

## BDA BENEVOLENT FUND IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU



Following the illuminating results of a survey into financial and wellbeing issues faced by dental students, **Chair of the BDA Benevolent Fund, Dr Ros Keeton**, explains how the charity is poised to support students facing such challenges

If you are feeling stressed or burned out, you are not alone. Our survey revealed that 90% of dental students feel stressed or burned out, and 74% believe COVID-19 has impacted their mental health.

### Students under pressure

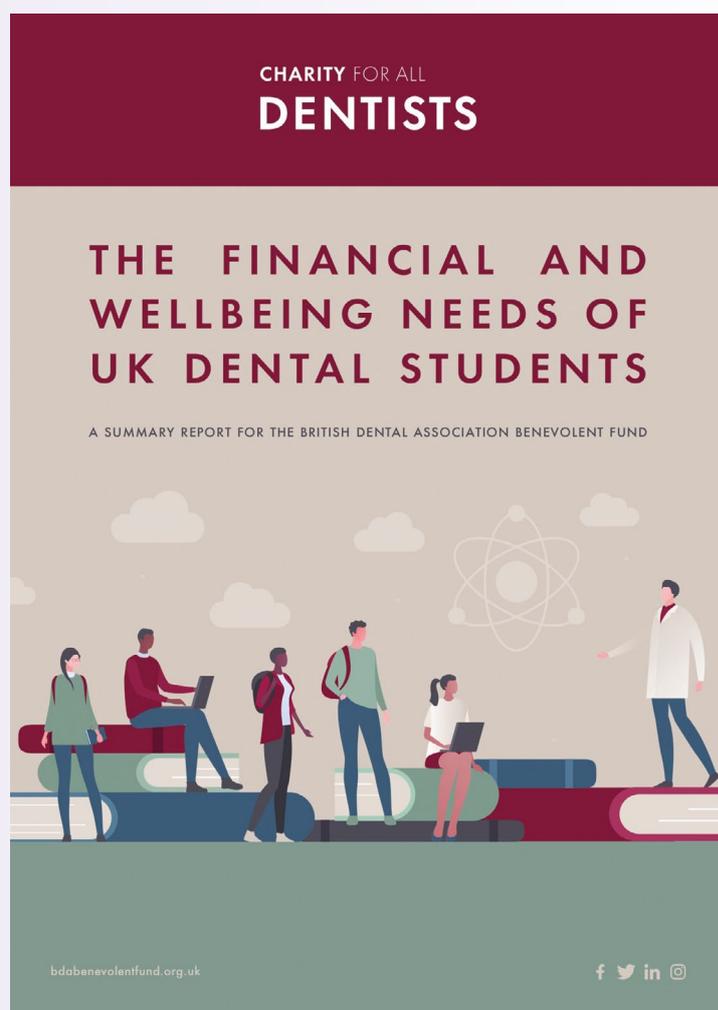
We know that dentistry can be a uniquely stressful profession, with a higher-than-average number of people suffering from stress, anxiety, and burnout, but perhaps, before now, not enough consideration has been given to dental students. We are committed to bridging this gap, now armed with the evidence we need to improve our understanding of the pressures that dental students face across the UK and where they seek support.

We will be using this invaluable information to identify, acknowledge and help people early on in their careers, even before they qualify.

### Extra challenges

Beyond the usual stresses of everyday student life, it is important to acknowledge that COVID-19 continues to have a negative effect

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on dental students. In fact, 74% of survey respondents said that COVID-19 increased their wellbeing support needs and 54% of students felt it increased their financial support needs – which makes complete sense.

After all, closures of businesses and social distancing meant that most part-time work stopped and therefore this avenue for supplementing income ceased, something that many of you reading this may have experienced. As courses were, by necessity, then extended, there were bigger bills to pay than originally budgeted for, such as extra rent and travel.

Added to all that, the survey revealed that students' families were often likewise financially affected, which meant they could not contribute in the same way they had previously.

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### Helping one another

To really understand what is needed going forward, we also asked students what they

thought would help improve both their financial and wellbeing needs. Survey respondents said they wanted more face-to-face learning and opportunities to build relationships and reduce isolation, which we think is achievable. Our hope is that when the academic establishments consider it to be appropriate, they will take this on board.

In addition, students said they would benefit from funding or better signposting for counselling, therapy, or other wellbeing services. We also think that peer support is useful – talking things through helps to reduce stress and anxiety. So, please don't be shy about asking for help.

### Securing your future

We have always been committed to offering grant funding to those facing hardship and will continue to do so, embracing a variety of different channels to raise awareness and reach out to greater numbers of potential people in need.

We will highlight the types of support available, giving examples and making it clear what our criteria, processes and timescales are for applying.

We know that certain groups, such as older students (25+), international students, postgraduates, those taking dentistry as a second degree, carers, and those with less access to parental income streams, are all more likely than the 'average' dental student to have unmet support needs.

In acknowledgement of that, we will more actively market our services to ensure that you are aware we can help if you are in this situation.

If you would like to know more about the results of the survey, you can view a copy of the report at [www.bdabenevolentfund.org.uk/news/uk-dental-students-missing-out-on-vital-support/](http://www.bdabenevolentfund.org.uk/news/uk-dental-students-missing-out-on-vital-support/)

Finally, and most importantly, if you are dealing with financial and / or wellbeing difficulties, please do not hesitate to contact us. Simply visit [www.bdabenevolentfund.org.uk/students](http://www.bdabenevolentfund.org.uk/students) in the first instance. Please remember, as soon as you start your BDS or BChD course, we are here to help you in your dental career through training, work and beyond.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41406-022-0307-x>