

## SBDN LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN DENTISTRY

By **Tracy Wallis**, President, Society of British Dental Nurses 2022–2024

In September the Society of British Dental Nurses launched their work on 'Speaking up and Listening up' in response to recent headlines highlighting sexual misconduct among surgeons<sup>1</sup> and a later acknowledgement to nurses. Unfortunately, over the years, this has on occasion been related to complaints within dentistry and involved dental nurses. Broader discussions have led the Society to believe this may often go unchecked or ignored.

The Society is acutely aware that this is not specific to women, but data may paint this picture simply because the dental nursing profession is predominantly female (GDC Registration Reports, 2023).

At the time of writing, there are 938 male dental nurses and 58,929 female dental nurses recorded on the GDC register.

Dentistry, like healthcare, commonly has a hierarchical structure and many do not feel able to speak up for fear of retaliation

or not being taken seriously. Sexual misconduct examples are:

- Sexually suggestive comments, for example remarking on your body or appearance, or name calling
- Sexual jokes that make you feel uncomfortable, offended or intimidated
- 'Leering' or unwanted and inappropriate sexual propositions, whether in person, or online
- If someone intentionally grabs or touches you in a sexual way that you don't like, or you're forced to kiss someone or do something else sexual against your will – this includes sexual touching of any part of someone's body, and it makes no difference whether you're wearing clothes or not
- If someone forces you to have penetrative sex, or has sex with you without your consent or agreement, that's rape
- If someone sexually assaults you by penetrating you with a part of their

body or another object, this is classed as 'assault by penetration.'

The Society is interested in the broader picture here and has launched a survey on its website to gain awareness and insight of sexual misconduct experienced or witnessed by dental nurses in the UK. This can be found at: <https://go.nature.com/48NfvTq>.

The Society is calling on other professional dental groups to commit to looking deeper into this issue and to come together to provide answers and actions.

### References

1. Begeny C T, Arshad H, Cuming T *et al*. Sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape by colleagues in the surgical workforce, and how women and men are living different realities: observational study using NHS population-derived weights. *Br J Surg* 2023; doi: 10.1093/bjs/znad242.

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## NEBDN CELEBRATES 80 YEARS

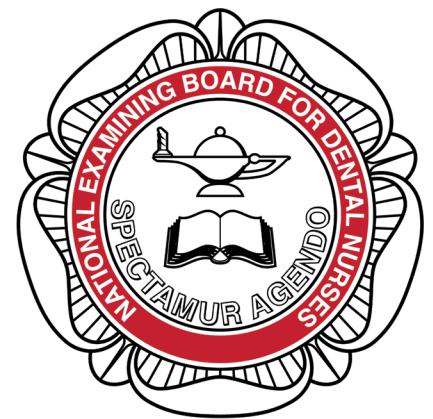
The National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) is celebrating its 80th anniversary this October at a Lancashire venue, to mark a special milestone achievement. The black-tie celebration evening will consist of a presentation and awards ceremony, dinner, and dancing. Staff, trustees, associates and stakeholders who will come together to celebrate 80 years of success, with a reflection on how the business started to where it is now.

NEBDN's roots stretch back over 80 years to 1936 when Philip Grundy, a visionary dental practitioner, imagined creating a recognised qualification to regulate the profession nationwide. Having founded the British Dental Nurses' and Assistants' Society (which later became ABDSA and then BADN), with the assistance of his dental nurse Madeleine (Bunty) Winters in 1940, Philip Grundy founded the British Dental Nurses' & Assistants' Examining Board in 1943, which set about creating educationally balanced written and oral examinations which could be

replicated and regulated across the UK.

The first dental nursing examination was held in 1943 with 179 learners sitting and has been repeated every year (with the exception of 1947 and 1948). Back in 1943 the fee was one guinea, and a £10 prize was given for the highest mark. Bunty Winters obtained the highest mark, but was denied the prize because she was Philip Grundy's dental nurse! These days the number of learners far exceeds 5,000 every year and exams are now held online.

The widely recognised badge was first introduced in 1951. 1964 saw the name change to the Examining Board for Dental Surgery Assistants and 1987 to the National Examining Board for Dental Surgery Assistants upon its separation from the Association, which had run the Examining Board since the beginning. In 1995, following the Association's decision to reclaim the title 'dental nurse' as opposed to 'dental surgery assistant' and change its name to the British Association of Dental Nurses, the Examining



Board also changed its name to the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN).

NEBDN became a fully incorporated charity and a company limited by guarantee in 2005. NEBDN today operates as an Ofqual regulated organisation in Preston, Lancashire, alongside a variety of accredited providers across the UK. NEBDN's next step is to offer an NEBDN Apprenticeship in Dental Nursing.

Also see: *An exciting change for NEBDN* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-023-1779-4>.

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