

Defence organisation proud to achieve menopause-friendly accreditation

Dental defence organisation Dental Protection has announced that it is proud to have achieved the industry-recognised Menopause Friendly Accreditation.

Dental Protection, part of Medical Protection Society (MPS), serves and supports the profession, including looking after the physical health and emotional wellbeing of its members and people, most of whom are female.

Committed to understanding the various factors which can negatively affect a woman's wellbeing and ability to flourish at work, MPS recognised the need to talk openly about menopause and put the right support in place for those who need it.

MPS became a Menopause Friendly member in 2022 and embarked upon implementing operational and cultural changes to support its colleagues.

A wide range of interventions created and led by colleagues include:

- Establishing a MenoChat group, which provides peer-to-peer support and has been instrumental in helping people to manage the symptoms of menopause in a safe, friendly environment
- 'Ask me anything' sessions which have been significant in normalising the conversation
- The formation of a Menopause Network which seeks to understand the wider impacts on colleagues and the business, build awareness and smash taboos
- Training and supporting Menopause Advocates

- Conducting Menopause Awareness training for senior leaders, managers and colleagues
- Calling for more training, support and flexible working arrangements for dentists and dental professionals going through the menopause, to reduce the risk of a potential exodus of passionate and skilled clinicians from the workforce
- Providing free, confidential counselling for their members who are struggling with menopause symptoms at work.

Professor Dame Jane Dacre, MPS President said: 'We've seen perceptions change and know people now feel confident to open up and talk about menopause with their peers and manager. We decided to apply for the Menopause Friendly Accreditation to show our members, colleagues and stakeholders that we take this very seriously as a long-term commitment and aren't simply following the media trend or ticking a box'.

The Menopause Friendly Accreditation, established by Henpicked: Menopause In The Workplace, recognises high standards and proven practices that embrace menopause in the workplace. Employers are required to demonstrate evidence of their effectiveness in six key areas, namely: culture, policies and practices, training, engagement, facilities and evaluation. Menopause Friendly Accreditation is considered by many as a mark of excellence for menopause in the workplace.

Exodus from NHS dentistry reaches new heights

The British Dental Association (BDA) has urged government to drop any pretence that NHS dentistry is on the road to recovery and finally deliver a meaningful rescue package, as the exodus from the service reaches new heights.

Freedom of information requests undertaken by the BDA indicate just 23,577 dentists performed NHS work in the 2022/23 financial year, down 695 on the previous year, and over 1,100 down on numbers pre-pandemic. The crash brings the workforce to levels not seen since 2012/13.

These official figures are at odds with repeat claims from the Prime Minister that recent reforms have boosted dentist numbers, arguments also made by ministers and officials in evidence to the current Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into the crisis in NHS dentistry. The BDA understands several MPs have already sought corrections to the official record, and there are now at least seven instances where they have a basis to proceed.

The PM has stated time and again that 500 additional dentists recorded as delivering NHS work in the 2021/22 financial year reflect the success of recent government reforms. The minor tweaks to the discredited contract fuelling the current crisis were rolled out in October 2022, so do not even correspond to the year the PM chose to cite. The BDA believes that any 'bounce' in 2021/22 likely reflects

the unique circumstances from the first year of COVID in which practices were closed from lockdown to June.

The professional body stresses that recent commitments to develop a 'recovery plan' for dentistry were made by government based on false assumptions that the workforce had 'turned a corner'. It says there can be no more tinkering at the margins, and real commitment is now required to form the basis of a rescue package, simply to stabilise the service ahead of longer-term negotiations on wholesale reform.

The BDA believes that the clearest way forward is to utilise record-breaking 'underspends' in the dental budget to bring a degree of sustainability to practices on the brink. The BDA estimated in February that funds returned by practices not hitting their contractual targets would likely exceed £400 million this year, or over 10% of the total NHS budget. The BDA now believe this was a very conservative estimate. Practices face huge financial penalties often as a result of being unable to fill vacancies.

The BDA say a new higher minimum Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) value could bring all practices in line with areas with the strongest access levels, give them the chance to fill vacancies, support retention and operate more sustainably in the face of soaring costs. The BDA stress any costs could be kept within the anticipated levels of clawback for 2022/23. A minimum UDA level of £23 was rolled

out in October, lower than the current patient charge level of £25.80, and below the level required for most practices to cover their costs or attract new dentists.

In August the PM pledged a Five-Point Plan for dentistry, including commitments to ring fence NHS dentistry funding. The BDA's approach builds on this, and echoes observations made by Broadland's Jerome Mayhew MP, who in a recent debate urged members to 'follow the money', noting that the best areas for access 'spend nearly £80 per month per year on dentistry; in the East of England, the figure is £39 – a full 50% less.'

The BDA stress the fall in workforce numbers significantly understates the full scale of lost capacity within NHS dentistry. The government counts heads not NHS commitment. A recent BDA survey of dentists in England revealed over half of dentists (50.3%) had reduced the proportion of NHS work they did since the start of the pandemic – by more than a quarter. 74% indicated they plan to reduce – or further reduce – the amount of NHS work they undertake in the year ahead.

Shawn Charlwood, Chair of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee said: 'Government needs to drop the spin, accept the facts, and provide a rescue package to keep this service afloat. NHS dentistry is hemorrhaging talent, and further tweaks to a broken system will not stem the flow.'

'The PM once called for this budget to be ring fenced. We face an access crisis, and with hundreds of millions set to be pulled away, funds must be put to work solving these problems.'

BOS joins forces with Premier League on oral health resource for schools



The British Orthodontic Society (BOS) is delighted to be collaborating with the Premier League to empower school children across England and Wales to understand the benefits of good oral hygiene with a new Premier League Primary Stars education resource called 'Taking care of our teeth'.

Developed in collaboration with Stoke City FC, the free resource, which includes worksheets and online activities to boost the dental health habits of children aged 7–11, will be available to every primary school in England and Wales. The resource encourages classroom-based discussions on the sugar levels in different food types, the effects that sugar can have on oral health and how to make healthy choices to keep teeth strong.

Dr Anjali Patel, Director of External Relations, BOS said: 'The British Orthodontic Society is delighted to be collaborating with Premier League Primary Stars to make a positive difference to the lives of young people. We hope to inspire the next generation to make healthier lifestyle choices such as being "sugar smart". Initiatives such as this with Premier League Primary Stars mean we can create more awareness of the issues around good oral health.'

Premier League Primary Stars' 'Taking care of our teeth' builds on the success of Stoke City Community Trust's award-winning 'Keep Stoke Smiling' project, which has used the appeal of football to deliver diet and dental health messaging to 11,000 primary school children in Staffordshire.

The free 'Taking care of our teeth' resource can be downloaded by teachers from <https://plprimarystars.com/resources/taking-care-of-our-teeth>.

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