

Regional European Organisation of the FDI

National Report on the activities of 2023

Country: United Kingdom

Association: British Dental Association

Please classify your national report by following subjects:

Changes

in the association and its organisation

There have been no specific changes within the Association and its organisation. The BDA Presidency changes annually; the President from May 2023-2024 is John Milne; from May 2024-2025 it will be Richard Graham, who will also attend the FDI Congress in Istanbul.

Trends and developments:

in professional politics

2023-2024 has been an extremely busy year in professional politics. National Health Service (NHS) dentistry, its workforce and funding problems, are now at the forefront of public awareness thanks to the BDA's campaigns and actions. A General Election is expected to take place during the second half of 2024, and dentistry is one of the key political factors in this context too.

The Government has published both a Long Term NHS Workforce Plan and a specific dental recovery plan (specific to England). Both have as a focus the increase of the dental workforce, through dental undergraduate places, increased training places for dental care professionals (dental therapists and dental hygienists); through proposals to change the way in which overseas-trained dentists might be registered in future; through allowing dental care professionals to become more involved in treating patients independently; and through a raft of other measures aimed at bringing dentists to particularly underserved communities. However, none of the proposals appear to be properly costed, no new funding is being put towards them, and none of them address the reason for why there is an exodus of dentists from the NHS in the first place – the unworkable contractual arrangements. Therefore the BDA does not see how the government's proposals will provide the remedy that they are intended to do.

in health and social politics

Workforce issues are the main issue and driving force of most issues in health and social care. Doctors and dentists on hospital contracts, as well as other health professions, have mounted a

series of strikes throughout 2023/2024 to argue for better pay and conditions. Some of these have since been settled.

in educational politics

Linked to the long-term workforce plan mentioned earlier, there are significant proposals on the table for the increase of dental undergraduate education places. While the Dental Schools Council and the individual dental schools as well as the BDA are considering the aspects of these proposals, the information on funding, supporting, recruitment of teaching staff and the modelling for the proposals remain unclear.

One of the proposals also relates to a tie-in of new graduates into the NHS system for an as yet unspecified time. A consultation is expected.

Corporate Dentistry

*position of NDA towards dental chains
problems with dental chains
possible solutions*

Dental corporate bodies are a reality in the UK; they range from small practices who have become limited companies, to small or medium chains of practices, to the big, sometimes internationally known companies. The BDA published research about the development and activities of dental corporate bodies in 2019. We do not have a specific political position about corporate dentistry in the UK but support the tenet of the Council of European Dentists' (CED's) resolution on the matter. We provide advice to member dentists working in dental corporates on contracts and work arrangements and believe that the General Dental Council should start registering (and therefore regulating) dental corporate bodies in the UK.

A more recent development is that some corporate bodies have been vocal in supporting intense and easier recruitment of dentists from abroad to deal with the workforce shortages mentioned earlier. The BDA believes that overseas dentists make a hugely important contribution to dentistry in the UK; however, intense proactive recruitment is neither fair – as the processes to become registered are long, onerous and costly – nor helpful as they undermine the need to address the actual reason for the workforce shortages, namely the unworkable NHS contractual arrangements. We are concerned that overseas dentists recruited through the corporate networks are often not well-supported and sometimes indeed exploited.

Changes in fees: n/a

Information regarding promotion of the World Oral Health Day: n/a

Further information (activities):

What are your 3 main concerns?

- Workforce issues, the related issues of patient access to dentistry, and the need for contract reform – also in terms of likely change of government within the next 8 months.
- A new system of provisional registration to be developed and ensuring that it is safe for patients and professionals
- Improving the work of the dental regulator especially in relation to fitness to practise processes

3 points you would like to discuss
