

Press release

18th March 2024

BSPD requests questions at Health & Social Care Select Committee panel enquiry

In advance of the Health & Social Care Select Committee's scheduled panel enquiry on Tuesday 19th March, BSPD's President, Professor Paula Waterhouse has written to each of the 11 committee members, including the Chair, Steve Brine MP, laying out questions that should be put to the panel.

Including the Society's recently issued 'Blueprint' for paediatric dental recovery, **Professor Paula Waterhouse said:**

"BSPD has high expectations of the enquiry since the crisis in dentistry is now a matter of urgency. What is needed is a serious plan that demands measurable outcomes, to grip the immediate crisis and set NHS dentistry on the path to recovery in the long-term."

Here below is the open letter in full that has been issued to each member of the Health & Social Care Committee:

Dear Steve Brine MP

I write to you as the President of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) www.bspd.co.uk regarding the Government's dental recovery plan - and in light of the Health & Social Care Select Committee's scheduled panel enquiry on Tuesday 19th March.

BSPD reached out to Victoria Atkins MP in November 2023 (and previously to her predecessor, Steven Barclay MP) to offer expert guidance on what is needed to address the current crisis in paediatric dentistry in the UK. At the time we also issued our Society's 'Blueprint' to get children's oral health back on track (see below). BSPD's clinicians and academics are the expert voice in children's oral health and best placed to advise on the most effective interventions. We did not hear back and as has been identified, the Government's current plan does not address the need for a fundamental reform of the contract with dentists (see [BSPD Press Release Govt Dental Recovery Plan](#)).

Therefore, at the enquiry on Tuesday 19th March, we request that the following questions are put to the panel:

1. Regarding the proposed mobile vans, are they mobile units able to deliver treatment – or simply vans delivering toothbrushes and toothpaste? If they are mobile units, where have they been moved from and where will the workforce come from?
2. How were the locations of the mobile units decided? Please can you seek reassurance that the decision has been clinically led, with involvement of dental public health teams to ensure they will be located in areas of high need and low access, rather than positioning them in marginal Conservative seats?
3. How will SmileForLife differ from the existing Smile4Life which appears to remain live on the NHSE website (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/dentistry/smile4life/>)?
4. Why does the plan opt for fluoride varnish instead of supervised toothbrushing, when the latter has a stronger evidence base and would provide a greater return on investment? *(NB: fluoride varnish provides only a modest and non-significant reduction in dental caries experience at a relatively high cost when delivered in a nursery setting twice a year from 3 years of age).*

BSPD has high expectations of the enquiry since the crisis in dentistry is now a matter of urgency. What is needed is a serious plan that demands measurable outcomes, to grip the immediate crisis and set NHS dentistry on the path to recovery in the long-term. Please do come back to me at president@bspd.co.uk and we look forward to hearing a productive panel enquiry on Tuesday.

Yours sincerely, **Professor Paula Waterhouse, President, BSPD**

March 2024

BSPD's Paediatric Oral Health 'Blueprint'

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) shares its **'Blueprint to improve children's oral health'** – with specific guidance on how best to get paediatric dentistry in the UK back on track.

The Society's message to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is a list of the following 10 steps:
BSPD's blueprint to improve children's oral health

1. Every child and young person (CYP) should have a 'dental home'
2. Deliver a Dental Check by One (DCby1) before every baby's first birthday
3. Support vulnerable groups (asylum-seeking children, looked after children and those in poverty) by expanding supervised toothbrushing schemes in early years settings, community water fluoridation and increasing the free school meals offer
4. Drive an equitable recovery of general anaesthetic (GA) services
5. Enable effective and funded Managed Clinical Networks (MCN)
6. Oversee true integration of oral health, with initiatives such as Mini Mouth Care Matters (MMCM)
7. Ensure targeted, evidence-based intervention for vulnerable groups such as looked after children, CYP with learning disabilities and/or neurodiversity
8. Upskill and contractually enable Primary Dental Care Practitioners to provide evidence-based interventions using schemes such as Child Friendly/Focused Dental Practices (CFDP)
9. Support and develop the whole oral healthcare team
10. Expand the paediatric dental workforce – including provision of Tier 2 services and recruiting community-based specialists and consultants

BSPD is focusing attention on vulnerable groups in our communities as the priority. These groups include neglected children, children living in poverty (an alarming percentage of the population will be less able to afford toothbrushes and toothpaste), asylum seekers and refugees. If put into action, the Society's blueprint would ensure that those most in need will be supported.

Ends

For further information contact: Kate Clark, kate@kateclarkpr.co.uk / 07990 525639

About BSPD

- The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) has an established place in the dental profession thanks to the dedication of dentists stretching back over 70 years. BSPD's mission is to improve the oral health of children and young people. The Society's executive committee provides strategic direction in line with our 3-year plan and oversees our engagement with other special interest groups and political decision makers. BSPD is now in a strong position to campaign for and implement improvements in children's oral health in the UK.
- BSPD membership has grown steadily over the last few years with a broadened profile. Anyone in the dental profession with an interest in children's oral health is welcome to join the Society. There are full and associate membership categories which encompass our growing groups of members. These include dentists, dental care professionals (DCPs), dental and DCP students, international members and all members of the dental team. We are clear that you do not need to have a dental qualification to be a member of BSPD, just a genuine passion for children's dentistry. Discover more at <https://www.bspd.co.uk>