

Putting Prevention First

BDA Manifesto 2017



About Us

The British Dental Association is the voice of dentists and dental students in the UK.

Dentists are critical to the health of the nation and we want to see better oral health for all. We stand up for dentists, so they can deliver the very best care for their patients.

We work to:

- Promote the interests of our members;
- Advance the art, science and ethics of dentistry;
- Improve the nation's oral health.

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Tooth decay – an almost entirely preventable condition – remains the leading cause of hospital admissions among children in the UK.


Prevention should be at the heart of any effective healthcare strategy. It is the first argument made in the NHS *Five Year Forward View*, yet successive governments have failed to provide dentists with the plans or priority to deliver on it.

The British Dental Association want to unlock that unrealised potential.

It means supporting care that improves health outcomes and lowers burdens on the NHS. It means addressing long-term challenges – on Brexit, regulation, funding and contracts – that jeopardise the long-term sustainability of the service.

In this snap election we call on all parties to commit to an overarching oral health strategy, and for action on 6 key fronts that limit the service's ability to deliver on this vital agenda.

Prevention is always better than cure. And these are priorities we will continue to press home in the lifetime of the next Parliament.



Mick Armstrong
Chair, British Dental Association

1. A National Programme

End the patchwork of provision by supporting a truly national programme to tackle decay among children.

Oral disease impacts on a child's health, confidence and life chances. Devolved administrations and local councils across England have already shown leadership and set up dedicated programmes to tackle decay during early years. England has deep and persistent oral health inequalities. It is time for a dedicated national programme.

The next government must:

- Build on tried and tested programmes in devolved nations and local government to give all children the best start in life;
- Provide both targeted and universal support based on need, including access to free toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste, supervised brushing, and fluoride varnish application;
- Maintain support for national dental health surveys and other epidemiological research to ensure effective targeting;
- Develop an engagement campaign modelled on *Change for Life*, encompassing both new and traditional media encouraging dental attendance and oral health best practice;
- Use existing funds from underspends in local budgets to guarantee access to NHS dentistry for all children;
- Channel proceeds from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy beyond the £415 million already committed to school sports to support these initiatives.



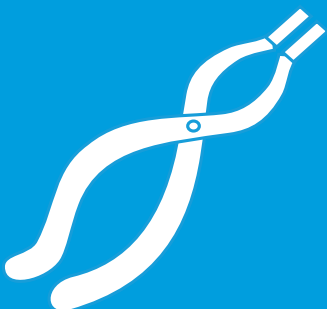
A child born in **Blackburn** is nearly 7 times more likely to experience decay than one born in **Surrey**.

Source: Public Health England



Over **40%** of children have not seen an NHS dentist in the last year.

Source: NHS Digital



In 2015/16 **40,800** extractions of multiple teeth in children in England cost more than **£35.6 million**.

Source: NHS Digital

2. Contracts

Deliver an NHS contract system that rewards prevention.

NHS dentistry in England is under pressure. The target-driven NHS contract imposed in 2006 – designed to improve access and refocus on prevention - continues to fail on its own terms. It is time for a new approach, for contracts based on a preventive care pathway, which can target time and resources on the patients who need us most.

The next government must:

- Make a decisive break from over a decade of discredited contracts based on the Unit of Dental Activity to help improve health outcomes and access for all.

3. Funding

Provide a fair funding settlement to make NHS dentistry viable.

In a cost-limited system government's abiding priority is keeping patient numbers down. In England budget is set aside to treat just 52% of the population, direct funding for dental services is in decline, and patients are paying more through charges. This approach forces many to delay or avoid treatment, and places significant pressures on other parts of the health service. We require a funding model which is sensibly linked to the overall objectives of promoting oral health and minimising barriers to care.

The next government must:

- Provide a long-term funding settlement for NHS dentistry that can support the provision of quality care to patients;
- End the over-reliance on NHS charge revenue. Rule out above-inflation increases, and maintain patient contributions as a stable or declining proportion of the NHS dental budget.



83% of dentists say the NHS contract is holding them back from preventive work

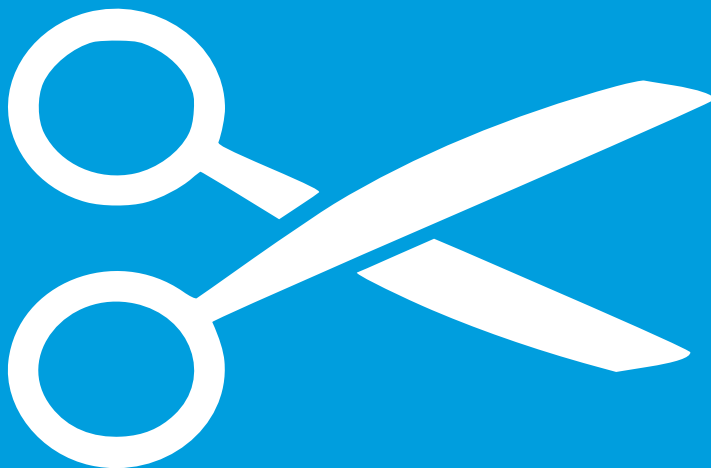
Nearly **70%** say it is now limiting their ability to take on NHS patients

Over **85%** state it is restricting the time they can spend with patients. *Source: BDA Survey*

1 in 5 patients have delayed treatment for reasons of cost. *Source: NHS Digital*

Charges are helping drive **600,000** patients to GPs every year - at a cost of **£26 million**. *Source: BDA/RJGP*

1 in 4 parents are unaware that routine check-ups are free for children. *Source: Yougov/BDA*



Direct government investment in the service in England has fallen by **£170 million** since 2010

4. **Brexit**

Guarantee the stability & sustainability of dentistry as UK leaves the European Union.

Brexit must not impact on patient care.

The next government must:

- Provide certainty to dentists from EU countries;
- Support practices with additional costs for materials and equipment that may emerge through new trade arrangements or changes in the value of Sterling;
- Ensure both education and immigration policies evolve to ensure UK dentistry remains sustainable in the long term;
- Give full consideration to the unique challenges facing providers on the border with the Irish Republic.

5. **Sugar**

Ensure the Soft Drinks Industry Levy marks the beginning - not the end - of action on sugar.

Sugar is fuelling tooth decay. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy has already made an important contribution to reducing levels of sugar. This needs to be part of a wider strategy to reduce sugar consumption.

The next government must:

- Protect children from junk food marketing everywhere;
- Restrict in-store promotions of sugary products;
- Extend the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to include sweetened milk-based, sports and energy drinks;
- Set mandatory rather than voluntary targets for sugar reduction;
- Make standardised traffic light nutrition labelling mandatory.

EU and overseas dentists are delivering over 20% of all activity within NHS dentistry in England. *Source: BSA*



17% of UK dental registrants qualified in the EEA. *Source: GDC*

Over 1/2 of UK dentists expect the costs of providing services to increase as a result of Britain's departure from the EU. *Source: BDA survey*



1 in 3 adults and close to 1 in 4 children suffer from tooth decay

Children aged 11-18 get 40% of their added sugars from soft drinks

6. Regulation

Fix a broken system that has failed patients and practitioners

Red tape and overregulation are fuelling a crisis of morale in the dental profession, and are putting the future of the service in jeopardy.

The next government must:

- Deliver primary legislation to support efficient health watchdogs capable of delivering 'Right Touch' regulation;
- Put an end to the culture that encourages 'defensive dentistry' and jeopardises patient care.

1 in 10 NHS Associates are now considering leaving the profession

39% of NHS Associates describe their morale as low.

87% of dentists lack confidence in the General Dental Council's ability to reform itself. Source: BDA surveys



