



Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

21st September 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

Action on NHS dentistry

We were pleased to see you recognize the crisis in NHS dentistry during the leadership campaign, and pledge that action to improve access to NHS dental services would be one of your three key priorities in the first 90 days of your premiership.

Research conducted last month by the BBC revealed that 9 in 10 dental practices in England are not able to accept new NHS patients. There isn't a single dentist in your area of Norfolk taking on new patients on the NHS, with a third of the country in the same position. As our mailbags can attest, lack of access to dental services is an urgent problem felt in every corner of the country.

Data shows millions of our constituents are left with no options. Some resort to DIY dentistry, while many others put further needless pressure on other parts of the NHS – our GPs and A&Es – which are not equipped to help them. This is now clearly part of the wider cost of living crisis. Those who can afford to access help privately will do so, while those who can't, will be forced to do without.

As dentists across the country are increasingly reducing their NHS commitment or quitting the service altogether, this problem will only get worse and inequalities will continue to widen unless urgent and decisive action is taken.

We welcome the package of changes to the NHS dental contract announced before the summer, and the legislation laid earlier this week to streamline the process of recognizing the qualifications of overseas dentists who want to come and work in the UK. However, these measures alone will not represent a silver bullet for the millions of desperate people across England who are unable to secure the help they need.

Action to train and bring in more dentists from abroad can be part of the solution, but unless we address the reasons behind the endemic and growing recruitment and retention issues which plague the sector, we will likely continue to lose NHS dentists faster than we can possibly replace them.

The key driver of the exodus of dentists from the NHS we are facing is the failed, target-based contract. Both main parties committed to reforming this system ahead of the 2010 elections, and for the past decade work has been underway to develop a new way of working in NHS dentistry. We urge you to make it a priority to deliver this desperately needed reform as soon as possible.



NHS dental budget has also not kept pace with inflation and population growth in recent years, and in the face of this unprecedented crisis it is crucial that appropriate resources are in place to underpin the reform and assure long-term sustainability of the service our constituents rely on.

The Kings Fund say that the system is on 'life support' and the British Dental Association warn it is facing a "slow death". We fear that failure to take swift and meaningful action now would mean the end of NHS dentistry as we know it. We hope you deliver on your campaign pledges, and act with urgency and ambition to bring forward the change millions of our constituents desperately need.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Bottomley

Sir Peter Bottomley MP
Father of the House

Harriet Harman

Harriet Harman MP
Mother of the House

Debbie Abrahams MP
Peter Aldous MP
Clive Betts MP
Paul Blomfield MP
Fiona Bruce MP
Judith Cummins MP
Philip Davies MP
Sir Ed Davey MP
Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Peter Dowd MP
Julie Elliott MP
Michael Fabricant MP
Tim Farron MP
Mary Kelly Foy MP
Barry Gardiner MP
Damian Green MP
James Grundy MP
Sally-Ann Hart MP
Sir John Hayes MP
Kate Hollern MP

Kevin Hollinrake MP
George Howarth MP
Christine Jardine MP
Dame Diana Johnson MP
Sir Greg Knight MP
Pauline Latham MP
Ian Lavery MP
Tony Lloyd MP
Rebecca Long Bailey MP
Tim Loughton MP
Caroline Lucas MP
Paul Maynard MP
Karl McCartney MP
Andy McDonald MP
John McDonnell MP
Esther McVey MP
Huw Merriman MP
Nigel Mills MP
Charlotte Nichols MP
Caroline Nokes MP

Kate Osamor MP
Kate Osborne MP
Dr Dan Poulter MP
Rebecca Pow MP
Yasmin Qureshi MP
Selaine Saxby MP
Andrew Selous MP
Virendra Sharma MP
Cat Smith MP
Graham Stringer MP
Sir Desmond Swayne MP
Derek Thomas MP
Sir Stephen Timms MP
Karl Turner MP
Derek Twigg MP
Christian Wakeford MP
Giles Watling MP
Nadia Whittome MP
Mohammad Yasin MP