

UK Dental Software Suppliers Association

Date: 10 June 2026

Open Letter to:

NHS Business Services Authority (BSA)
NHS England

CC:

Chief Dental Officer, England
NHS England Dental Transformation Team
British Dental Association (BDA)

Subject: Supplier Requirements Prior to Commitment to the NHS Dental Services Portal (DSP)

Dear colleagues,

The Dental Software Suppliers Association (DSSA) writes on behalf of its members to express our collective concern regarding the anticipated go-live of the NHS Dental Services Portal (DSP) later this year. We understand that the DSP represents a significant and necessary step in modernising the management and processing of NHS dental contracts, and the DSSA fully supports the ambition to deliver a more efficient, transparent, and consistent service across England.

However, the scale and operational complexity of the transition to the DSP — spanning multiple regions, contract types, and existing practice workflows — means that supplier commitment cannot responsibly be given without a number of critical pre-conditions being met. To proceed without these in place would risk disruption to NHS dental claiming, payment processing, and patient care at a time when the dental access landscape is already under considerable pressure.

Under the DSSA's long-standing regulatory framework, major system changes require a minimum of six months' notice from the point at which final technical specifications are agreed. This allows sufficient time for design, development, testing, validation, and practice rollout. At present, a number of the conditions necessary to begin that process have not yet been confirmed.

Our members are particularly concerned about the following, and we set out below the requirements we consider essential before suppliers can formally commit to DSP integration:

1. **Bedding-in period aligned with contract reform** – Contract reform was recently implemented, and as is typical with changes of this scale, post-live issues are already emerging that require clarifications, enhancements, and defect fixes. Suppliers are actively working through this remediation. Our concern is that proceeding with DSP go-live before this process has stabilised will require suppliers to absorb two significant streams of concurrent change work — managing ongoing reform fixes at the same time as delivering and supporting DSP integration. This materially increases the risk of errors, delays, and resource overstretch. Suppliers require a sufficient bedding-in period following contract reform stabilisation before DSP go-live is progressed.

2. **Finalised processing documents per region and contract type** – Complete and finalised processing documentation must be published for each region and each contract type before suppliers can complete their integration build. Documents that remain in draft or subject to revision after development work has begun will necessitate repeated rework and increase the risk of errors in live processing.
3. **Regional test packs** – A comprehensive and validated test pack, accompanied with the full processing rules, must be made available for each region prior to go-live. These packs and rules must reflect the specific contract types, validation rules, and processing logic applicable to each region, enabling suppliers to test end-to-end scenarios accurately before any live traffic is processed through the DSP.
4. **Testing server access extended indefinitely** – Access to testing environments must be available to suppliers on an ongoing and open-ended basis — not subject to arbitrary closure windows. Continuous testing access is essential for suppliers to develop, validate, and maintain software integrations effectively, and to respond promptly to any post-live issues.
5. **Confirmed and published go-live date** – Suppliers require a confirmed, fixed go-live date with sufficient notice to plan, resource, and communicate effectively with their practice customers. Ongoing uncertainty around the timeline makes it impossible to commit development resource and creates unnecessary risk of inadequate preparation across the supplier community.
6. **All users enrolled for authentication on DSP prior to go-live** – It is essential that all practice users are enrolled and authenticated on the DSP before the system goes live. Incomplete user enrolment at the point of launch will create access failures that directly impact the ability of practices to submit claims, manage contracts and place an unacceptable support burden on both suppliers and the BSA.

The DSSA believes it is essential that these requirements are addressed and confirmed before any formal supplier commitment to the DSP is sought. We propose that a joint working group be convened at the earliest opportunity to agree a realistic, evidenced delivery plan that gives all parties — suppliers, practices, and NHS bodies alike — the confidence needed to implement the DSP safely and successfully.

The DSSA and its members remain fully committed to supporting the successful delivery of the DSP and to working collaboratively with the BSA, BDA, and NHS England to achieve a smooth and effective transition. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these requirements further at the earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Baker

Chair, Dental Software Suppliers Association
Managing Director, Pearl Dental Software

Signed on behalf of:

Aerona Dental | Carestack | Carestream Dental (R4+ & Sensei) | Cloud 4 Dentists | Dental Plus | Dentsys | Henry Schein One (Dentally & Software of Excellence) | Pearl Dental Software | Systems for Dentists (SfD)