

## 4am queues for NHS care risk becoming the new normal

© zubada/Stock/Getty Images Plus



The British Dental Association has urged government to step up as Leigh, Greater Manchester, joined the growing list of communities where struggling patients have queued from the break of dawn to secure access to NHS dentistry.

Daily queues starting as early as 4am have been reported outside the Avenue Dental Centre in Leigh town centre, which offers appointments to all NHS patients on a first-come-first-serve basis.

This follows reports from Faversham, Kent where a practice received 27,000 calls for just 60 NHS slots, and in Kings Lynn which in May saw queues of more than 300 also form from 4am.

Wannabe patient Leah Price, who requires regular dental treatment as a result of Crohn's Disease, photographed the scenes. Leah told local media: 'The people working in the NHS are trying their hardest. But in this country, people should not be camping outside a dentist at 4am on camp chairs just to get on the NHS patient list, it's wrong.'

'Dental treatment is just as important at the end of the day as other health issues

and I'm just in disbelief that this is where we are at. I wasn't expecting to be added to waiting lists that are two years long and to be within a chance of being seen, I need to camp outside. I also have a child that I have to take to school, so waiting outside for hours isn't an option for me, it's a mess.'

A recent Health and Social Care Committee inquiry described the state of the service as 'totally unacceptable in the 21st century', setting out fundamental changes centred on reform of the dysfunctional NHS contract dentists work to. The BDA has urged the government to sign up to this reform plan, which it has characterised as an 'instruction manual' to save NHS dentistry. A recovery plan for the service – pledged by government in April – has yet to be published. Dentist leaders warned that without fundamental reform the exodus of dentists from the NHS will grow, and the service will not have a future.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'These scenes have no place in a wealthy 21st century nation, but risk becoming the new normal for millions of patients. The Conservative Party will gather in Greater Manchester in October and Ministers need to come armed with solutions to this crisis or NHS dentistry won't have a future.'

## Date for the diary

On Friday 17 November, the BDA's Annual Dento-legal study day returns, looking in depth at '*Professional boundaries – have the regulators pushed them too far?*' a theme also covered in this issue by Dr Onkar Dhanoya.<sup>1</sup>

The event, held at the BDA's office in London, will cover topics including:

- What constitutes professionalism and what is serious?
- Inappropriate behaviour and professionalism, what and how the regulator interprets

- How to maintain confidentiality including the use of social media
- Discrimination and inclusivity
- Can you teach professionalism and how?
- Real-life cases and the top legal learnings.

For further information on the programme, speakers and how to book, visit [www.bda.org/events/dentolegalday](http://www.bda.org/events/dentolegalday).

### Reference

1. Dhanoya O. Has it always been this difficult to be professional? *BDJ In Pract* 2023; **36**: 34-35.

## BSPD welcomes new President

Newcastle University's Director of Paediatric Dentistry, Professor Paula Waterhouse has been welcomed in as the new British Society of Paediatric Dentistry President for 2023/4, taking over from Dr Jenny Harris.

As well as her academic and teaching work, Professor Waterhouse has taken a leadership role in driving a refreshed curriculum perspective that has anti-racism, diversity and inclusivity at the heart of its spirit and content. This is a direction which BSPD embraces and the Society's intention during her Presidential year is to support Paula's work to help other dental schools, associations and institutes planning to go through a similar process.

Professor Paula Waterhouse said: 'Equality, diversity and inclusion are existing priorities for BSPD, and work is ongoing to consult with members to ensure broad representation and content. So, I am looking forward to my year as President as an opportunity to share the ED&I research and recommendations I have been leading at Newcastle University.'

'We know that vulnerable children are bearing the brunt of health inequities in our country. Making sure from the outset that every piece of teaching content, every message and every image reflect the diversity of our patients is key. We must respect, our broad national community to help the generations of vulnerable children to come to grow up supported by the good and fair paediatric oral health services they deserve. Unconscious bias is a barrier that paediatric dentistry must tackle – and I am delighted that BSPD will be taking on this challenge in earnest during my Presidential year.'

