

Volume 239 Issue 11 cover: The BDA foyer and function space

By Martin Woodrow, Chief Executive, British Dental Association, London, UK

It has been a pleasure reading the many memories of Wimpole Street over recent issues of the journal. The recollections and photographs have brought to life the important role the building has played for the Association and the profession.

My own memories are relatively modest. For half my time working for the BDA, it was that vibrant place of work and often a hub of activity for members, usually those carrying out our crucial representation functions. But in more recent years, it has been different. The pandemic of course changed so many things, including the way many organisations work. For an extended period, we were unable to access the building. I'm proud of the way the Association was able to support members during that difficult time, and it demonstrated what mattered most to so many – the support and services we provide, rather than the locations we provide them from.

Coming out of the pandemic, Wimpole Street hasn't represented quite the same focal point for what we do for members. The Association continues to work well as a hybrid organisation and our office footprint is much reduced. We cannot justify spending members' money on a building that is beyond what we need.

Whilst we will miss Wimpole Street and its connections to our work, it is also right that we look forward, focusing on what we can do for members wherever they live and work.

In 2026, we will strive to develop our offer across representation, advice, indemnity and learning. Important NHS reform processes, driven by the BDA, continue across the UK, but our representation as ever won't be just about the NHS, particularly if as anticipated, the Competitions and Markets Authority investigate the private dental market. We will continue to improve access to high quality advice for members whatever their branch of practice or membership tier. We will be



working to develop our market-leading occurrence-based indemnity product and provide more learning opportunities, whether through in-person events locally and nationally, or online via our CPD on-demand programme. We will continue to grow our affiliate membership programme aimed at overseas-qualified dentists.

We will look back with great fondness and memories for what 64 Wimpole Street has represented, but forward to continuing to be the Association the profession needs.

World-class dental training clinic for Barking

Barking and Dagenham Council, in partnership with Queen Mary University of London, has announced a £4.1 million investment to establish a cutting-edge academic dental centre in central Barking, East London.

The project will help train 130 new dental students per year and provide NHS dental care to over 5,000 patients annually, at a time when nearly 3,500 NHS dentist positions in the UK are vacant and one in eight UK dentists are within five years of retirement.

Within this part of East London, the effects of this national shortage have been huge. Sixty-five percent of 3–5-year-olds and almost 80% of 18–34-year-olds currently have no access to NHS dental services, and two in five children have tooth decay. With significant evidence to show clear links between oral health and general health – particularly around obesity, smoking, cardiovascular disease and diabetes – the deal has the potential to transform lives in one of the country's most deprived areas.

Funded through the council's Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy funding programme, the partnership will see two floors of Maritime House in Barking town centre transformed into a national-level dental training hub and anchor institution, expected to open its doors to students and patients in September 2026.

Queen Mary's Institute of Dentistry is leading the initiative. Undergraduate and postgraduate students at the university will deliver care through a community-based outreach model, expanding access to primary dental services and tackling complex oral health needs.

The initiative supports the Government's 10 Year Health Plan for England and the priorities of the North East London Integrated Care Board (NEL ICB), to tackle entrenched health inequalities. It also forms part of the council's commitment to investing in the health of its rapidly expanding community and to regenerating Barking town centre.

The centre will also have an economic impact locally by creating around 44 local jobs, from apprenticeships to roles in reception, sterilisation, security, cleaning, and dental nursing. It will also open up new opportunities for learning and research, helping to build long-term skills and knowledge in Barking and Dagenham.

Professor Chris Tredwin, Dean and Institute Director at Queen Mary University of London's Institute of Dentistry said: 'I am so proud that Queen Mary will play a key role in this collaboration, which will enhance the oral, and wider general health, of people in Barking and Dagenham and beyond.'

'Through our students we will be able to open the doors of opportunity to offer dental care to those that need it most, in an area of high need. It is an honour to work with the visionary Council of Barking and Dagenham and to be involved in a partnership that will transform lives.'