

Preet Kaur Gill and Eddie Crouch visit Birmingham School of Dentistry

On 7 March 2024 Preet Kaur Gill, Labour's Shadow Primary Care Minister, and Eddie Crouch, Chair of the British Dental Association (BDA), visited students at the University of Birmingham Dental Hospital and School of Dentistry to listen to their views about the future of the service.

Preet Kaur Gill and Eddie Crouch's visit to the dental hospital came after the Government announced a set of measures to tackle NHS dentistry, which the Government's own chief dental officer has suggested won't fix the current crisis. The BDA have also dubbed the so-called 'Recovery Plan' as unworthy of the title.

While NHS dentistry faces an immediate emergency, it also faces an existential crisis. Practices have been reporting significant issues with recruiting new NHS dentists. They have highlighted that the current dental contract disincentivises dentists from seeing new NHS patients, especially those with more complex needs. Practices unable to meet their targets have their funding clawed back, meaning frontline dentistry is missing out and NHS dentists are leaving to the private sector in their droves.



The Conservatives have promised to reform the dental contract for 14 years, but their announcement hasn't promised any reform this side of a general election.

Labour has said it is serious about fixing the long-term crisis in NHS dentistry by reforming the dental contract. In government, Labour has said it will meet with the BDA right away to start the critical work on reworking the contract.

Labour will also grip the immediate crisis in NHS dentistry, offering 700,000 urgent appointments a year, a targeted recruitment scheme for areas most in need, and a national supervised toothbrushing scheme for 3–5-year-olds.

Eddie Crouch said: 'The horror stories are true, and an ever-growing number of dental students are giving up on NHS dentistry before they've even graduated.'

'If this service is going to have a future it needs to be a place the next generation of dentists would choose to build a career.'

'These undergrads need to know that underfunding and failed contracts aren't inevitable. That they have a chance to provide quality care to millions.'

Tiya Raithatha, 4th year student at the University of Birmingham School of Dentistry, said: 'We all came here to the dental school with serving the public at the fronts of our minds. They're patients, not customers, and our first priority is to help them.'

'I'm increasingly worried that we won't be able to do that. I hope the next government can deliver urgent change so my colleagues and I can work in the NHS and do right by our patients.'

What would you like to see in BDJ Perspectives?



Launched almost two years ago – in summer 2022 – BDJ Perspectives was designed to assimilate and debate chosen topics and themes affecting the UK and global oral healthcare profession. Curated by Associate Editor Avijit Banerjee and only accessible to British Dental Association (BDA) members and *BDJ* subscribers, the Perspectives section of the *BDJ* aims to stimulate our readers to think about and develop their own thoughts, views and opinions, based on fact.

Numerous topics have been published to date including dental amalgam, sustainability, orofacial cleft management, online dental education, and postgraduate career pathways.

We would like to invite readers to propose new topics for BDJ Perspectives. What else would you like to see in this section of the *BDJ*? What topics have we not yet covered – or which topics should we revisit now time has passed? Is there something in particular on which you would like to read stakeholders' views?

All suggestions are welcome; please email the News Editor, Kate Quinlan, on k.quinlan@nature.com.