

# North Devon Conservatives

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## **New Government figures expose crisis in NHS dentistry across North Devon**

*Action needed to increase access to NHS dentists says Philip Milton*

New official figures published by the Government have revealed that a shocking number of people across North Devon do not have access to an NHS dentist. In response, Philip Milton, Prospective Member of Parliament for North Devon, is calling for a series of reforms to ensure more patients can go to an NHS dentist, rather than force people to go private or miss out on treatment completely.

The latest NHS figures show that 49% of the population across Devon PCT have not been seen by an NHS dentist in the last two years.

Conservatives have announced a series of reforms to NHS dentistry which will improve NHS care. A comprehensive plan proposes:

- Creating new incentives for dentists to spend more time on preventative dental care, improving oral health and reducing long-term costs.
- Restoring access to an NHS dentist for the one million patients who have lost it under Labour's failed system, by removing costly bureaucracy and cutting out waste.
- Using money currently spent on carrying out unnecessary treatments to reintroduce dental screening for children in schools.
- Ensuring that taxpayer-trained dentists work for the NHS for at least five years.

Philip Milton said:

'The Labour Government is leaving a terrible dental legacy which will be difficult to fix. A million people have lost their NHS dentist in just three years, and many of the population remain without an NHS dentist. Even my own dentist has a lengthy waiting list for prospective NHS patients.'

Published and promoted by Sir Richard Peek on behalf of the NDCA, The Strand, Barnstaple, N. Devon  
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“Dentists are fed up with the flawed system that Labour have introduced. As a result, local residents have to travel miles to see an NHS dentist, or else pay to go private to receive the treatment they need.

“Conservatives will help restore access to an NHS dentist, and spend more on preventative treatment to help avoid tooth decay. We need to tackle the worrying number of people needing to have their teeth pulled out.”

## **Notes to Editors**

### **NEW PROPOSALS TO BOOST NHS DENTISTRY**

Conservative proposals, *Transforming NHS Dentistry*, were published on 19 May 2009.

[http://www.conservatives.com/News/News\\_stories/2009/05/New\\_reforms\\_to\\_give\\_one\\_million\\_more\\_people\\_an\\_NHS\\_dentist.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2009/05/New_reforms_to_give_one_million_more_people_an_NHS_dentist.aspx)

Labour’s approach of micro-managing the NHS has been especially damaging for dentistry. Bureaucratic changes in 2006 severed the patient-dentist relationship by stopping people registering with local practices, instead contracting dentists to perform fixed units of treatment every year. This was disastrous: perverse incentives now force dentists to skip essential preventative care to meet short-term targets for curative treatments. Oral health has declined, skewing resources to fewer and fewer patients – a million people have lost access to an NHS dentist already.

- Conservatives are proposing to scrap Labour’s bureaucratic dental contract and restore the right for patients to register with dentists. To achieve this, we will use two stages of innovative reform designed to tackle the long-term drivers of bad oral health and the rising cost of remedial treatments.
- First, micro-management will be replaced by new incentives that reward dental professionals for providing essential preventative care and other innovations that improve oral health and deliver better value for money. We will also remove the perverse incentives that drive dentists to provide unnecessary treatments, providing enough capacity to restore access to dentists for the million people that lost it due to Labour’s botched reforms and yielding long-term cost and health benefits.
- Then, as capacity builds, we will move to patient registration, strengthened by giving people access to new information about the results dentists achieve, empowering their choices over which ones best meet their needs.
- These reforms will not only tackle the immediate crisis in access to NHS dental care. They will build a sustainable system where more effective incentives and more empowered patient choices drive a virtuous cycle of increased access to care and value for money for taxpayers.