

Smile Together meets highest standards of social and environmental performance

Cornwall-based Smile Together is now officially a certified B Corporation, and the first dental practice in the UK to achieve this prestigious accreditation.

B Corp provides independent verification that an organisation meets the highest standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency and legal accountability in balancing profit and purpose.

Smile Together is an award-winning employee-owned dental community interest company operating across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and they achieved an impressively high overall B Impact Score of 122.9. In context, 80 qualifies for B Corp Certification, so a score like this is incredibly high, demonstrating Smile Together's commitment to their patients,

community, environment, suppliers, partners and one another.

The formal B Corp plaque presentation took place on Monday 15 August at Polzeath Beach, Cornwall with Mark Cuddigan, a member of the national executive for B Corp UK.

Paul Critchley, Smile Together Managing Director, said: 'This is a tremendous accolade. As a values-based, mission-led organisation, impact is at the heart of everything we do and it was natural for us to seek B Corp accreditation. After a rigorous and lengthy certification process, we can now proudly shout that we're a member of this international community of like-minded organisations making business a force for good across the world.'

Also in attendance was Nick Wills, Head of IT & Information Governance for Smile Together, who coordinated the B Corp assessment process, and Chris Hines MBE who works closely with the company and inspired their B Corp journey.



(l-r) Mark Cuddigan, Nick Wills, Chris Hines MBE and Paul Critchley

'NHS dentistry is light years away from where it needs to be'

On 25 August, the British Dental Association (BDA) said that the latest damning data¹ on NHS dentistry in England underlines the need for radical and urgent change.

Just a third of adults (34%) accessed NHS dental care in the 24 months to 31 March, with children seen in the last year at 44.8%. This compares to 49.6% for adults, and 58.7% for children in the last full year prior to the pandemic.

In 2021–22, just 26.4 million courses of NHS dental treatment were delivered. This is just two-thirds (67%) of the average volumes delivered annually in the five years prior to the pandemic, 39.4 million. Since 1 April, dentists have been compelled to hit 100% of pre-pandemic activity, but the BDA understands there have been no gains in terms of the volume of NHS dentistry delivered.

Over a year's worth of NHS dental appointments have been lost since lockdown,

creating a backlog that will take years to clear, with patients now presenting with higher levels of need, having stored up problems as a result of ongoing access problems.

Recent BBC research has underlined the scale of the crisis, with nine in ten practices reported as unable to take on new adult patients on the NHS. The Health and Social Care Committee was warned in May that NHS dentistry in England faced a 'slow death', with endemic recruitment and retention problems fuelled by the discredited target-based contract. The Committee dubbed the contract 'not fit for purpose' and has pledged a dedicated inquiry.

While both contenders for the Conservative leadership have pledged urgent reform of NHS dentistry, there is no indication yet that the Treasury will be mandated to provide the funding needed to underpin the rebuild and reform of services. The current system funds care for only half the population. After a decade of savage cuts

the BDA estimate would take an extra £880 million a year simply to restore resources to 2010 levels.

Recently announced 'tweaks' to the NHS contract have had no new funding attached, and the BDA argue changes will do nothing to meaningfully expand access or halt the exodus from the NHS.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'What we're seeing isn't a recovery, but a service on its last legs. The Government will be fooling itself and millions of patients if it attempts to put a gloss on these figures. NHS dentistry is light years away from where it needs to be. Unless Ministers step up and deliver much-needed reform and decent funding, this will remain the new normal.'

Reference

1. NHS Digital. NHS Dental Statistics for England, 2021–22, Annual Report. 25 August 2022. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics/2021-22-annual-report> (accessed August 2022).