



Looking forward to a year of collaboration, affiliation, and partnership

SBDN Presidential Column by **Clare Faulkner**

Happy New Year. This year, the Society of British Dental Nurses (SBDN) decided that, rather than following tradition and reflecting on the previous year, the focus would be on the learnings the Society will take forward and the work ahead. After all, this is a milestone year for the Society, and we certainly want to make the most of it, whilst sticking to our strategic plans and staying close to our core values.

We look forward to a year of collaboration, affiliation, and partnership with those who have supported the Society over the last ten years. We are incredibly grateful to those who gave their support in our endeavour to secure our Trademark.

On 9 December 2025, I visited Westminster as a guest of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dentistry & Oral Health, alongside our Executive Director, and I was delighted not only to be able to briefly chat with Minister Kinnock, but also to have the opportunity to have a photograph with him; there were a number of other MPs in the room too. I was also fortunate to meet the BSDHT President, Rhiannon Jones, and the President of BACDT, James Neilson, who I know from the Dental Professional Alliance meetings. I also met Dr Urshla Devalia who is the paediatric dentist and consultant behind Mini Mouthcare Matters, and many more key individuals. It certainly was a wonderful event in an incredible building.

The Society would like to raise a rather concerning issue that came to our attention just before the Christmas break. We wish we could say it was the first of its kind, but sadly, it wasn't. The issue related to a student dental nurse who was experiencing a difficult time at work and was being harassed and bullied, and with the potential of being discriminated against. It raises the question of how safe dental nurse students feel in the workplace when things go wrong. Employment status is rarely on their side; they have no indemnity to contact their providers, as they work under the practitioner's cover whilst in training and in this instance, the individual became isolated at work. We are interested in speaking with others, exploring what mechanisms are in place to support dental



Clare Faulkner (left) with Dr Urshla Devalia (centre) and Fiona Ellwood

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nursing students, especially when going to the manager is not an option. On social media, the student was advised to leave. This takes the situation away for that student, but without any accountability for that behaviour; surely this leaves the door wide open for a repeat scenario. We hope to hold a focus group in the near future.

It has been a rather busy start to the year, as we prepare for the dental shows and aim to meet the early deadlines. We are excited to attend all the regular shows, featuring some wonderful subjects and speakers. We have already had our first regular Committee catch-up and the first Ambassadors' meeting of the year, confirming our activity for 2026. We are pleased to have some new Ambassadors join and to listen to their ideas and hopes for the future; they will become part of 'NextGen': a new initiative for 2026 by the Society.

We will be attending the Chief Dental

Officer of England's Scientific Meeting in Sheffield and taking part in the GDC work on the framework for professionalism. We will be attending the first Dental Professional Alliance meeting mid-January and the Coffee Café will be back at the end of January (the last Saturday in the month at 10.30 am). We will also be meeting up with our chosen charity for 2026, the Cleft Lip & Palate Association (CLAPPA).

Finally, we have a call out for research participants for a member who is looking for dental nurse participants, and we would like your help to ensure it is possible to gather enough data [see separate news story]. We would also like to congratulate all of the New Year's Honours recipients, particularly dental nurse Elaine Simmons, who is a longstanding colleague of several of the Society's committee. Now all we need is sight of the 10-Year NHS Plan and what that means for dental nurses.