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BDA fights the good fight

Dentists 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 Birm-
ingham, 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 retured 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 say-
ing 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.

‘Botched’ reforms fail 1.2m people

More than 1.2m fewer people saw an NHS den-
sist 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.

The report, NHS Dental Sta-
tistics for England: Quarter 1, 30

June 2008, shows that in the two years up to the end of June 2008, 28.8m 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 government claims that the super surgeries will have to register to be seen. It is expected to fetch £500. It con-
tains advice such as straighten-
ing teeth using gold wire. If that fails, the alternative was to ‘break the teeth into or-
der 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 pre-
vent 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, was presented with an MBE by Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace in London. Mr Gill, from Whitburn, who has no idea who nominated him for the honour, said: ‘It was a special day, a fabulous experience and something I will remember for my whole life. I feel lucky and very privi-
eliged to have received this honour.’

Super surgery

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

Health Secretary Alan Johnson has opened in England.

The Hillside Bridge Health Care Centre in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Mr Gill gave him a big smile, according to Mr Gill who said: ‘His teeth were very good, slightly crowded but very clean.’

Small change

A PCT in Cornwall has wasted £50,000 on renting empty, purpose-
built NIS 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.

Book auction

One of the first books on den-
tistry, written by King George III’s dentist, is up for auc-
tion. Thomas Berdmore, wrote the book A Treatise on the Dis-
orders and Deformities of the Teeth and Guns 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 con-
tains advice such as straighten-
ing teeth using gold wire. If that fails, the alternative was to ‘break the teeth into or-
der 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 pre-
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Clawback payments reach £120m

The ‘botched contract’ is forcing dentists to give back £120m to the NHS because all the units of dental targets agreed with local health authorities.

Around half of dental practices have fallen short of the targets and will have to make clawbacks to their local health authority.

The British Dental Association fears these clawbacks may put some practices out of business and could lead to more dentists quitting the NHS.

Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by DPAS, provider of dental insurance that supports practices in of-fering their own practice-branded plans, reveals that although thousands of patients are still on waiting lists for NHS treatment, five million fewer treatments were carried out in 2007-08 than were budgeted for by the health service.

In Leicester, for example, more than 9 per cent of all UDA (units of dental activity) have not been delivered and 21 dental practices face repayments of £50,000 or more. Across the country, 89 per cent of primary care trusts responded to a survey that found a total of 41 UDA contracts where targets were missed by £50,000 or more.

Peter Ward, the chief executive of the BDA, said that dentists who failed to meet their targets in the first year were likely to have failed to do so again last year, creating a ‘roll-over effect’.

He said: ‘Once again this highlights problems with a target-driven contract that contains one crude measure of performance, which has long been criti-cised by the profession and pa-tient representative groups.’

Quentin Skinner, the chair-man of DPAS, said: ‘For those dentists who fell rather short of the mark, the future for them in the NHS certainly looks bleak.’

However the Department of Health has said it will not con-sider waiving financial claw-backs for dentists.

Mike Penning, Shadow Health Minister, said: ‘These figures show, yet again, why we need to rip up Labour’s botched contract and move towards a registration system based on clinical need, not cash. That is why innovation was a priority of our incoming dental ill-health rather than react-ing to it.’

The BDA requested an amnesty for dentists who had completed a significant amount – but not all – of their units of dental activity (UDA) for 2006/07.

Social networking site launch

A trio of inspiring and innova-tive teachers won awards at this year’s Dental Defence Union Educational Awards.

Alison Grant at Bristol Dental School, won the award for DCP (dental care professional) Teacher of the Year. Ms Grant said: ‘It’s great to receive this recognition. I was first inspired to go into dentistry by the enthusiasm of a hygienist who treated me as a teenager and I want to thank her. DCP teachers are not just teaching students to pass an exam; we are teaching them to be-cone dental hygienists and I be-lieve that communicating our enthu-siasm is an essential part of this.’

The award for Dental Teacher of the Year was won by Professor Dayananda Samarawickrama at Harts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry.

Professor Samarawickrama dedicated the award to his students, col leagues and school and said: ‘I have been humbled by this experi-ence and I’m obviously very pleased to have won. My late father used to say that education is the best gift one can give so it is particularly important to me that I have won this award for my work as a teacher.’

While Stephen Brookes of the Oxford Deanery scooped the Voca-tional Teacher of the Year award. He said: ‘It’s very gratifying to be recog-nised by my peers for all my efforts over the past 12 months and the pre-vious 18 years. I’d like to thank my vocational trainees, my course ad-visor and the Oxford Deanery. Having been nominated a couple of years ago, it’s wonderful to have ac-tually won the award this time.’

Rupert Hogben-Hogben, head of the DDU (Dental Defence Union) praised the winners and said: ‘Their commitment to dental education over many years and their level of experience is clearly crucial in enabling them to com-municate effectively with their stu-dents and VDPs (vocational dental practitioners) in the classroom or surgery.

They provide an informed and invaluable source of advice and guidance to young dental profes-sionals at the start of their careers.

The winner in each awards cat-eory received £1,000 towards the cost of educational materials for their schools or Vocational Train-ing (VT) schemes.

The theme of the day was ‘Edu-cation, Ethics and Aesthetics’ and after the finalists’ presentations, Derrick Willmot, professor of oral-health at Sheffield University and dean of the faculty of dental surgery and Richard Ascroft, pro-fessor of bioethics at Queen Mary University of London addressed the issue of whether purely cosmetic dentistry and where aesthetic treatments may have a therapeutic outcome.

Nicholas Peacock, a barrister from Hambatham Chambers, spoke about the legal issues that consumers have to bear in mind when choosing treatments, to help avoid a complaint to the General Dental Council or a claim.

DDU awards the innovative teachers

‘Botched’ reforms fail 1.2m people

A social networking site has been launched for den-sists.

Dentist Network is a social network dedicated to the dental profession.

The site provides related con-tent, extensive practitioner, and users are encouraged to interact by providing and uploading their own video and picture content, along with polls, blogs and fo-rums.

Dentist Network (www.dentist-networks.com) has already attracted keen interest from den-tistry students using the site as a resource to study and learn from fully trained professionals. Den-tist Network has also joined forces with the International As-sociation of Dental Students (IADS) giving members the chance to network globally over their common profession.

Tomasz Spindler, president of the IADS said: ‘I’ve had the idea of the website as soon as I saw it. It is fan-tastic that such a resource has been created and will be a huge benefit to dentistry students worldwide, al-lowing them to interact with each other and compare practices and proce-dures, as well as getting first hand advice from those in the know.’

He added: ‘Our latest figures show that there were 655 more dentists in NHS dental in 2007/08 than in the previous year. There are now 12 new NHS dental practices opening all the time with dental companies as well as individual dentists bidding to provide more NHS dental services across the country. This proves our reforms are working.’

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