Association of Dental Groups

Press statement
18th September 2026

Objective should be a better contract, not simply a different one
ADG doubles-down by talking up NHS dentistry

The Association of Dental Groups' (ADG) Exec Chair, Neil Carmichael responds today to criticism reported in the dentistry trade media of their paper, ADG Paper: NHSE Dental Contract Reform Priorities.

Neil Carmichael, Executive Chair, Association of Dental Groups said:

"The ADG wants reform but not wholesale replacement of the existing contract. This is quite clear in our report. We should be talking up NHS dentistry not inadvertently suggesting dentists are insufficiently interested in it. The ADG is clear that NHS dentistry also needs sustainable funding.

"Actually, I would suggest there is significant overlap between the ADG's position and campaigners for more radical reform, chiefly because we all want patients to benefit from a properly funded, easy to access and professionally delivered NHS system.

"The BDA survey provides an important indication of concern among its respondents, but it involved just 415 general dental practitioners, and the published questions do not ask whether dentists favour radical replacement of the contract over progressive reform. So, it should not be presented as demonstrating a profession-wide view on that question.

"We must also recognise the progress being made. NHS dental activity is increasing, with new data showing that in 2025/26, courses of treatment for adult patients increased by 6% to 25 million, and by 7% for child patients to 13 million. This is due to the thousands of dedicated dentists and other dental professionals. It is important that we talk up NHS dentistry and the commitment of those delivering it, rather than inadvertently suggesting that dentists no longer want to provide NHS care."

There are over 45,000 registered dentists. Clearly very few of them responded to the survey. The BDA survey represents 0.92% of registered dentists. In short, the survey's results are not representative of the whole profession. NHS delivery has returned to pre-covid levels but, of course, there is further to go."

Ends

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Notes to editors:
Read more: ADG Paper: NHSE Dental Contract Reform Priorities
Read more: Dentistry.co.uk BDA rejects incremental NHS dental contract reform
Read more: NHSBSA dentistry statistics 2025/6