



# 'We must protect our profession'

BADN Presidential Column by **Preetee Hylton RDN**

**A**s the year draws to a close and the festive lights begin to sparkle, I find myself reflecting on what has been a year of growth, collaboration, and moments that have reminded me how proud I am to be part of this profession.

One of the biggest highlights was the launch of the BADN EduPortal, a platform bringing together high-quality learning and resources to support our continued professional development. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our affiliated course providers who have joined us on this exciting venture; your partnership and belief in our vision mean so much.

I must also express my sincere gratitude to Jacek Drozdek, our IT and Communications Officer, whose vision, creativity, and technical expertise brought the EduPortal to life. His dedication to enhancing BADN's digital presence and social media engagement has been nothing short of inspiring, and I want to thank him for all he continues to do for our members and community.

We have also celebrated some wonderful achievements within our community. Congratulations to Rachael England on her appointment as Head of Policy and Advocacy at the Oral Health Foundation. Her leadership and passion will undoubtedly help drive meaningful progress for oral health across the UK.

October was an especially busy and rewarding month. I had the privilege of taking part in the Domestic Abuse Training event with the Dental Mums Network at Bupa's new Training Campus in Staines. Sitting on the survivors' panel was one of the most moving experiences; hearing others share their stories with courage and honesty was both humbling and empowering. It was a powerful reminder of why we must continue to create safe, supportive spaces within our profession and beyond.

As part of Mouth Cancer Awareness Month, we were delighted to welcome Joss Harding as a guest speaker at our October Coffee Catch-Up session, where we explored the importance of a team

approach to the early detection of oral cancer. Dental nurses are often the first to notice subtle changes in a patient's mouth – and a timely observation can truly make all the difference.

I also attended the 'Dental Care That Works for All' reception at the House of Commons, hosted by Denplan alongside MPs Helen Morgan and Jess Brown-Fuller. Denplan's continued advocacy for equitable access to oral healthcare is inspiring, and I was especially pleased to see Dentaid's BrightBites programme highlighted – an outstanding initiative delivering oral health education to children and communities most in need.

The revised Scope of Practice has been presented as an opportunity for growth, and in theory, it could be, but only if it is implemented with fairness, clarity, and accountability. Expansion of scope must not become an excuse to stretch dental nurses beyond their training or to exploit our willingness to go the extra mile. We must protect our profession from being over-relied upon without proper reward, recognition, or support.

This year also marks a very special milestone: BADN's 85th anniversary. For 85 years, this association has stood for professionalism, community, and advocacy. I am deeply grateful to our

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This month, I had the opportunity to deliver a webinar for NIMDTA on bullying and sexual harassment in the dental workplace. Sadly, too many dental nurses continue to experience such behaviours yet remain silent out of fear of repercussions. We must keep pushing for change and ensure every workplace is a safe one. I also spoke at the LDC Berkshire Core CPD Event on safeguarding and accountability, both of which remain at the very heart of safe, ethical practice.

On the regulatory side, the GDC's 12% ARF increase for DCPs has left many of us feeling frustrated and disheartened. It is incredibly difficult to justify such a steep rise when many dental nurses are still earning as little as £14 an hour. We are skilled, qualified professionals who carry significant responsibility every single day, yet our value is still not reflected fairly in our pay or recognition. Dental nurses are the backbone of patient care, and these financial burdens only widen the gap between what we give and what we receive in return.

members, our Representatives, and our Executive Committee; your dedication, guidance, and encouragement make everything we do possible.

I would also like to welcome the following into their new roles:

- Chairman/General Secretary: Ruth Garrity RDN
- President-elect: Carolyn Roberts RDN LCGI
- Treasurer: Rebecca Silver RDN MSc.

It is an honour to work alongside such passionate individuals, and I am genuinely excited to see where the next year takes us.

As I move into my second year as President, I remain deeply honoured to represent dental nurses nationally. There is still much to do – to raise our profile, to push for fair recognition, and to ensure every dental nurse feels valued, respected, and empowered in their role.

I wish you all a joyful festive season, time to rest and recharge, and a bright, fulfilling year ahead.