

# Caries remains top reason for child hospital admissions

The British Dental Association (BDA) has warned that new data on hospital tooth extractions among 0- to 19-year-olds understate the level of demand, given huge backlogs and only partial recovery of elective services.<sup>1</sup>

While numbers remain well below pre-COVID levels for now, the data confirm that tooth decay remains the most common reason for hospital admissions in children aged between six and ten years – and that rates for children and young people living in the most deprived communities are nearly 3.5 times that of those living in the most affluent.

The BBC reported in August that 91% of dental practices in England were unable to take on new adult NHS patients, with 79% unable to take on new child patients.<sup>2</sup> The BDA remains deeply concerned that ongoing and severe access problems, together with disruption to public health programmes and lockdown diets, will widen these deep oral health inequalities. Nearly 50 million NHS dental appointments have been lost in England since lockdown, with dentists now reporting typical patients presenting with higher levels of need.

The Health and Social Care Committee is set to begin receiving oral evidence next month on the crisis in NHS dentistry in England. The BDA has accused government of failing to deliver needed reform and investment. This week it was revealed that during this unprecedented access crisis over 10% of the service's already inadequate £3 billion budget is set to be handed back,<sup>3</sup> as struggling practices are unable to hit government targets owing to widespread recruitment problems.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Tooth decay is still going unchallenged as the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children.'



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'Decay and deprivation are going hand in hand, and this inequality is set to widen.'

'None of this is inevitable. This government needs to be willing to take off the gloves when it comes to fighting a wholly preventable disease.'

## References

1. Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. Hospital tooth extractions in 0 to 19 year olds 2022. 23 February 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2022/hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2022> (accessed February 2023).
2. British Dental Association. NHS dentistry at a tipping point, as BBC reveal true extent of access crisis. 8 August 2022. Available at: <https://bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/Pages/nhs-dentistry-at-a-tipping-point.aspx> (accessed February 2023).
3. Anderson H. The national dentistry budget is set to be underspent by a record £400m this year, due to a shortage of dentists willing to take on NHS work, HSJ has learned. HSJ, 21 February 2023. Available at: <https://www.hsj.co.uk/finance-and-efficiency/nhse-set-for-400m-dentistry-underspend-despite-access-crisis/7034260.article> (accessed February 2023). ✦

## Junior hospital dentists to join strike

The British Dental Association (BDA) has announced that dentists working in hospitals employed under the junior contract will join their medical colleagues in a 72-hour walkout from 13 March.

These dentists will be withdrawing their labour in 19 employing trusts. One hundred percent of voters backed industrial action in 18 of the 19 trusts.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'This small but important group of dentists are working to the same contracts as their medical colleagues, and like them are not worth a penny less than they were 15 years ago.'

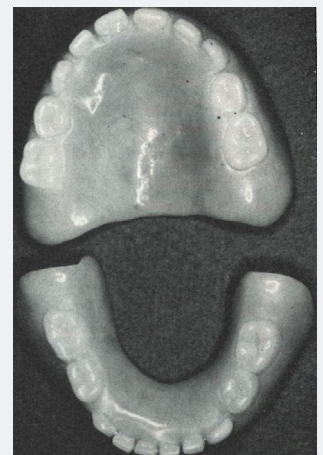
'Our members will down drills until the government comes back to the table with a serious offer.'



## Wanted by the BDA Museum – can you help?

The volunteers in the BDA Museum have identified some gaps in the collection. They are asking if anyone has any of the following items and would be prepared to donate them to the Museum. Please ask your colleagues, technicians or laboratory owners if they have any of the following:

- Full and partial dentures for deciduous teeth
- Prosthetic teeth, moulds and shade guides for deciduous teeth
- Images of dentures to replace the deciduous dentition.



An example of a child's full acrylic denture. BDA Museum collection

If you can help, please contact the Museum by email: [rachel.bairsto@BDA.org](mailto:rachel.bairsto@BDA.org).