

BDA presses UK government to stop 'rearranging the deckchairs'

The British Dental Association (BDA) has pressed government to step up and deliver urgent reform, as new research from the BBC underlines the scale of the access crisis facing NHS patients across the country.

The BBC research revealed on 8 August that nine out of ten NHS dental practices are unable to offer appointments to new adult patients, in the most extensive survey of patient access ever undertaken.

Between May and July, BBC researchers reached out to every UK dental practice with an NHS contract to ask if they were taking on new patients. Working with the BDA, the BBC identified 8,533 dental practices across the UK that were believed to hold NHS contracts and attempted to call them all. The survey found that:

- Across England, 91% of NHS practices were not accepting new adult patients, 4,933 of 5,416, rising to 97% in the East Midlands, and 98% in the South West, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber
- Of those practices not taking on adults in England, 23% (1,124) said they had an open waiting list, and 16% (791) said the wait time was a year or longer, or were unable to say how long it would be
- Out of 152 local authorities in England, BBC researchers did not successfully reach any practices accepting new adult NHS patients in 56 (37%) local authorities
- In England, 79% of NHS practices were not accepting new child patients, 4,293 of 5,416.

The crisis facing the service across England is being fuelled by a discredited NHS contract, which funds care for barely half the population and puts government targets ahead of patient care. NHS England recently announced modest, marginal changes to this system. However, the BDA say that the changes, which come without



any new investment, will not address the problems patients face accessing services or keep dentists in the NHS.

Thousands of NHS dentists have left the service since lockdown. At the beginning of August, the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee dubbed the contract 'not fit for purpose', called for urgent reform and pledged a dedicated inquiry into the crisis in the service.

The BDA has pressed the UK government to stop 'rearranging the deckchairs' and to finally commit to a fair funding settlement and fundamental reform of the service as a matter of urgency. After a decade of savage cuts, the BDA estimate it would take an additional £880 million a year simply to restore funding to 2010 levels.

Shawn Charlwood, Chair of the British Dental Association's General Dental Practice Committee, said: 'NHS dentistry is at a tipping point, with millions unable to get the care they need and more dentists leaving with every day that passes.'

'We're seeing the results of years of chronic neglect, set into overdrive by the pressures of the pandemic. The question now is will Ministers step up before it's too late?'

'Nothing we've heard from government to date gives us any confidence this service has a future. Without real reform and fair funding NHS dentistry will die, and our patients will pay the price.'

BASCD Autumn Scientific Meeting 2022

The British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) has organised an Autumn Scientific Meeting in London on 10 November 2022. The conference theme is 'A Place to Call Home: Rescue or Repair'. It continues the topic of inclusion oral health which was highlighted during the Summer Scientific Meeting in Glasgow in June 2022. The meeting will look at the response in providing dental care to two vulnerable groups in our society. The morning session will be on asylum seekers and refugees, while the afternoon session will focus on looked-after children.

After the lunch break, there will be an update on the revised BASCD position statement on recommended actions to reduce the consumption of free sugars and improve oral health. This is timely as the Sugar

Awareness Week 2022 will take place soon after the Autumn Scientific Meeting.

During the conference, there will be a BASCD-Borrow Foundation Early Career Award competition. The poster award is sponsored by

BASCD and the Borrow Foundation who are actively engaged in promoting oral health and disease prevention. Closing date for abstracts submission is 5 pm on Friday 2 September 2022.

In addition to the posters display, there is also an exhibition showcasing the work of Dentaid in the UK and overseas. There will be a collection for donation to this charity.

Details of the conference programme, abstracts submission and registration are available at: <https://bascd-events.co.uk>. The early bird rate will close on Saturday 17 September 2022.

