

# WELSH DENTAL COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER



**July 2025**



## Welsh Government's Strategic Priorities

One of the roles of WDC, as described in our mission statement, is to “provide real world context to inform and shape policy”.

Five strategic priorities of Welsh Government are:

- Influencing the wider determinants of health
- Promoting healthy behaviours
- Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention
- Tackling the public health effects of climate change
- Protecting the public and maximising population health outcomes

Our goal is to work within this structure, providing a vision of what dentistry could look like in the future. We intend to do this over the coming months by publishing Position Statements on a variety of principles relating to A Healthier Wales and The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

## Consultation on the reform of NHS General Dental services in Wales

- Welsh Government carried out a public consultation which ran from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025, regarding their proposal for a new NHS General Dental Services contract for implementation in April 2026.
- WDC would like to thank all members of the profession, and patients, who responded to this consultation.
- WDC have put considerable work into our own response, with two additional meetings added to our schedule.
- The next step is for Welsh Government to read the responses, identify patterns, and reflect on any areas of the proposal which require further development.

# Three WDC Position Statements

A position statement is a formal document outlining our official stance on a specific issue. They will provide background context, a clear unambiguous stance, a rationale for the position, recommendations, and any other relevant information.

Our statements will be published online and should be used to guide policy, the development of services, and response to emerging issues.

WDC have voted on which three topics will form our first position statements and determined that they will be:

- Greener Dentistry
- Eliminating Inequality in Oral Health
- Providing Dental Care for Vulnerable People



## We would welcome your input...

Please email [adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk) with any specific information you think should be included in any of the position statements listed below.

### Position Statement 1: Greener Dentistry

We have shared much information on this topic in previous newsletters. The position statement will be built around:

- The principles of Reduce; Reuse; Recycle; Rethink
- Small changes can add up to a significant change
- Sustainability should be factored into all decision making and planning
- Supporting digital workflow and modernisation
- Seeking evidence regarding re-processing vs recycling

What information do you think we should include to assist in reducing waste, conserving energy, ensuring sustainable services, and using eco-friendly products?



# MARMOT PRINCIPLES

Public health expert Sir Michael Marmot's eight principles aim to eliminate unfair and avoidable differences in health which can be caused by where people live, what kind of job they do and how they are treated in society.

1. Give every child the best start in life.
2. Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
3. Create fair employment and good work for all.
4. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.
7. Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes.
8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

## Applying these principles to oral health

How can the dental profession eliminate inequality?  
Are dental services in the right place, at the right time?  
Are they equitable?  
How can we gather data and monitor change?  
Are pathways accessible?  
Which needs are currently unmet?

## POSITION STATEMENT 2: ELIMINATING INEQUALITY IN ORAL HEALTH

Wales will become the world's first 'Marmot nation' as part of the Welsh Government's ongoing work to tackle health inequalities.

June 16<sup>th</sup> 2025

**Is there any specific information you think we should include in our position statement?**



Image provided by Public Health Wales



# POSITION STATEMENT 3: PROVIDING DENTAL SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The August 2022 Welsh Health Circular defined vulnerable people as 'those for whom inequality of disease experience and/or access to care have been demonstrated'.

Vulnerable people are often at increased risk of dental and oral disease and are likely to include those who are unable to:

- co-operate with routine dental care;
- understand the need for dental care and good oral hygiene;
- maintain good oral hygiene without assistance; and
- readily access dental services (e.g., patients who require a hoist to transfer to the dental chair).

They may also be:

- people with complex health needs which may include medical, physical, or mental health needs;
- socially disadvantaged, including asylum seekers, homeless people, and people with substance misuse disorders;
- Looked After Children, or children with dental disease who are severely affected and/or not being taken for dental care; and
- frail and vulnerable older people, including those living with dementia and people who live in care homes who are unable to access care from GDS.



## How can the dental services better support vulnerable people?

Please email [adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk) with any information you feel should be considered when developing our WDC position statement.

How does our service compare to 10 years ago?

What factors have influenced this change?

What changes would we like to see over the next 10 years?

What improvements would they bring?

What are the barriers preventing change?

# BREASTFEEDING AND ORAL HEALTH

In 2023, 41% of babies in Wales were breastfed at 6 weeks of age, reducing to 29% at 6 months.

There is sometimes confusion about associations between breastfeeding and oral health, and the potential for mixed messaging from health professionals.

Reference: Breastfeeding by age of baby and health board



## DELIVERING BETTER ORAL HEALTH

Delivering Better Oral Health is an evidence-based toolkit to support dental teams with their role in improving patients' oral and general health. It recommends that breastfeeding provides the best start in life and infants should be exclusively breastfed for around the first 6 months.

The available evidence indicates that breastfeeding up to 12 months of age is associated with a decreased risk of dental caries and may offer some protection when compared with infant formula. The evidence on breastfeeding after one year is not straightforward because much of the research is observational and does not adjust for confounders such as dietary factors, oral hygiene practices and use of fluoride containing products. Further well-designed research is needed.

Once teeth begin to appear, parents may raise the dilemma of when to brush a child's teeth if they fall asleep at the breast. Parents should be encouraged to brush children's teeth as close to bedtime as possible and follow the general guidelines, rather than wake a child to brush their teeth.

Reference: Delivering Better Oral Health

The above paragraph was extracted from Chapter 10 of Delivering Better Oral Health. To learn more about diet in the early years, scan the QR code.

WDC Chair: Adam Porter - [adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:adam.porter2@wales.nhs.uk)  
WDC Vice Chair: Jonathan Carter - [chairgwentldc@gmail.com](mailto:chairgwentldc@gmail.com)  
WDC Secretary: Rebecca Evans - [rebecca.evans034@gov.wales](mailto:rebecca.evans034@gov.wales)