

Dear Colleague on NHS Dentistry

I was pleased to see the government adding to dental services through the methods set out by the Minister. I am keen to see Wokingham's needs recognised, so I put to her the issue of ensuring we add additional dentists and dental surgeries as more housing is built and the population expands. She said she also wished to see this and understood the point.

Please find below the Dear Colleague Letter from the Minister which sets out the Government's plans.

Dear colleague,

Faster, Simple and Fairer: Our Plan to Recover and Reform NHS Dentistry

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England have today published Faster, Simple and Fairer: Our Plan to Recover and Reform NHS Dentistry.

Our new plan will help patients can get the dental care they need when they need it and support NHS dentistry to deliver 2.5 million more appointments for patients.

The plan will address the series of challenges facing NHS dentistry which affect patients' oral health and ability to access the care they need, as well as workforce recruitment and retention. Our plan will deliver faster, simpler and fairer access to NHS dentistry. The new measures being announced include:

- Offering a New Patient Premium to support dentists to take on new NHS patients
- Introducing dental vans to deliver care to under-served areas
- Attracting dentists into areas of need with 'Golden Hello' payments
- Launching our 'Smile for Life' programme to focus on prevention and good oral health from birth so that every child includes toothbrushing as part of their daily routine by the time they reach primary school. We are keen to embed good oral health habits at an earlier stage, given the evidence that doing so later – for example, through supervised toothbrushing programmes in the later school years – will have less impact on outcomes but add administrative burdens to primary school teachers.
- Streamlining and tackling bureaucracy to support and maximise the effectiveness of our entire dental workforce
- Expanding dental training places by 40% as set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan
- The full plan can be found here
<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-recover-and-reform-nhs-dentistry>

The plan is backed by £200 million across the next year and will immediately introduce the new bonus payment scheme for dentists taking on new NHS

patients from March. As well as reforming NHS dental contracts to make NHS work more attractive and encouraging practices to take on new patients, the government is also boosting the number of dentists. There were 1,352 more dentists doing NHS work in 2022/23 compared to 2010/2011, and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan will expand dentistry training places by 40% by 2031/32.

The plan also includes new measures to attract dentists to work in the NHS, including supporting more graduate dentists to work in NHS care. We will consult on a 'tie-in' to explore whether dentists should be required to work in the NHS for a period upon completion of their training.

In 2022, 46% of new dentists joining the General Dental Council's (GDC) register were from overseas. A lack of flexibility in international registration processes can create unnecessary delay to overseas-qualified dentists providing NHS services. That is why we are making it easier and simpler for NHS practices to recruit dentists from overseas by reducing bureaucracy and streamlining systems.

Geographical variation in access to dental care remains a challenge across the country, particularly in rural and coastal areas. To make access fairer, 'golden hello' financial incentives will be brought in for dentists who commit to working for three years in areas of need, and mobile dental vans will be rolled out to bring care and treatment to the most isolated and under-served rural and coastal communities later this year.

Tooth decay is a significant, yet largely preventable public health problem and is the most common oral disease affecting children and young people. In the plan we have set out a new emphasis on prevention and embedding good oral health in all parts of society, particularly babies and the youngest children, where outcomes are best, through an ambitious new programme called "Smile for Life". The government will support nurseries and early years settings to incorporate good oral hygiene into children's daily routines by the time children get to primary school and provide advice to pregnant mothers and expectant parents on how to protect their baby's gums and teeth. This will include dental teams going into primary schools in areas of need and applying fluoride varnish to children's teeth.

We will also consult on expanding water fluoridation, initially to the northeast of England, to protect more people from the risk of tooth decay. The northeast of England was chosen based on a combination of factors including the oral health needs of the region and water company experience operating schemes.

Our recovery plan is ambitious, with immediate impact on access through the new patient payment which will start from the 1st March, alongside proposals to deliver improvements through the rest of this year and beyond.

Our ambition is for everyone who needs an NHS dentist to be able to access one and today's announcement puts us on the right path to achieving this.

THE RT HON DAME ANDREA LEADSOM DBE MP