

Access to NHS Dental Care for Children in Cornwall

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Cornwall Councillor Rowland O'Connor has warned that access to NHS dental care for children in Cornwall is becoming increasingly difficult, with many families unable to secure even routine appointments.

Backing a motion at Full Council, Cllr O'Connor said too many children are now going without routine dental care—leaving problems untreated and families with limited options.

“*Right now in Cornwall, there are children who simply cannot get access to an NHS dentist. That is a serious concern, and it's something we need to address.*”

Parents across the Duchy are reporting long waits, closed lists, and being forced to travel significant distances—or go without care altogether.

The motion calls on Cornwall Council's Director of Public Health to work with NHS partners to:

- expand preventative programmes
- increase outreach, including mobile dental services
- improve access pathways for children and vulnerable groups

Cllr O'Connor said the focus must now shift from recognising the problem to delivering solutions:

“*This issue has been recognised for some time. The priority now must be turning that understanding into practical action for families.*”

He also highlighted the Council's duty as a corporate parent:

“*As corporate parents, we have a duty to ensure children in our care can access basic healthcare, including dental services. That must be a priority.*”

Looking to the future, he said the crisis will not be solved without tackling workforce shortages:

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“*In the longer term, we need to support and grow the dental workforce locally so that services are sustainable for the future.*”

Closing his remarks, Cllr O'Connor added:

“*Access to a dentist is a fundamental part of a child's health, and it's important that the system works to provide that consistently.*”

The motion was supported as a practical step toward improving access and strengthening preventative care across Cornwall.

Broadcast Clip (30 seconds):

“*We're hearing from families across Cornwall who simply can't get their child seen by an NHS dentist. That means problems are being picked up too late, or not at all. This motion is about practical steps—working with partners to improve access, strengthen prevention, and make sure children get the care they need.*”

— ENDS —

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