

# NHS Dentistry

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 9 Chwefror 2026  
Petitions Committee | 9 February 2026

**Reference:** RS25/12887-4

## Introduction

The following two petitions on NHS dentistry are to be considered:

**Petition Number:** P-06-1551

**Petition title:** Stop the Welsh Government's Harmful Changes to NHS Dentistry

**Text of petition:**

We call on the Welsh Government to halt proposed changes to NHS dental services that will dramatically affect access to care, especially for people with disabilities, those with mental health conditions, and individuals with a fear of dentists.

These changes risk reducing the availability of appointments, increasing waiting times, and placing greater pressure on dental practices already struggling to meet demand. Many people with disabilities or complex needs already face barriers when accessing dental care – including physical inaccessibility, sensory overload, communication difficulties, and anxiety.

Reforming the system without strong patient consultation and support will only make these problems worse. We urge the Welsh Government to reconsider these changes and instead invest in making NHS dentistry more accessible, inclusive, and responsive to vulnerable patients' needs.



**Petition Number:** P-06-1557

**Petition title:** Introduce guaranteed NHS dental treatment for the population of Wales

**Text of petition:**

Ensure that NHS dental treatment coverage is available for all residents of Wales.

The Welsh Government should ensure that NHS dental coverage is available throughout Wales, be it provided by an NHS dentist or a service that is bought in from the private sector at the same fee level.

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.

## Committee inquiry and Dental Access Portal

The Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee carried out an [inquiry into dentistry](#) and published its [report](#) in February 2023. A [Senedd Research article](#) outlined some of the issues with accessing NHS dentistry in Wales at the time. In October 2024, [the Welsh Government provided an update](#) on action it had taken in response to the Committee's recommendations.

In response to the Committee calling for the Welsh Government to consider a single centralised waiting list across Wales, an all-Wales digital [Dental Access Portal](#) (DAP) was rolled out in February 2025. This enables people to register their interest in receiving NHS dental care. The [Portal](#) originally had a requirement that people must not have received routine dental treatment on the NHS in the last 4 years but [this requirement was removed](#) in June 2025.

The Welsh Government's letter to the Petitions Committee (5 January 2026) highlights that the DAP aims to provide health boards with a clear understanding of need in their area and enable them to manage the allocation of people to dental practices as capacity becomes available. When registering with the DAP, people can indicate how far they are willing or able to travel to see an NHS dentist.

## Proposed new dental contract

Information on the current NHS General Dental Services contract and related reforms is set out in a Senedd Research article on [Developments in NHS dentistry in Wales](#).

[Tripartite negotiations took place](#) from September 2023 to October 2024 between the Welsh Government, NHS, and the Welsh General Dental Practice Committee to design and develop a new General Dental Services contract.

During [Plenary on 18 March 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (the Cabinet Secretary) outlined a **proposed new contract for NHS General Dental Services in Wales**. The new contract aims to deliver a system based on prevention and the provision of dental treatment on a risk and needs basis, meaning **the automatic recall of patients every six months for a routine check-up will end**.

A [consultation on the proposed new contract](#) was held between March and June 2025 with [proposals including](#):

- creating a single route of entry for people to access NHS dental services;

- implementing a different remuneration system;
- adjusting patient charges due to changes in the remuneration system;
- a change in how charges are collected; and
- the development of a [high-needs pathway](#).

## **Changes following consultation**

On 23 September 2025, a [consultation summary was published](#), and [in Plenary](#), the Cabinet Secretary set out **changes to the proposed new contract**.

[The original consultation document proposed](#) that patients would be assigned a dental practice through the DAP. This could result in patients being sent to different practices in their local area depending on their recall status and the capacity in the health board area.

Following the consultation, [the Cabinet Secretary confirmed](#) that **people with good oral health will not be referred back to the DAP**. He said this aims to maintain a patient's relationship with their dentist, and enable the monitoring of a patient's oral health based on risk and need.

The Cabinet Secretary also referred to the [development of a high-needs pathway](#) for people who may need additional support. The Welsh Government's letter to the Petitions Committee states that vulnerable people who are unable to access general dental services will continue to be seen by the community dental service.

**Other changes following the consultation include** an increase in payments made by the NHS to dentists, and the introduction of an online payment system being postponed to April 2027.

## **Implementation of the new contract**

The new contract is planned to come into force in April 2026 and will be [implemented by legislation and directions](#). At the time of writing, the relevant regulations had not been laid.

The **British Dental Association Cymru** has raised a **number of concerns** regarding NHS dental contracts and the proposed reforms. [Its website includes blogs and news articles setting out these concerns](#).

During [Plenary on 18 March 2025](#) and [23 September 2025](#), Members raised issues including accessing dentistry and ensuring dental provision across Wales, and the details of the proposed new contract.

## Statistics on dentistry

According to [the latest Welsh Government statistical release](#), (published in November 2025), the percentage of children [treated by an NHS dentist](#) has increased in the last year, while adult treatment rates have remained broadly stable over the last 18 months.

In the 12 months ending 30 June 2025, 48.2% of **children** living in Wales received NHS dental treatment. 40.1% of the **adult** population received treatment in the [24-month period](#) ending 30 June 2025.

These figures show the volume of treatment delivered, not the number of people who needed care or were unable to access it, so they only provide a partial picture of access.

The Welsh Government's letter to the Petitions Committee states that since April 2022, when a [variation to the current contract](#) was introduced, almost 530,000 new patients have received a full course of treatment; and 214,000 appointments have been provided for new patients to have urgent care.

While these figures suggest capacity for new patients, [the Health and Social Care Committee's report on dentistry](#) noted BDA Cymru's concerns that the contract reform's aim of releasing capacity to provide appointments for new patients could come at the detriment of existing patients. The Committee recommended that the Welsh Government monitors the provision of patient appointments to ensure the right balance is struck.

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.