



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about access to NHS dental services. Dentistry is an integral part of the clinical services provided by the NHS. I believe it is important that the most vulnerable and those on low incomes continue to receive support and to access dental treatment.

I fully recognise that waiting times and access to dental services has been affected by the pandemic and the degree of infection control measures that have been required to keep services going. Indeed I spoke with local and national dentistry commissioners during the pandemic about the issues my constituents were raising with me at the time – including the lack of service in the town of Daventry itself.

Despite these pressures, dental services in many parts of England have been recovering. In November 2021, one third of dental practices in England were delivering 85% of procedures.

To boost recovery further, Sara Hurley - the Chief Dental Officer – wrote to dental staff in England in December 2021, asking them to deliver 85% of the procedures in their contract between January and March 2022. The letter further noted that dental practices should plan on the basis that NHS income protection would come to an end in April 2022 when they will be expected to deliver 100% of procedures in their contract.

The Government has recognised challenges that patients have faced in accessing dental services, recently announcing £50 million funding across England to support the delivery of 350,000 additional dental appointments. This funding will be targeted towards those in greatest need of dental treatment – children, people with learning disabilities, autism or severe mental health problems.

Dentists provide a vital service and I fully support steps to recruit dentists and dental care professionals. The NHS People Plan published in 2020 acknowledged that there is a shortage of dentists, which the NHS is committed to addressing. Health Education England recently published the *Advancing Dental Care Review* which has recommended more flexible dental pathways, with the option for non-linear careers and creating new entry routes which will widen access and participation to ensure the dental can match population needs. The NHS and Government have also committed to improve retention and the working lives of dentists and dental care professionals. I know that in July 2021, NHS staff were awarded a 3% pay rise, including dentists, and in the recent Budget and Spending Review the Government has committed to public sector pay rises.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

Website: www.heatonharris.com