

**Press release**   **28th November 2024**

**ADG ‘calls for a public inquiry’**

**in response to NAO dental recovery report**

The Association of Dental Groups (ADG) is calling for an official inquiry into the former Conservative Government’s dental recovery plan announced in February this year. This demand for an inquiry comes in response to the recent publication of the National Audit Office’s (NAO) report on the plan: *‘An Investigation into the NHS dental recovery plan’* which exposes it as not able to deliver on its aims.

The dental recovery plan’s key pledge was that *‘everyone who needs to see a dentist will be able to’*. But the NAO report highlights that it is unlikely to be able deliver an additional 1.5 million treatments by March 2025, and that even if this could happen, it would still result in 2.6 million fewer treatments being carried out than before the pandemic.

However, the ADG, the member trade association representing 10,000 clinicians and 1,800 practices, claims that the NAO report is not a thorough enough examination of the current crisis. There is a lack of focus on dentistry workforce planning, in favour of revisions to the NHS dental contract, which shows poor understanding of the intersection between contract reforms and ensuring the dental workforce is sufficiently strong enough to turn the situation around.

The NAO report claims to provide clarity on the current state of NHS dentistry, how the plan was developed and whether it is on track to meet its objectives, however ADG members, who are the nation’s dentistry ‘boots on the ground’ see a fundamental lack of understanding of the full picture.

**Neil Carmichael, Executive Chair, ADG** said: *“The National Audit Office report is disappointing. It shows a clear lack of understanding of the complexities of the issues that are responsible for the crisis in dentistry. The NAO report has focused on contract reform, rather than workforce planning. Unfortunately, this finds both the Conservative’s dental recovery plan AND the report on it ‘pie in the sky’. If you don’t have the workforce to deliver dental treatments, ANY plan, is never going to work.*

*“The ADG believes an official public inquiry is the only way forward. The Public Accounts Committee need to have a look at the plan and also why the NAO report lacked meaningful consultation that would have shown how a recruitment and retention focus for the full spectrum of the dental workforce is the solution. The dental workforce includes other Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) such as dental nurses and dental therapists who are critical to providing patient care. Remember DCPs are now trained to carry out 70 percent of the treatments that dentists can.*

*“We talk to large and small dental practices up and down the country every day, and our insights from our members should be part of what informs this official inquiry. It is the only way we will get the full picture and a robust recovery plan. The ADG is here to support the new Government to deliver on dentistry reform.”*

**Ends**

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**Notes to editors:**

Read more: [NAO investigation into NHS dental recovery plan](https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/investigation-into-the-nhs-dental-recovery-plan/)

Read more: [About the Association of Dental Groups (ADG)](https://www.theadg.co.uk/)

Read more: [ADG Seven Steps to Save UK Dentistry](https://www.theadg.co.uk/seven-steps-to-save-uk-dentistry-association-of-dental-groups-launches-patients-first-report/)

**About ADG:**

* The Association of Dental Groups (ADG) is the trade association for groups of dental health and care practices and organisations working with and on behalf of members, representing their view and progressing improvements in the working environment for groups of dental providers of oral health care.
* ADG members adopt and share best practice to enable their peers to deliver the highest quality service to patients.
* The leadership of ADG members are often experienced dentists themselves, with involvement in professional and vocational training, enabling them to provide expertise as trainers and advisers.
* Areas of focus include working on sector improvements for dental groups, including sharing consistent best practice, supporting innovation, and encouraging the investment and skills development of all dental professionals. The ADG aims to do this by shaping policy, raising awareness and influencing key stakeholders.
* The ADG is involved in policy development, encouraging policy makers to make evidence-based decisions.
* The ADG takes a solutions-focused approach to create the most supportive environment for dental groups where teams feel valued and are able to provide the highest quality dental care for patients.
* The ADG supports, promotes and encourages a prevention approach to improve oral health.
* Workforce support includes campaigning for more dentists to be trained in the UK, identifying key strategies to improve recruitment and the retention of dental professionals from the UK and abroad, including streamlining onboarding processes.
* The ADG works with key stakeholders to contribute to undergraduate, foundation and DCP training and provide opportunities to create a learning and supportive environment for dental teams.
* When it comes to commissioning, the ADG influences in key areas to ensure both private and NHS dentistry are developed in a financially sustainable way.
* The ADG’s six strategic objectives are:

1. Developing an agile, inclusive, and professional workforce across dentistry.
2. Fighting for fair access to quality NHS Dentistry.
3. Supporting the work of private dentistry.
4. Promoting the work of dental groups in public, private, and community operations.
5. Shaping public policy to improve oral health in the United Kingdom.
6. Building a safer and sustainable environment.