

'CONSIDER YOURSELF AS ONE' CHIEF DENTAL OFFICER TELLS DENTISTRY'S WORKFORCE



JUNIOR DENTISTS BALLOTTED ON INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Junior hospital dentists in England will be balloted on industrial action as the government prepares to impose a flawed contract.

This is the first time members of the dental profession have been asked to consider industrial action, their trade union the British Dental Association (BDA) announced on 9 October.

These NHS dentists are employed on the same terms of service as junior doctors, who are set to be balloted by the British Medical Association (BMA).

Peter Dyer, Chair of the BDA's Central Committee for Hospital Dental Staff, said: 'From the start doctors and dentists have asked for a fair contract, one that works for patients and practitioners. We are taking this step because the government is now set to impose a contract that fails both tests.'

'Our profession has never gone down the road of industrial action before. We have not taken this decision lightly, but an unprecedented attack on our members' interests requires an unprecedented response. It is now vital that all the NHS dentists affected by this contract have their say.'

Mick Armstrong, Chair of the BDA, said: 'These professionals form a small, but vital part of our NHS. This contract is bad for them, their families and their patients. It's bad for the oral health of Britain.'

'Hospitals are at crisis point dealing with record numbers of children requiring oral surgery. This contract represents a frontal assault on an already overstretched workforce. These dentists don't expect special treatment, just a fair deal, and industrial action may now be necessary in order to achieve it.'

'All healthcare professionals have a stake in this. We are determined to stand up for the next generation, and secure a contract that won't put their futures or patient care in jeopardy.'

Further information is available on the BDA website.

The distinctive roles within a dental team need to be overlooked if dentistry's workforce is to successfully meet the oral health needs of a future population.

That was the message from the new Chief Dental Officer (CDO) for England, Sara Hurley, when she addressed delegates at the British Association of Dental Therapists (BADT) national conference last month (25-26 September).

Joining her predecessor, Barry Cockcroft, in delivering the event's keynote speech, she advocated the policy of dental teams considering themselves as 'one entity' when tackling dental health care.

She also promised to act on any ideas put forward by DCPs in order to successfully facilitate the necessary changes for future care.

Speaking after the conference, she said: 'The conference was an outstanding success, testament to the talent and energy of an exceptional group of health care professionals. I was honoured to be present and to initiate a dialogue, which I am confident will endure and produce high value health dividends for our patients.'

BADT president, Fiona Sandom, said: 'The fact the CDO Sara Hurley chose to address dental therapists in her first 100

days in post signifies how much she values DCPs and views us as an integral part of delivering dental treatment. She spoke of the dental profession – and not of dentists and DCPs – which I thought interesting and demonstrated a mind-set.'

Amanda Gallie, BADT president elect, also welcomed her address. She said: 'It's heartening to hear Sara Hurley acknowledge the value of DCPs and to hear that she wishes to keep in touch with us, offering to be a sounding board and conduit for our ideas and suggestions.'

In his contribution to the opening presentation of the conference, Barry Cockcroft, past CDO for England and now non-executive director of Mydentist, said the profession must 'learn from the past in order to predict the future.'

He argued that data – and accurate interpretation of that data – was key to developing services for the future and, whilst acknowledging the current inequalities in child dental health, maintained that these could not be tackled by improvement of dental services alone.

The joint presentation concluded that segmentation of the workforce was not a 'sensible way' to plan and deliver the best outcomes.

GROWING NUMBER OF DENTISTS WOULDN'T RECOMMEND THEIR PROFESSION

Half of dentists would not recommend their profession to friends and family members, according to new research by Wesleyan, the specialist financial services provider for dentists.

In sharp contrast to findings a year ago, 50% of dentists said they would not recommend the profession, compared with 31% in 2014.

More than eight out of 10 (81%) dentists also say the increasing cost of education and training, along with changes to pay and conditions, will deter future generations from choosing the profession, up from 74% a year ago.

Despite their concerns for the future, just under three quarters (71%) of those already working in the profession say they would choose the same profession if they could start again, compared with 60% in 2014. However, 94% admit increased pressure caused by recent changes in the profession is a major issue.

When asked what they were most concerned about over the next five years, the introduction of the new NHS dental contract (in England and Wales) emerged as the biggest worry for 60% of dentists followed by rising costs in the profession (58%).