

John gets his teeth into dental crisis

MP JOHN Penrose has raised the problems of NHS dentistry in North Somerset with Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Speaking during Prime Minister's question time, John highlighted the case of the Houston Dental Surgery in Milton Road, Weston-super-Mare.

The Houston Surgery is the largest NHS dentist in the South West, serving 30,000 NHS patients.

Since April, funding for the practice has come from a new dental services contract, put in place by the Government. This has left

the surgery under-funded by £550,000. 6,500 patients faced the axe from NHS Lists.

The surgery has appealed to health bosses for more money. But the practice has been told that extra cash will only become available if another local NHS surgery closes down.

Rather than cut patients from its lists altogether, the Houston practice is instead providing NHS patients with a reduced service, leaving them to pay privately for treatment that had previously been available on the NHS.

Mr Penrose asked the Prime Minister to intervene. He also wrote to Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt appealing for help. Last month, John made a second appeal to Health Minister Rosie Winterton during health questions in the House of Commons.

Speaking after the debate, John said: "I am bitterly disappointed by the responses we have had so far. The Government can't continue to pass the buck onto the PCT.

"North Somerset Primary Care Trust has made it



6,500 NHS places are under threat

plain that they simply haven't been given enough cash.

"The only way they can provide more money to the Houston surgery is if another local NHS surgery closes down.

"It is incredibly difficult for local people to get onto

NHS dental lists. Across the country, over half the population are not even registered with a dentist.

"Having a major practice like the Houston Surgery is worth its weight in gold. If they and other local NHS providers are forced to cut their NHS lists and

go private, then it is clear that something is seriously wrong with the proposed new system.

"The clock is ticking for over 6,000 of my constituents who will be thrown off their NHS dentist's list . . . unless the

Government acts now."

STOP PRESS... John has recently been told that the extra money will be available, but is waiting for official written confirmation.



JOHN Penrose

MP's warning on conditions at Guantanamo Bay

JOHN Penrose has tabled a Motion in Parliament with Labour MP Clare Short and Lib Dem MP Nick Harvey expressing concern about the alleged treatment of terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay.

The Motion raises concerns about the conditions under which Guantanamo Bay detainees on hunger strike are allegedly tied down and force fed through a tube three times a day.

The allegations were made in a BBC interview and are currently the subject of legal challenge.

Mr Penrose who recently spoke at the 20th anniversary of Weston Amnesty International said: "The people detained in Guantanamo

Bay have never been to court.

"If they're guilty, then let's put them on trial in a proper court and hand out some strong sentences.

"But until then they should be treated in accordance with national and international law.

"That's what sets us apart from the killers of Al Qaeda, and makes us better than them.

"We all despise terrorism, kidnapping and murder, but using techniques such as force-feeding and restraint chairs on people who haven't been properly tried and convicted is completely unacceptable"

