

Motion

Access to NHS dentists in Eastleigh

To consider the following motion proposed by Councillor Liz Jarvis, and seconded by Councillor Bhavin Dedhia:

Council notes:

- a) Our gratitude to the dentists, doctors and staff across Eastleigh who continue to strive to provide the best possible dental care for patients despite the pressures of working in a dysfunctional target-driven system;
- b) access to NHS dentist appointments is limited for children and adults across Hampshire, which is creating additional pressures in other parts of the health service, particularly urgent and emergency care and primary care*;
- c) Eastleigh, similarly to the rest of the country, is facing an acute NHS dental crisis;
- d) there are particular concerns by the impact of a lack of dental care for children and the impact this can have on the rest of their lives, with tooth decay still the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children (aged five and over);
- e) according to the British Dental Association, Government spend on general dental practice in England has been cut by about a third in the last decade in real terms;
- f) in July the Health and Social Care Committee concluded its inquiry into NHS dentistry, describing the state of the service as unacceptable in the 21st century, and set out recommendations to Government for real urgent reform**; and that
- g) the Government's response to the inquiry has been overdue since 14 September 2023.

Council agrees that:

- h) the Government should implement an emergency rescue plan for NHS dentistry, including spending any funding that has gone unspent in recent years to boost the number of appointments as well as the removal of VAT on children's toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Council resolves to:

- i) write to the Secretary of State of Health outlining concerns over local provision and access to services, outlining urgent reforms which need to take place, including boosting spending, reforming commissioning to tackle the twin crises of access and affordability, recognising overseas dentistry

qualifications, implementing an urgent programme to recruit and retain more NHS dentists, and to undertake a wholesale reform of NHS dental contracts to make it more financially sustainable and better structured for dental practices to remain in the NHS system; and

j) seek the backing of Eastleigh's Members of Parliament for these actions.

*Source: According to research commissioned by the Liberal Democrats from the House of Commons library, 48.7% of children in Hampshire have not been seen by an NHS dentist in the year to June 2023. Over 62% of adults in Hampshire have not been seen by an NHS dentist in the past two years.

**Source:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmhealth/964/report.html>