# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **A Healthier Wales: the oral health and dental services response**  |
| **DATE**  | **11 July 2018** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething AM, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services** |

Today we are publishing details of the contribution oral health and dental services will make in achieving the vision of a whole system change, focused on health and wellbeing and a preventive approach to care that is set out in ‘A Healthier Wales’ <https://gov.wales/topics/health/professionals/dental/?lang=en>.

The path we are taking for dentistry builds on the principles of prudent healthcare and the commitments made in Welsh Government’s national strategy, Prosperity for All, to ensure the services we provide support people in Wales to live healthy, prosperous lives.

The oral health and dental services response to A Healthier Wales emerges fromTogether for Health: A National Oral Health Plan for Wales 2013-18. This has made good progress over the last 5 years in improving and maintaining the oral health and wellbeing of people in Wales, but challenges remain and we have more to do.

Good oral health is an important part of wellbeing. In children, it contributes to physical, educational and social development. In adults, good oral health means people take less time off work due to toothache and they experience a better quality of life as they can eat and speak without discomfort or embarrassment. Due to the impact of the Designed to Smile programme the oral health of young children in Wales is improving across all social groups. Children attending schools in the most deprived areas are seeing the greatest improvements in oral health.

We want to continue to develop oral health and dental services which promote the prevention of dental disease, for both individual and collective wellbeing, and are ready to meet the needs now and in the future. This is essential to bring about a healthier and more equal Wales.

The oral health and dental services response to A Healthier Wales is set out under the principle that patients and the public are at the heart of everything we do. The services are also set out under three themes, namely: a step up in prevention; dental services fit for future generations; and developing dental teams and networks. These themes are relevant to everyone who works in dentistry, regardless of the role they play or the setting they work in.

This response is also for Health Board executives, Primary Care and dental contracting teams, dental clinical leads, specialists, academics, generalists, dental care professionals - and also for dental practice, hospital, community services and programmes.

We have set out five key priorities for 2018-21 and beyond for transforming dentistry:

* timely access to prevention focussed NHS dental care;
* sustained and whole system change underpinned by contract reform;
* teams that are trained, supported and delivering value-based quality care;
* oral health intelligence and evidence driving improvement; and
* improved population health and wellbeing.

These are ambitious priorities, which reflect a shift in policy direction, supporting delivery

and reform of the dental contract via system change.

We need change to achieve these priorities and progressing contract reform is a vital element of that change. All seven health boards are participating as part of the dental contract reform programme and 22 dental practices (some 5% of the all-Wales total) are collecting and using clinical oral ‘need and risk’ assessment to plan care, give personalised preventive advice and agree appropriate recall intervals with patients to meet individual needs. I want to see the dental reform programme expand at pace and expect health boards to have a minimum of 10% of dental practices in their area taking part from October 2018.

I will provide further information on the development and progress of the dental reform programme later on in the year.