**BSPD calls for equality of access to specialist care for 0-16s with highest dental needs**

New research into the UK’s dental specialist workforce suggests that the number of specialists in paediatric dentistry should be trebled to meet the needs of children aged 0-16.1

There are currently 227 specialists in paediatric dentistry working in the UK and David Auld, Chairman of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry’s specialists’ branch, says urgent steps should be taken to incentivise specialist training.

Auld said: ‘You can see clearly on the map created by the study’s authors that there are areas of relatively good access very close to areas with much poorer specialist to child population ratio, often in more remote areas.

‘Children living in rural areas will have clinical needs just as children in urban populations do, although the specific needs aren’t looked at in this study. I hope that individual health boards and regional NHS teams will look closely at these inequalities and take action to improve access for children to specialist-led care where it is required.’

The concept of developing specialist-led services is supported by BSPD which believes that by appointing consultants and specialists to leadership roles in areas where access is poor, the workforce can be up-skilled, developed and supported.

Urshla Devalia, BSPD’s Honorary Secretary and a Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry said that there are already parts of the country where specialists are being given a leadership role with a mandate to support GDPs in rural practices. However, more specialists are needed as well as more innovative models of care.

Devalia added: ‘There is no shortage of dental graduates wanting to train as a paediatric dentist but the recruitment system and the absence of collaboration between employers are barriers to developing the paediatric dental workforce.

‘We need to be working creatively and collaboratively to ensure that every child and young person is able to access highest quality, specialist-led paediatric dental services.’

Reference