BDA fights the good fight

Dentists up and down the country are eagerly waiting 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 Birmingham, won a Judicial Review which said that primary care trusts were wrong to insert a clause in the NHS dental contracts allowing them to terminate 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 unreasonable.

Back in April 2006, South Birmingham Primary Care Trust included a without grounds termination 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.

Every right-minded person can see that this is totally unreasonable and would destroy the viability of family dental practices. How can dentists plan for the future 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 agreements and will leave dentists in a very vulnerable position.

‘Botched’ reforms fail 1.2m people

More than 1.2m fewer people saw an NHS dentist in the two years up to June 2008 than in the last two years under the old dental contract, 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, 26.4m 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.

‘This appeal must send shivers down the backs of all practitioners’

Dr Crouch contested the contract offered to him but signed it in December to ensure he could continue to provide NHS care to his patients.

He said the DH appeal ‘must send shivers down the backs of all practitioners’.

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Small change
A PCT in Cornwall has wasted £30,000 on renting empty, purpose-built NHS dentist rooms over the last two-and-a-half years.

Xmas credit?
This Christmas the credit card will be swept the world over, so it’s worth knowing what deals are out there before you start.

Mr Dean
Working in the Navy, launching dental courses, supervising training— is there anything he can’t do? Meet Professor Lambert-Humble.

Top-hole school
When it comes to scooping awards for being the UK’s best dental school, size doesn’t matter. Head of dentistry explains why.

Money Matters
Borrow money for free this Christmas

Book auction
One of the first books on dentistry, written by King George III’s dentist, is up for auction.

Thomas Berdmore, wrote A Treatise on the Disorders and Deformities of the Teeth and Gums and the Most Rational Methods of Treating Them in 1779. It is bound in its original calf skin and is being auctioned in Derby. It is expected to fetch £500. It contains advice such as straightening teeth using gold wire. If that fails, the alternative was to ‘break the teeth into order by means of a strong pair of crooked pliers’. Children with milk teeth are told in the book to ‘chew upon coral, wax and suchlike bodies’ to prevent decays.

MBE award
A dentist in South Tyneside has been awarded an MBE for his services to NHS dentistry.

Matthew Gill, a partner at Dean Road Dental Practice in Whitley Bay, is the first of 152 practitioners to be awarded an MBE for their services to the NHS.

The government claims that the awards are to recognise the work they do seeing more treatments for the patient they do see, with a rise of 1.4 per cent reported by the Information Centre.

The report, NHS Dental Statistics for England: Quarter 1, 30

News in brief

News and opinions

Money Matters

Education Tribune

Education Tribune

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The first “payment on account” for 2008 - 2009

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