

BETTER CAREER PATHWAYS ARE NEEDED FOR YOUNG DENTISTS



Amid concerns of widespread workforce shortages and pressures in dentistry, Denplan's inaugural Next Gen group of young dentists have published a policy report setting out the key steps that need to be taken to attract and retain the best new talent in the profession.

The group warn that all dentists face considerable pressures at work and that the pandemic has worsened the prevalence of mental health issues in the sector. As a result, many young dentists have left, or are planning to leave, the profession.

To address this, the report puts forward seven recommendations aimed at policymakers, regulators, and NHS bodies alike to urge them to drive forward positive change to better support the next generation of dentists – before it is too late.

Key recommendations include calls on the Government and NHS bodies to promote better career pathways for young dentists, as well as to work with the sector to safeguard the profession and ensure the workforce is resilient, supported, and engaged.

Next Gen member Niki Keyhani, Principal Dentist at Horsham Dental Studio, said: 'I am passionate about my work, but the days are often long and without much break. I love what I do, but with the current

demands and responsibilities on dentists, I am not surprised my profession feels the need for reform.'

The report also expresses concern that, despite the prevalence of private and mixed dental practices in the UK, many policymakers do not understand the important distinction between the different types of practices that operate across the country. Significantly, the Department of Health and Social Care is yet to recognise or identify a role for private dentistry, and this did not feature in last year's 'Integration and innovation' White Paper.

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As a result, the young dentists warn, these misunderstandings about mixed and private dentistry have filtered down to the public and dentists often find that their patients do not understand which treatments they are and are not entitled to on the NHS.

The report also highlights common misconceptions that private treatment is expensive and purely cosmetic yet, in reality, most private practice business models are based around ongoing regular preventive oral care for families.

To tackle this, the report calls on the Government and NHS bodies to lead a public education campaign to emphasise the importance of oral health and give clarity about the scope of NHS dental care. Giving mixed and private dentists representation on Integrated Care Boards would help too, suggests the report.

Dr Catherine Rutland, Clinical Director at Denplan, said: 'Denplan's first Next Gen group represent the very best of our industry – bright and aspiring young dentists that have the potential to become future industry leaders.'

'I welcome the work that they have done in creating this report, and I look forward to bringing together policymakers, regulators, and industry colleagues to address the important challenges that they have raised in it to help safeguard the future of the profession.'

To view the report visit www.denplan.co.uk/the-core/industry-and-company-news/next-gen-policy-report.