

Press release

7 February 2024

BSPD welcomes Government's new dental recovery plan but flags absence of dental contract reform

Today, in response to the Government's dental recovery plan announcement, the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry welcomes the inclusion of measures to improve children's oral health. This promise of funding and the implementation of measurable outcomes is pivotal to ensuring that at last the beleaguered NHS dental health services get the support needed to address the crisis in oral health in the UK today. However, the Society flags that there is an absence of a dental contract reform proposal to enable this.

Professor Claire Stevens CBE, BSPD Spokesperson said: *"This long-awaited plan includes some measures to tackle the crisis in children's oral health. However, we cannot see a plan to review and revise the dental contract which is central to kick-starting the UK dental recovery. Is this the 'elephant-in-the-room'? For too long we have had podium announcements which sound good, but are actually unworkable on the ground. We have been calling for clinically-informed policies with measurable outputs. The current dental contract is not fit for purpose and reform is long overdue.*

"We need to ensure the funding is put to good use and supports the dental health workforce with a contract that works. In the run up to an election, we want to feel confident that these initiatives won't just be shelved once the focus is off getting votes."

Included in the plan are proposals to support water fluoridation, which BSPD has long supported as a proven intervention to improve oral health. There is mention of other initiatives such as the creation of mobile dental units. However, BSPD has some concerns regarding the value of mobile vans which include questions about a clear plan as to who will staff them, and secondly, requests reassurance that they will not just be for check-ups and fluoride varnish treatments, when the focus should be on targeting the most vulnerable children and rendering them dentally fit.

Professor Claire Stevens said: *"Our starting point if we could advise the Government would be to show them our 10 step Blueprint to dental recovery, which we sent to the secretary of health in November. We would want, as a minimum, the Government to commit to funding supervised toothbrushing schemes for the 20% most deprived children in England. This would be taking on board the valuable work done as part of the CORE20PLUS5 CYP initiative – which recognises that to make health care equitable, not just equal, some children will need more support to ensure that every child has the best start in life."*

On water fluoridation, Professor Stevens said: *"BSPD supports the fluoridation of public water supplies in communities where the burden of dental decay is severe enough to warrant this public health measure and fluoridation is technically feasible. We look forward to seeing the details regarding the Government's fluoridation plans."*

Professor Claire Stevens concluded *"A preventively-focused dental services plan with funding and measurable outcomes is what we need. We look forward to seeing more details as the plans unfold and remain willing to work with all parties who commit to improving children's oral health."*

Ends

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Notes to editors:

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

Discover more about [CORE20PLUS5 CYP](#)

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>