

Enhancing the wellbeing of the UK oral healthcare workforce

In 2023, the MINDSET U.K. collaboration, comprising experts in mental health and dentistry, invited all members of the dental team to take part in a survey to evaluate the current status of mental health and wellbeing of dental teams across the UK. There was a good response rate to the survey and data analysis is currently underway with plans to disseminate results over the coming months to policy, service and education leaders, as well as the wider dental community.

MINDSET U.K. believe this is the first time the whole dental team in the UK, including dentists, DCPs and technicians, practice managers and receptionists, have been surveyed, and they were appreciative of the time people gave to completing the questionnaires and contributing free text.

Dr Ian Mills said: 'It is always humbling when dental staff share their wellbeing stories, but extremely frustrating that we are not doing more to address many of the underlying problems. We must use this information to improve the situation in order to reduce the levels of stress which dental teams are experiencing on a daily basis.'

Members of the collaboration came together in person for the first time on 22 February in Dundee Dental Education Centre (pictured). The group took the opportunity to plan and prioritise future UK-wide research and implementation activities to enhance the wellbeing of the dental team in the UK.



Professor Jan Clarkson said, 'It is important that all stakeholders facilitate and champion well-being in the dental workplace. Ultimately we need a healthy, happy and motivated workforce to deliver high-quality oral health care for patients.' Further details will be shared in due course.

The current group composition is as follows: Professor Jan Clarkson, NHS Education for Scotland/University of Dundee; Laura Crawford, Public Health Agency Northern Ireland; Michael Donaldson, Health and Social Care Northern Ireland; Fiona Ellwood, Chair Mental Health Wellness in Dentistry Group; Professor Gerry Humphris, University of St Andrews; Dr Ilona Johnson, Public Health Wales; Jennifer

Knights, NHS Education for Scotland; Andrew Leitch, NHS Education for Scotland; Roz McMullan, Chair Probing Stress in Dentistry Northern Ireland; Margaret Mooney, NHS Education for Scotland; Dr Ian Mills, University of Plymouth; Professor Tim Newton, King's College London; Professor Robert Witton, University of Plymouth; and Dr Linda Young, NHS Education for Scotland.

If you are interested in learning more about this project visit <https://www.sdprn.org.uk/current-projects/mental-health-in-dental-settings-u-k-project-mindset-u-k/> or contact Jennifer Knights, MINDSET U.K. Chief Investigator (Scotland) at Jennifer.Knights@nhs.scot.

Over a million new mothers miss out on free access to NHS dentistry

As MPs debate the prospect of extending free NHS dentistry to cancer patients*, the British Dental Association (BDA) has renewed its call for reform of NHS dentistry, with analysis of official data revealing one and a quarter million new mums have missed out on free dental care due to the pandemic.

Patients are entitled to free NHS dental care if they are pregnant when they start treatment, and for 12 months after the baby is born, but uptake for both groups crashed

during the pandemic.

In the five years prior to the pandemic, an average of over 840,000 maternity claims were made per year. This plummeted to 245,967 in 2020/21, to 490,298 in 2021/22, and to just 542,353 by 2022/23, leaving an estimated 1,241,838 maternity appointments lost since lockdown.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can make gums more vulnerable to plaque, leading to inflammation and bleeding.

Changes to dietary habits and morning sickness can also damage teeth. Research also suggests that fever or infections from dental problems can also cause serious adverse effects for both mother and child.

The BDA believes charges are the wrong way to fund NHS dentistry, and says many groups have a strong case for exemption. However, it stresses these data show the reality is that there really isn't enough NHS dentistry to go round. ▶▶