care trust should be able to say to a dentist, your con- tract will come to an end tomorrow, just because we feel like it.’

‘Every right-minded person can see that this is totally unre-asonable and would destroy the vi- ability of family dental practices. How can dentists plan for the fu- ture if they have no security? A success for the Department of Health would be bad for dentists, bad for patients and disastrous for the health of the nation.’

A reversal of the original High Court judgment will apply to all personal dental service agree- ments and will leave dentists in a very vulnerable position.

Super surgery
The first super surgery hous- ing dental and maternity services under the same roof as traditional family doctors has opened in England.

Health Secretary Alan Johnson has opened the first one – the Hillside Bridge Health Centre in West Yorkshire.

The new centres will open for every primary care trust in Eng- land.

Yorkshire, is the first of 152 new ‘super surgeries’ – one for every primary care trust in England.

The new centres will open from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week and patients will not have to register to be seen.

The government claims that the super surgeries will have a strong focus on promoting health, particularly for hard-to-reach groups, and on re- ducing health inequalities.

‘Botched’ reforms fail 1.2m people
M ore than 1.2m fewer people saw an NHS den- tist in the two years up to June this year than in the last two years under the old dental con- tract, according to figures from the NHS Information Centre.

However the data also shows that NHS dentists are carrying out more treatments for the patient they do see, with a rise of 1.4 per cent reported by the Information Centre.

June 2008, shows that in the two years up to the end of June 2008, 26.8m people - which equates to 52.7 per cent of the population, saw an NHS dentist.

The percentage of people seen by an NHS dentist varied from area to area with a higher percentage of people tending to see an NHS dentist in northern strategic health authority (SHA) areas compared with those in the south of England.

The report, NHS Dental Sta- tistics for England: Quarter 1, 30 June 2008, shows that in the two years up to June 2008, 26.8m people - which equates to 52.7 per cent of the population, saw an NHS dentist.

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