

Latest survey results show CONFIDENCE IN NHS DENTISTRY HITS ROCK BOTTOM.

THE SECOND SET
OF RESULTS FROM
THE NHS CONFIDENCE
MONITOR

How the survey was put together...

The NHS Confidence Monitor asks respondents to rate their level of confidence in the future of NHS dentistry compared to 12 months ago. The survey is conducted every six months and began in November 2014.



Detail of the second survey...

- CONDUCTED ONLINE FROM MAY TO JULY 2015
- OVER 300 DENTAL PROFESSIONALS TOOK PART

Of which...

- OVER HALF HAVE 30% OR MORE FEE-PAYING ADULTS ATTENDING THEIR PRACTICE
- 39% WERE NHS PROVIDERS
- 47% WERE NHS PERFORMERS
- 9% HAVE BEEN, OR ARE INVOLVED IN THE NHS CONTRACT REFORMS

The six questions asked:

Compared to 12 months ago, how confident are you...

1. ...in the future of NHS dentistry overall?
2. ...that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer the right balance of treatment versus prevention in the future?
3. ...that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer an appropriate level of remuneration for the future?
4. ...that the dental team will be able to work effectively within the NHS framework for the future?
5. ...in your career prospects within NHS dentistry for the future?
6. ...that patients will be happy with the outcome of attending an NHS dental practice in the future?

CONTINUE TO SEE THE RESULTS ↓

The full results

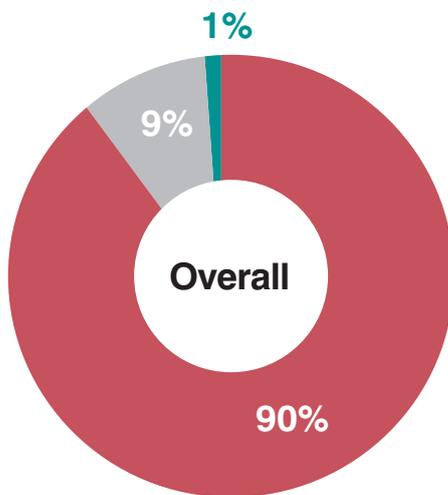
from NHS providers and performers

Compared to 12 months ago...

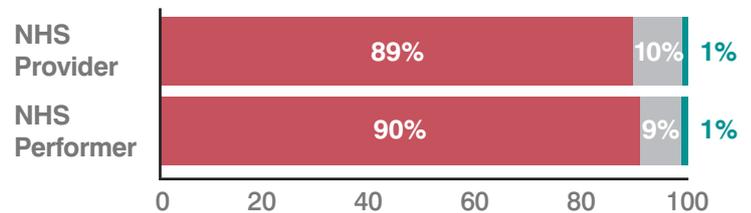


Career prospects

How confident are you in your career prospects within NHS dentistry for the future?

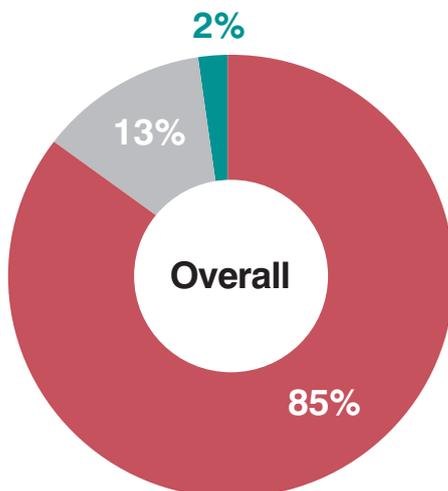


Detailed results...

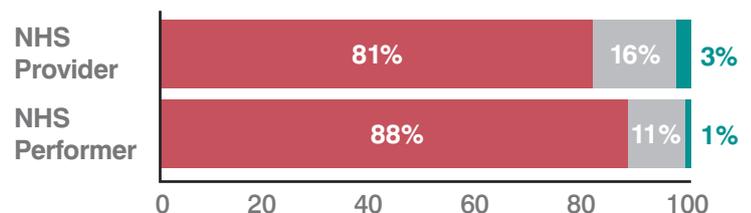


Balance of treatments vs prevention

How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer the right balance of treatment versus prevention in the future?



Detailed results...



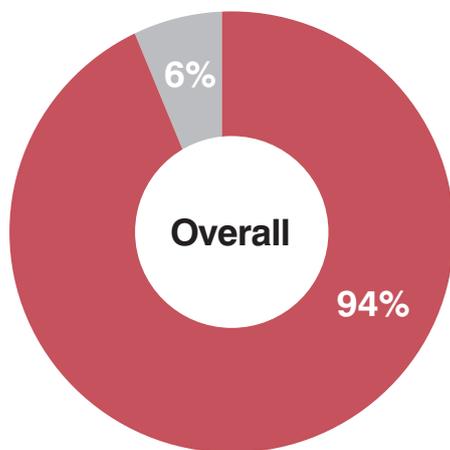
The full results

from NHS providers and performers continued
Compared to 12 months ago...

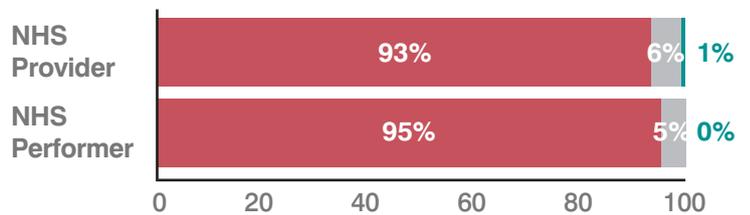


Remuneration

How confident are you that practising dentistry within the NHS will offer an appropriate level of remuneration for the future?

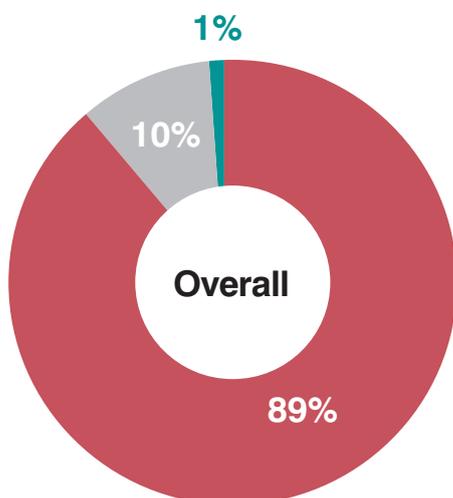


Detailed results...

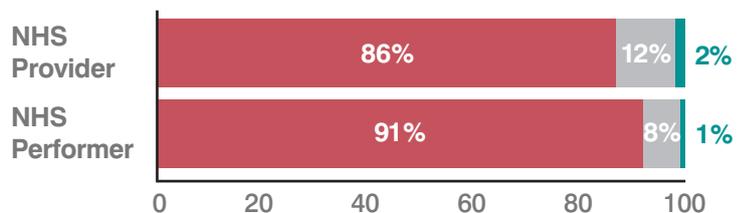


The dental team

How confident are you that the dental team will be able to work effectively within the NHS framework for the future?



Detailed results...



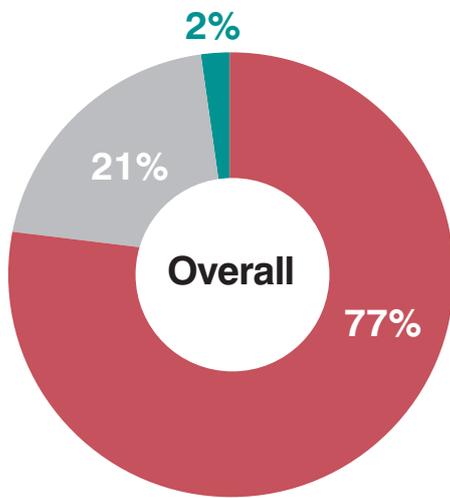
The full results

from NHS providers and performers continued
Compared to 12 months ago...

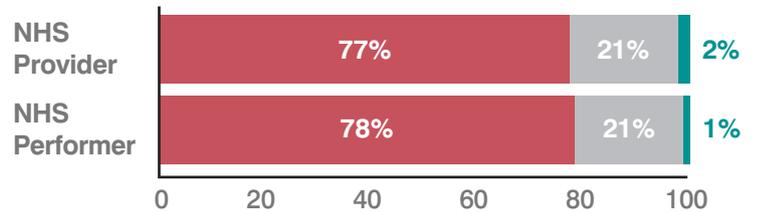


Patient happiness

How confident are you that patients will be happy with the outcome of attending an NHS dental practice in the future?

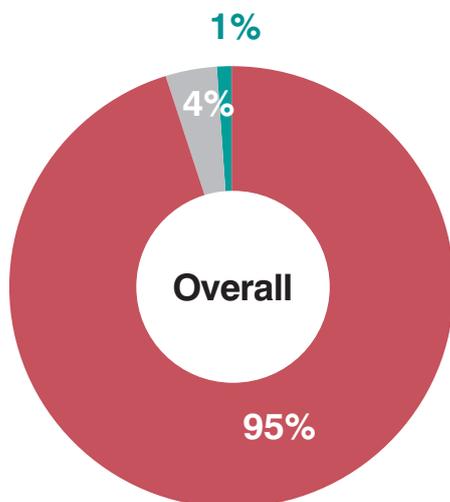


Detailed results...

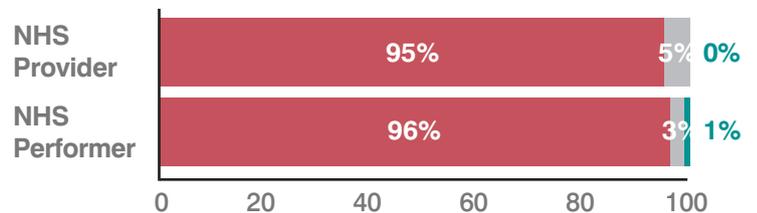


Overall confidence

How confident are you in the future of NHS dentistry overall?



Detailed results...



Professional opinion...

WE'VE SHARED THE RESULTS WITH SOME OF THE GROUND LEVEL DENTISTS AND KEY PLAYERS WITHIN THE PROFESSION TO GAIN THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF NHS DENTISTRY.

HERE'S WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY...

It's inevitable that dentists' confidence will fall further

'It will come as no surprise to the Government that dentists' confidence in the NHS is suffering. It has been clear that the NHS will continue to have to make efficiencies, and the BDA have been telling ministers and NHS England how low confidence in the profession is.

With an inadequate NHS dental budget under further attack, it's inevitable dentists' confidence will fall further. However, the Government will only take note if that effect is for the workforce to turn away from the NHS, and whilst access remains high, they will not worry about low confidence in the profession. The arrival of a new Chief Dental Officer for England has an

opportunity for new dialogue and collective working on how NHS dentistry can be reshaped, but she will not have much time if this survey is truly reflective of what direction the profession sees itself heading.

As to the future? I think the profession must have one collective voice and engage with its patients to put pressure on the politicians to raise the profile of dentistry. Obviously for me that would be the profession uniting behind its trade union, the BDA, in much larger numbers to show the powers that be that the profession is united in dissatisfaction with the way it has been treated.'



 **Eddie Crouch**
Principal, Vice Chair of the Birmingham LDC and immediate past Chair of the BDA Central Counties Branch

'In my opinion, the fall in confidence is a result of reduced income for principals and associates, endless delays and lack of detail for the new contract, and a vindictive regulator that has lost touch with reality. There is a long history of the Government promising one thing, then imposing something quite different, without adequate negotiation or the support of the profession. I suspect unless the queues of patients return, nothing swift will happen and those of us that are able to retire will sell up and get out if things do not improve.'



David Houston 
Joint Principal, The Houston Group of Dental Practices

'I cherish the variety and scope of dental care provided by the NHS and believe that a broad range of treatment can and should be available - provided that the correct and realistic funding for it is in place.

Confidence can only be instilled back into the profession by engaging with us and listening to our concerns, acting upon them swiftly and decisively to save a cherished and much needed public health service. Sadly, however, I do not see any signs of a political will to act in this way.'



Claire Roberts 
Principal Dentist

'The results reflect an overwhelming discontent in UK dentistry amongst those who have shown a commitment to the state-run system. How low must the morale of the profession be when only one in a hundred are more confident in the future of NHS dentistry?'

Alun Rees : Dental Business Coach





THE FALL IN CONFIDENCE IS A RESULT OF REDUCED INCOME FOR PRINCIPALS AND ASSOCIATES, ENDLESS DELAYS AND LACK OF DETAIL FOR THE NEW CONTRACT, AND A VINDICTIVE REGULATOR THAT HAS LOST TOUCH WITH REALITY

Claire Roberts : Principal Dentist

'In my view there is absolutely no wonder (English and Welsh) dentists have lost confidence. They're working through the most damaging NHS contract to date, within the most aggressive medico-legal climate they've ever known. Expenses are increasing, income is restricted, and fear and damage limitation is rife.

It's impossible to be confident when the profession have to do the best they can for patients, with their backs against the wall.

Unfortunately there is no evidence that the Government will do any more than dismiss these survey results. The agenda seems to be reducing the budget at any cost without being honest with the public about what that means.'



Sheila Scott
Business Coach



Time to get vocal



Simon Thackeray
Principal Dentist and
prev. Director of the BDA



'I strongly feel that the decrease in confidence can be simply summarised as lack of trust in the Government over past contracts, lack of clarity around what will be available in any new contract, lack of a clear timescale for the introduction of the contract, doing more work for less money, and, finally, the GDC's lack of proportionality adds to a lack of morale within the profession. The new contract is likely going to be a pig whatever. And we all know, even if you spend money having your pig manicured, exfoliated and dressed it up nice... it's still a pig.

So let's get the gloves off. Be very, very vocal to the national press, and stop trying to wave the white paper of pacification. No pussyfooting about this time, because what is bad for dentists is going to be bad for patients and THAT is the message that has to be got out there.'

'Many dentists do not feel valued, let alone important in NHS endeavours to enhance general health. A major issue for, in particular, younger dentists, is not being able to put into practise the dentistry they were taught in dental school. If the Government makes nothing of these results and persists with 'more of the same', commitment to the provision of NHS services could suffer a significant setback.'

Prof. Nairn Wilson
Dental Academic

'Progress on contract reform continues to be very slow. Consequently, most dentists will feel some way off the sort of fundamental changes in practice that will align patient needs with dental services in a way that is fit for current purpose.'



Jimmy Steele
Clinical Consultant



Please note that all views expressed are individuals' personal opinions only and do not represent or reflect any affiliated or associated institution policy or thinking.



RESULTS SUGGEST AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE



PRACTICE PLAN'S SALES DIRECTOR, NIGEL JONES, OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS ON THE SECOND SET OF RESULTS FROM OUR NHS CONFIDENCE MONITOR AND THE FUTURE OF NHS DENTISTRY.

When we first commissioned the NHS Confidence Monitor survey last year, its purpose was to gain insight into the profession's levels of confidence in NHS dentistry during a time of uncertainty and provide a snapshot of the mood of the profession looking forward. Although I anticipated the results showing a general malaise within the industry, the findings from this second survey paint an exceptionally stark picture of perceptions about the future of NHS dentistry.

The NHS, in its various 'national' guises, remains the biggest influence on the UK dentistry market. Of course, there are many practice owners, who have reduced or even eliminated their involvement with the NHS, who can look upon the current state of affairs with mild interest and concern for their colleagues while feeling relatively immune from fears over Government intentions for NHS dentistry.

However, there are established private practices in parts of Scotland who are having to contend with continued investment by the Scottish Government in new, highly competitive NHS dental clinics. And even the most recent LaingBuisson market report into dentistry, while predicting a bright future for the private dental market as it recovers strongly from the recession, states that the growth it should experience will be heavily influenced, positively or negatively, by what happens with NHS dentistry.

Although the contractual variations in NHS dentistry around the UK create very specific regional dynamics, it is inevitable that much of the focus when considering the longer term future of dentistry within the NHS is on what is happening with the English dental contract. It's in that context that Practice Plan's work on the NHS Confidence Monitor makes for such an interesting and alarming, though not necessarily surprising, read.

The confidence of the dental profession, and in particular practice owners, is a very important consideration when trying to forecast the development of the dental market. Indeed, much of my career has been based on giving dentists the courage, in appropriate circumstances, to develop the private practice for which they yearn. That task is affected by the confidence that practitioners have in the potential for light at the end of the NHS tunnel and therefore, an upturn in its attractiveness and availability to patients and dentists alike.

As such, this latest round of responses to the NHS Confidence Monitor seems to demonstrate that many in the profession lack faith in the potential for Government to attach sufficient priority to NHS dentistry,

at least in England. Just about every angle that the monitor considers, from the balance of treatment and prevention to fair remuneration, shows confidence has markedly fallen in the last twelve months.

This might be a reflection of the fact that a new Government, voted in on the back of unashamedly austere policies and faced with the almost impossible task of making the wider NHS sustainable, may feel emboldened to take a tougher stance on NHS dentistry. Such a tougher stance may bring opportunities for some as well as threats for most.

Even if the new Government continues on the reform path mapped out by its predecessor, the results of the NHS Confidence Monitor suggest a high level of anxiety about the practical and financial implications of the proposed prototypes for England.

The lack of certainty about the future for NHS dentistry is clearly unhelpful and adding to the already excessive stress levels of many in the profession. There are repeated calls for clarity to be forthcoming and it will be interesting to see what effect any additional information, if it comes, has on the future results of the NHS Confidence Monitor. It will also be interesting to see just how many in the profession decide, in the absence of a clear steer, to take matters into their own hands and take back control of their practising lives.

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