

Greens pledge to end 'dental deserts' with £3bn for new NHS contract

The Green Party has vowed to end Britain's 'dental deserts' by restoring full access to NHS dentistry after years of cuts that left millions unable to get affordable dental treatment.

Elected Greens will push for a new contract for NHS dentists that ensures everybody who needs an NHS dentist has access to one, backed by an additional £3bn for the dentistry budget by 2030.

This will begin to reverse more than a decade of real terms spending cuts and begin to restore the incomes of dentists providing NHS services.

Co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

"In many parts of the country it is now impossible to register with an NHS dentist, and many dentists are de-registering NHS patients to avoid treating them at a loss.

"Too many of us are feeling the consequences: dropping from regular preventative dental visits to only going when we have a problem that needs treatment. Prevention is so much better than treatment, and it's a national outrage that tooth decay is now the top reason for child hospital admissions.

"Our Green plan for dentists will put the billions into the NHS needed to turn around fourteen years of Conservative failure, and ensure every person in every community will have access to an affordable NHS dentist.

"Green MPs will commit to meeting with the British Dental Association as soon as possible after the election, so that we can pile the pressure on the next government to fix dentistry as a matter of urgency."

The announcement comes after the British Dental Association (BDA) reviewed the dental policies in each party's manifesto. (1)

The BDA stated that "meaningful reform needs to go hand in hand with fair funding" and noted the "multi-billion-pound promises" made in the Green Party manifesto.

By contrast, the BDA noted a "modest pot of new money from Labour for 700,000 urgent appointments", but that Labour's wider promises on dentistry "have yet to be priced in and will likely hinge on future negotiations."

Elected Greens are also committed to pushing for all children to have a daily free school meal, made from nutritious ingredients and based on local and organic or sustainable produce. The BDA supports universal free school meals, "to fight the severe impact child hunger and poor nutrition are having on children's dental health." (2)

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. BDA review of the parties' manifestos: *"Meaningful reform needs to go hand in hand with fair funding. We've seen multi-billion-pound promises from both the Greens and Lib Dems for the NHS. There is a modest pot of new money from Labour for 700,000 urgent appointments, but pledges on reform – "a shift to focusing on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists" have yet to be priced in and will likely hinge on future negotiations."*

<https://www.bda.org/news-and-opinion/blog/nhs-dentistry-where-we-go-beyond-election-day>

2. BDA manifesto supports free school meals: *"Extend free school meals to every primary school child in England to fight the severe impact child hunger and poor nutrition are having on children's dental health."*

<https://www.bda.org/what-we-do/campaigns-and-advocacy/general-election-2024/manifesto>

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