

# The NHS Confidence Monitor

WITH CHANGES IN NHS DENTISTRY AFOOT, PRACTICE PLAN CONDUCTED AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY TO SEE HOW CONFIDENT THE NHS PROFESSION IS IN ITS FUTURE.

At the end of 2014, we commissioned a fully independent survey asking NHS dental professionals to rate how confident they feel working within NHS dentistry over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months. Its purpose is to track the profession's confidence levels over the medium term, whilst new information and detail is released on the NHS contract reforms, to give insight into the thoughts and feelings of the profession.

This is the first of a number of surveys that will be conducted over the coming months. The results from each survey will then be benchmarked against the previous set to create a 'monitor' of past and current confidence levels in the future of NHS dentistry.

It's hoped that this will provide the profession with an understanding of what their peers are thinking and feeling about the contract reforms in a time when information can be limited and sometimes unclear.

**The initial, never-conducted-before survey asked 80 dental professionals (NHS Providers and Performers) to rate their confidence levels on five key statements covering:**

- Their future career prospects
- Getting the balance of treatment vs. prevention right

- Remuneration levels
- The ability for the team to work effectively within the NHS
- And, if patients will be happy with the level of care provided.

The results proved an interesting read with a large amount of evidence suggesting that, despite the constraints and challenges working within the NHS bring about, dental teams are making sure they still provide the right level of care to patients.

#### **There's more...**

To bring additional context, thoughts and opinions to the results, we pulled together an 'Insights Panel' of peers and professionals – which included Michael Watson, Eddie Crouch, David Houston, Tony Jacobs, Sarah Franks and Andrew Lockhart-Mirams – to share their views and to debate on the results. Again, this provided some very interesting insights which will be released over the coming months.

In a couple of months' time, the survey will be commissioned again, but until this point, why not take a look overleaf at the results from the first survey. We've also included some very interesting opinions from dental professionals and industry leaders to give you a rounded view, but feel free to form your own opinion too!

**The five questions were conducted by a telephone interview, to a mix of NHS Providers and NHS Performers...**

**Q:** How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer the right balance of treatment versus prevention over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

**Q:** How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer an appropriate level of remuneration over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

**Q:** How confident are you in your career prospects within NHS dentistry over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

**Q:** How confident are you that the dental team will be able to work effectively within the NHS framework over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

**Q:** How confident are you that patients will be happy with the outcome of attending an NHS dental practice over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

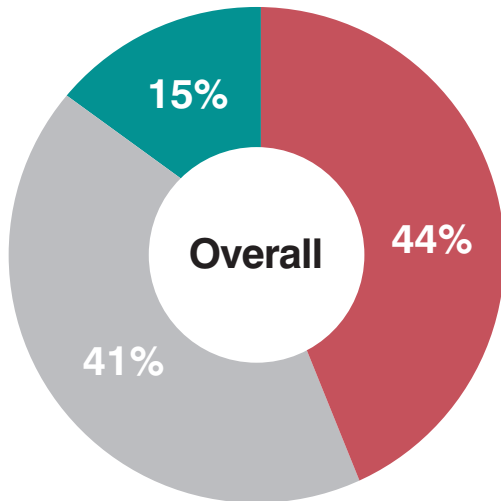
**Turn the page for the results...**





Balance of treatments vs prevention

**How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer the right balance of treatment versus prevention over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?**



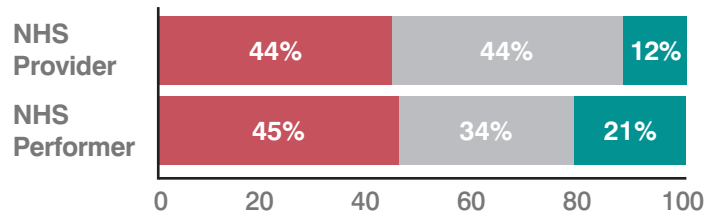
Some of the detail...

- **Almost half** of respondents are **less confident** in this area with only 15% being more confident.
- Both NHS Providers and Performers **feel equally as strong** that NHS dentistry won't provide the right balance of treatment versus prevention in the future.

**“[We’re] losing confidence in getting the balance right”**

Claire Roberts, Principal Dentist

Detailed results...



Expert opinion...



**Sheila Scott**  
Business Consultant

If this profession is to do its best for patients, it must deliver prevention above all else. We all know that. Many practices are doing their best to embrace this, despite the difficulty of there being almost no direct funding for such an approach under the NHS. In fact, the current NHS contracts discourage a truly preventive approach and, it can be argued, that the current NHS contract in England is the most damaging to patients and the profession in decades.



**Claire Roberts**  
Principal Dentist

There seems to be an overall decline in confidence from the NHS Provider group. As this is the group who manage the finances and know how much it costs to run a practice, this trend doesn't surprise me.

Uplifts in contract value have been inadequate for years and profitability is down so providers have seen their income slashed.



David Houston

Joint Principal of the Houston Group of Dental Practices

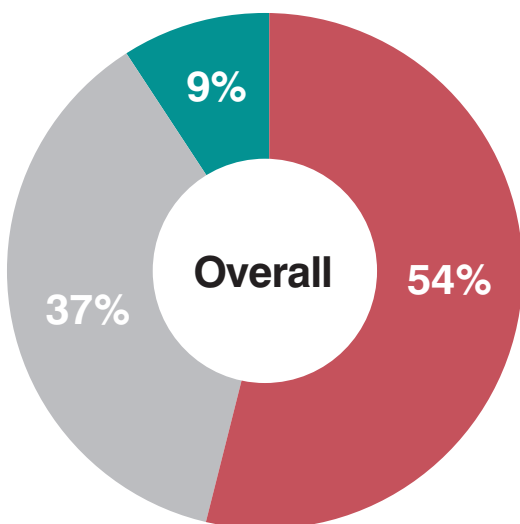
Uncertainty creates concern and I think smaller practices predominantly dependent upon an NHS business model are rightly anxious about security, stability and success.

The ongoing costs of compliance will presumably get higher, while remuneration may, in real terms, become smaller as government cutbacks make them feel the pinch. They may find it more difficult to plan financially if target-driven payments come into force because they won't be aware of any clawback until the end of the year. This becomes very much more problematic if regulations increase ongoing costs.



### Remuneration

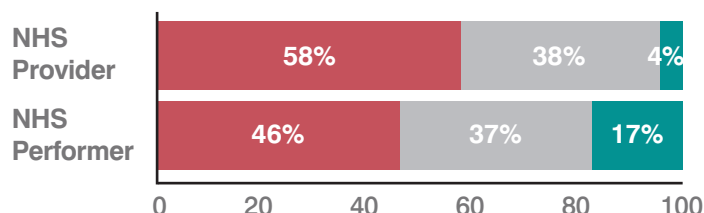
**How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer an appropriate level of remuneration over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?**



#### Some of the detail...

- The majority of respondents are less confident that the NHS will offer an appropriate level of remuneration over the next 12 months.
- Over half of NHS Providers support this view.

#### Detailed results...



**“The profession is not happy with the rumours of the next change in NHS dentistry”**

Sheila Scott, Business Consultant

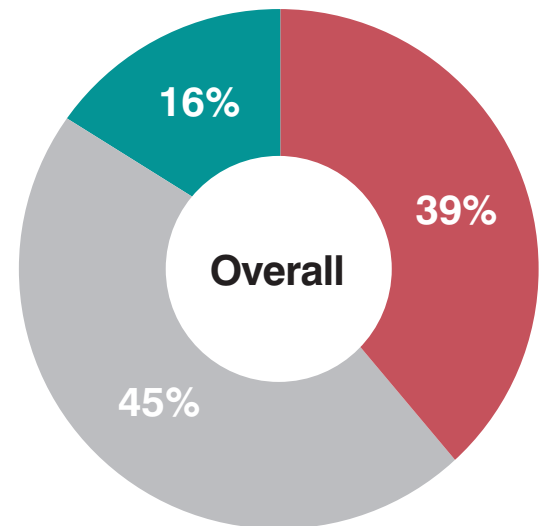


## Career prospects

**How confident are you in your career prospects within NHS dentistry over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?**

### Some of the detail...

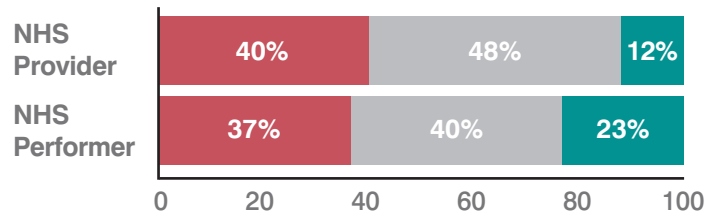
- The majority (45%) stated they will remain **as confident** in their career prospects, although closely followed by 39% who said they are **less confident**.



“There will be less opportunity to progress in the future”

Claire Roberts, Principal Dentist

### Detailed results...



## Expert opinion...



**Claire Roberts**  
Principal Dentist

I'm not surprised the results show many of the respondents are less optimistic about their future career options, especially for the NHS Providers as I think they'll be paying more attention to the detail of the prototypes. If these reforms come to fruition, there will be less opportunity for young associate dentists to progress, or to earn enough to get to the point of owning a practice.



**Alun Rees**  
Dental Business Coach

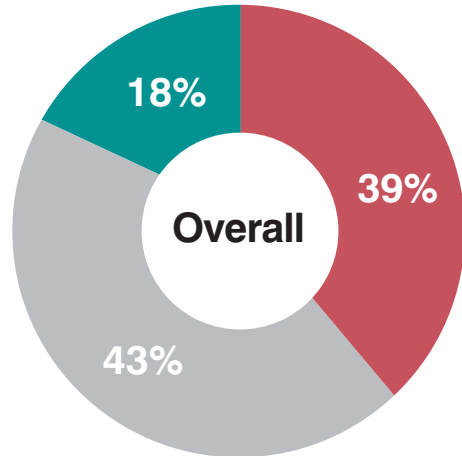
The results of the survey disappoint but don't surprise me. In many practices it's only the professionalism and dedication of the teams who have repeatedly put their patients first, whilst absorbing increased costs that have kept businesses afloat.

What is apparent is that there is no confidence in a government, of any hue, to show commitment to dentistry.



## The dental team

**How confident are you that the dental team will be able to work effectively within the NHS framework over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?**



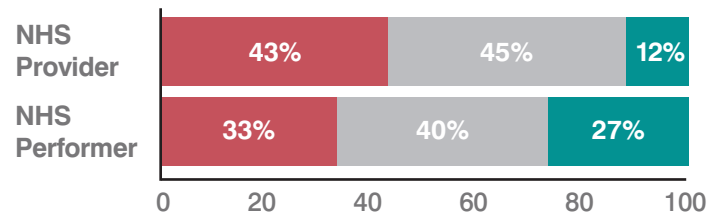
### Some of the detail...

- **43%** stated they will remain **as confident** in this area with **27%** of NHS Performers stating they are **more confident**.
- This said, only **12%** of NHS Providers stated they were **more confident** in this area.

**“Therapists and hygienists may be enthusiastic about the change”**

David Houston, Principal Dentist

### Detailed results...



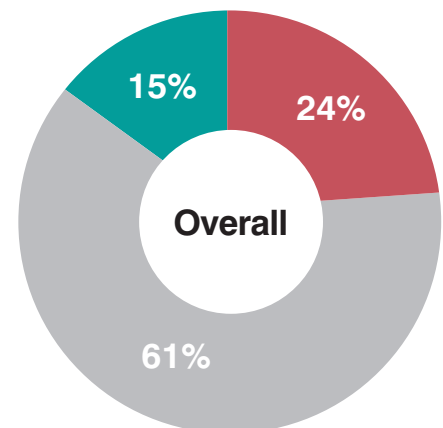
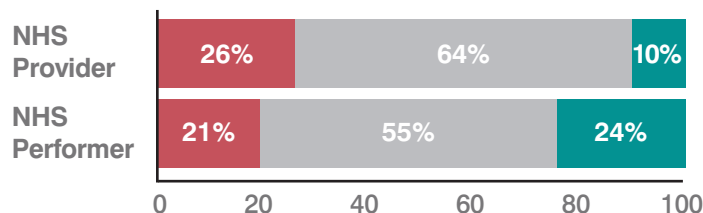
## Patient happiness

**How confident are you that patients will be happy with the outcome of attending an NHS dental practice over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?**

### Some of the detail...

- A huge **61%** said they will be as confident that **patients will be happy** with the outcome of attending an NHS dental practice in the next 12 months.

### Detailed results...



To find out more, visit [www.NHSDentistryInsights.co.uk](http://www.NHSDentistryInsights.co.uk)