

FGDP(UK) to MPs: NHS dentistry is neglected, unviable and unattractive

The Faculty of General Dental Practice (FGDP(UK)) has told a committee of MPs that NHS dentistry is 'highly neglected and under significant strain', and 'increasingly unviable and professionally unattractive' for dental practices and dentists.

Submitting evidence to the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into dentistry services, the Faculty said that the NHS dental contract in England is 'ill-conceived and not fit for purpose', that its 'crude and ineffective' payment system has 'perverse incentives' which penalise practices which look after patients with greater need, and that many patients struggle to access NHS dental care as 'the funding simply does not provide the universal offer they expect'.

In a wide-ranging response, FGDP says that as the amount of activity commissioned from each dental practice changes from year to year, practices are denied 'the certainty needed to invest, recruit and train to meet future needs'. It also asserts that a combination of reduced commissioning, decreasing remuneration and the contractual restrictions on NHS work has led to many practices either closing or reducing their commitment to the NHS. The response calls for annual contractual clawback to be replaced with a multi-year cycle, and says the

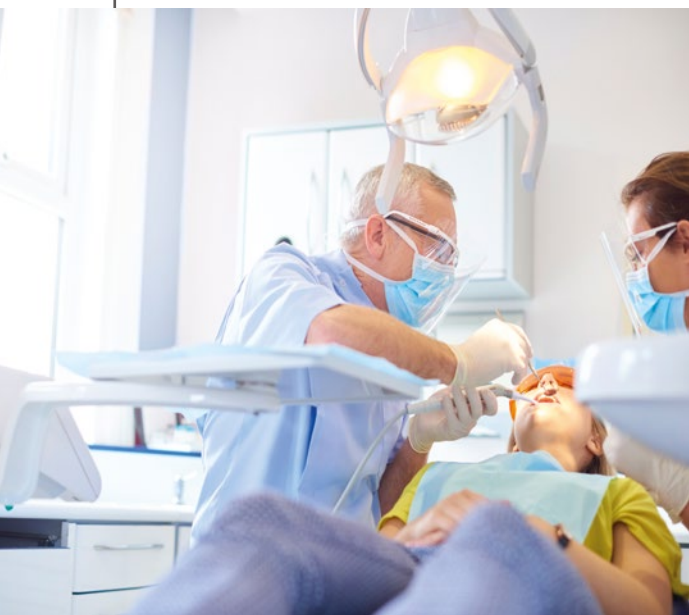
new NHS contract should also 'include a significant element of capitation... re-introduce patient registration... and reward preventative activity, minimal-intervention dentistry and out-of-surgery visits to less mobile patients'.

'The Select Committee's inquiry is an opportunity for the profession to lay bare the shortcomings of a system which is ignoring the needs of patients'

The Faculty says that put together these factors have led to the number of adults in England seeing an NHS dentist every two years declining to 50%, and accuses government of peddling a 'disingenuous fiction' that comprehensive NHS dental care is available to all.

The submission also calls for the NHS to 'remove the outdated and unnecessary restrictions on the roles played by members of the wider dental team' and to 'support the development of career pathways for general dental practice'.

Ian Mills, Dean of FGDP(UK), said: 'Government has been reluctant to acknowledge that problems exist in NHS dentistry, let alone address the underlying issues. The very least we need now is an honest conversation. The Select Committee's inquiry is an opportunity for the profession to lay bare the shortcomings of a system which is ignoring the needs of patients, driving inequality and failing members of the dental team. It is hoped that the Committee will then encourage Ministers to act swiftly to ensure that NHS dentistry has a viable future.'



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Helping the BDA Benevolent Fund deliver Christmas cheer

Following on from the 'One Day Changes Lives' campaign, the BDA Benevolent



Fund wants to show the profession how one small act can make a big difference.

The Charity helps dental students, dentists and their families when they face hardship, supporting those who do not have the funds to pay for some of the normal things in life, ranging from contributions towards food and daily living costs, funds to improve the quality of life for those retired due to ill health, to more specific needs like paying someone's annual retention fee or indemnity, to help them get back on their feet and into the profession.

The impact of the relatively small but incredibly caring and generous group that makes up the dental profession cannot be overstated. There are many stories out there that evoke a feeling of sadness but, working together, lives can genuinely be changed for the better on an ongoing basis.

Between this month and the end of the year, the team at the BDA Benevolent Fund will be doing all they can – as they always do – to keep a roof over people's heads, as well as fed, safe and warm.

They will also give people additional support so that they can feel a sense of normalcy, for example ensuring the children of beneficiaries do not miss out on a present, or that no-one spends Christmas Day alone because they cannot afford to travel to their family.

If you, or someone you know are in need, please contact the BDA Benevolent Fund straight away. If you're worried about your reputation (although there is obviously no shame in needing help), everything is confidential – simply call 020 7486 4994.

If you are able to make a donation, please visit <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1014657>.