

Dental crisis in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 30 Mehefin 2025

Petitions Committee | 30 June 2025

Reference: RS25/11480-3

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1512

Petition title: Call on the Welsh Government to recognise and address the dental crisis facing patients in Wales.

Text of petition: The Welsh Government does not recognise the reality of the dental crisis in Wales and the impact on the public.

Whilst there have been petitions presented in the past, the Welsh Government has never admitted that there is a crisis and to the public, it seems that there has been no action taken by the Welsh Government in addressing this crisis.

In September 2024, the First Minister, Eluned Morgan, made a misleading claim that “The UK government will take inspiration from NHS Wales on dentistry, where reforms have unlocked almost 400,000 more appointments in the last two years”. This is insulting to the people impacted by the dental crisis, and demonstrates the lack of understanding at the heart of the Welsh Government of the realities that patients face when trying to access NHS dental care.

Public Health Wales recently revealed that more than half of all mouth cancer cases are now being diagnosed at the most advanced stages (rising each year). Timely access to regular dental appointments can help to identify early signs of mouth cancer.

Unless the Welsh Government admits that there is a dental crisis in Wales, a solution will not be found.



The petition calls on the Welsh Government to recognise that there is a dental crisis in Wales and to then work to address the problem with the urgency that the Welsh people deserve.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

Concerns relating to NHS dentistry in Wales have been raised by Members on a number of occasions during Plenary, including most recently on [10 June 2025](#), [18 March 2025](#), [4 March 2025](#) and [8 January 2025](#). Senedd Research also published an [article in June 2023](#) which outlines the issues with accessing NHS dentistry in Wales.

The British Dental Association (BDA) Cymru published an [open letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care](#) on 17 February 2025. This set out the concerns and challenges for dental providers in Wales, including investment in dentistry, dental activity and workforce, and financial uplift negotiations. BDA Cymru states that “...NHS dental activity has stalled and may be about to fall off the cliff if the issues we and others have raised repeatedly are not addressed very soon.”

Dentistry statistics

The latest statistical release, [NHS dental services: April 2023 to March 2024](#), was published in October 2024. A range of statistics on NHS dentistry are also available on [StatsWales](#), including [new NHS dental patients treated](#); NHS patients treated in a [12-month](#) and [24-month](#) period, and the [number of dental contracts and practices by local health board](#).

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Petitions Committee dated 3 June 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care states that he and his predecessors “have acknowledged that access to dentistry is not where we and the public want it to be.” The letter also states that it has been acknowledged that the issue is more pronounced in some parts of Wales and there is no quick fix.

Recent action taken by the Welsh Government in relation to NHS dentistry in Wales includes the following:

- In a [Statement in Plenary on 18 March 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care provided information on a **proposed new dental contract for General Dental Services in Wales**. The Cabinet Secretary set out some of the key proposed changes to the contract and stated that he would like to see the new contract implemented from April 2026. The [consultation on the reform of NHS general dental services](#) was launched on 27 March 2025 and closed on 19 June 2025.
- [Since April 2022](#), dental practices in Wales have been offered the opportunity to opt-in to a [variation of their contract](#), which encourages the provision of care on a risk and needs basis and includes a requirement to see a set number of new patients, dependent on the practice’s NHS contract value. The Cabinet Secretary’s letter to the Committee states that this has enabled more than 400,000 new patients to receive a full course of NHS dental treatment.
- In response to a [recommendation by the Health and Social Care Committee](#), an all-Wales digital [Dental Access Portal](#) was rolled out in February this year, which allows people to register their interest in receiving NHS dentistry if they haven’t had access to an NHS dentist in the last four years.

3. Welsh Parliament action

As mentioned above, issues relating to dentistry have been raised in the Senedd on a number of occasions. Dentistry has also been raised during the following:

- The Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee carried out an [inquiry into dentistry](#) and published its [report](#) in February 2023. In a [letter to the Committee on 10 October 2024](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care provided an update on action the Welsh Government has taken in response to the Committee report's recommendations.
- The [Health and Social Care Committee's report](#) and [Sian Gwenllian MS](#) called for the Welsh Government to consider establishing a school of dentistry in Bangor. [The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care stated](#) that it's not currently possible to fund a project of this sort but is open to a robust proposal being in place that could be progressed quickly when the opportunity arises.
- On 28 March 2025 the [Committee for the scrutiny of the First Minister](#) discussed dentistry.
- During [Plenary on 30 April 2025](#), Mabon ap Gwynfor MS led a debate on his Member's Legislative Proposal: A Bill on minimum NHS dentistry staffing levels. The motion was agreed.
- During [Plenary on 17 June 2025](#), Heledd Fychan MS noted that she had been contacted by a number of NHS dentists who expressed "deep concerns" regarding the [consultation on the reform of NHS general dental services](#), including their thoughts that "this will be the end of NHS dentistry if the plans progress."

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.