

<p>Name of representative/organisation: Specialist Orthodontist (Bude) – Original provider of orthodontic provision in North Devon.</p>	<p>Answers provided to questions from the Committee:</p>
<p>1. The Nuffield Trust wrote: “NHS dentistry in England is at its most perilous point in its 75-year history”, and also described it as “in near-terminal decline:</p> <p>Nearly six million fewer courses of NHS dental treatment were provided last year than in the pre-pandemic year; funding in 2021/22 was over £500m lower in real terms than in 2014/15”</p> <p>Do you agree or is it a scare story? If you do agree, why?</p>	<p>On the whole I would agree that “NHS dentistry in England is at its most perilous point in its 75-year history.” I have noticed an increasing divide between the treatment need in the population and the NHS provision available. The pressure on available services is increasing.</p> <p>The costs of providing dental services has undoubtedly increased above the rate of increase in NHS funding, profit margins are diminished or even eliminated.</p> <p>I am aware of that many practitioners ceasing their NHS contracts.</p>

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<p>2. Why are there so few dentists, and how soon is it realistically possible to increase the supply of dentists and how can it be done?</p>	<p>I don't think that the number of dentists has increased in line with population increase and while at one point it was predicted that dental disease (primarily dental decay) would decline this has not been the case.</p> <p>The scope of dentistry has also expanded especially with regard to primarily aesthetic treatments.</p> <p>I think that there has been a wave of slightly earlier retirements that may have been exacerbated by the pandemic. I also feel that the general trend in dentistry is to work fewer hours.</p> <p>The training of dentists is lengthy and training places are limited, it is not possible to address the lack of dentists in the short term. There are many overseas dentists providing care in the UK but I think that it is unlikely that this number can be significantly increased.</p> <p>The pressure on dentists can be reduced by continuing the increase in therapy positions (skill mix).</p> <p>In the long term a continued emphasis on prevention could help.</p>

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<p>3. In your opinion what will be, or has been, the effect of the Conservative government’s dental plan that promised “In 2024, we will significantly expand access so that everyone who needs to see a dentist will be able to.”</p>	<p>This has been ineffective. Most of the political parties have made pledges with regard to improving dental access in the recent general election. I have no idea how they would be able to implement these pledges.</p>
<p>4. At the moment a range of people are entitled to free dental care (including under 18s, pregnant or new mothers, those on low-income benefits). In your experience do these people receive the care the law says they are entitled to?</p>	<p>There is an increasing number of patients who cannot access the care they are entitled to.</p> <p>Recently I have received a significant number of orthodontic transfer cases from IDH the vicarage as they ceased providing their contracted orthodontic services. Some of these patients have also lost their NHS general dental provision at the same or other providers. In some cases they cannot access the extractions required to facilitate the continuation and completion of their orthodontic treatment as these extractions were not prescribed at the beginning of treatment as is usually the case. The situation is further complicated as some of the patients are now over 18 years of age and are not entitled to free care.</p>