toothfairy

The *23,000,000* Day Problem

Why Dental Should be at the Heart of Your Health & Wellbeing Strategy



Executive Summary

Dentistry in the UK is suffering a perfect storm

Dental is a universal workforce need. Everyone has a mouth. Everyone can experience dental issues. Yet, it has never been harder to access a dentist.

Most organisations have invested in mental health, MSK and virtual GPs. But dental, the health risk that affects more employees more frequently than almost any other, remains largely unsupported in the workplace.

Incumbent support is failing. 97% of new patients cannot secure an NHS appointment. 79% of employees delay treatment. Many dentists are leaving the NHS, or dentistry entirely.

Dentistry is uniquely time-sensitive. Most dental conditions do not self-heal. A missed filling becomes a root canal, worn enamel does not regrow, a cavity does not close... Without early intervention, issues only gets worse, making the consequences of inaction, and business impact, uniquely costly.

The cost is real. Over 23 million working days are lost annually. Dental sick leave averages 6.5 hours per episode, costing a 1,000-person organisation over £40,000 a year in lost time alone...

Dental is a window into wider health. Oral health conditions are clinically linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes complications, sleep disruption and mental health deterioration. Dental is a gateway to overall health and wellbeing.

The opportunity is clear. Thanks to new delivery mechanisms available to employers, 70% of dental issues can now be managed remotely through virtual consultations and digital triage. This closes the gap with easy digital access without the cost or absence of traditional models.

The bottom line: Only 15% of UK employers offer dental benefits. For the rest, dental is THE largest unmanaged health risk in their workforce. It is a productivity, absence, focus, and cost risk for employees and employers alike. Dental, therefore, needs to be a core consideration in your health and wellbeing strategy.

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- 1400+ excellent reviews
- 2000+ companies we protect
- #1 rated dental app
- 1,000,000+ members covered



The Ongoing *Dental Crisis*



"The UK dental system is facing a multi-layered crisis driven by two core challenges: accessibility and affordability."

— DR DEEPAK AULAK, CEO, CO-FOUNDER, AND PRINCIPAL DENTIST, TOOTHFAIRY

The UK's dental system is under unprecedented strain. This has become known as 'The UK Dental Crisis', and is one of the most significant risk factors affecting your workforce today.

When employees want to seek treatment, the overburdened and underfunded system is working against them. 97% of new patients cannot secure an NHS appointment. 79% delay treatment as a result. And for those who do find availability, it almost always means taking time off work to attend in person. Most practices open 9-5 Monday-Friday, which means every NHS appointment carries a built-in cost to business in absence and lost productivity.

Financial pressures such as inflation, changes to subsidisation thresholds in Government funding, and rising cost of materials has also caused spikes in treatment costs, meaning 21% of employees to delay treatment because of cost alone.

See Dr. Deepak Singh-Aulak discussing the Dental Crisis from a dentist's perspective here:

BBC RADIO 5 LIVE



A queue from 2am outside Warrington dental clinic for emergency dental appointments.

The Ongoing *Dental Crisis*

The Numbers are Sobering...

6,000,000 UK adults are currently living with untreated dental disease.

97% of new patients cannot secure an NHS appointment.

73% of employees delay treatment.

21% 73% of employees delay because of cost alone.

32% Nearly one third of adults report dental pain in a typical year.

23,000,000+ working days are lost annually to dental problems,

6.5 hours employees who take dental sick leave missing an average of 6.5 hours per episode

"This is not a distant public health story. It is a central workforce risk that is growing rapidly."

Matt Johnson - CRO, Toothfairy



Incumbent Support Mechanisms *Fail Working Adults*

Dental is a unique problem for employers

Dental sits apart because of three compounding factors:

First, dental conditions do not self-heal. A missed filling becomes a root canal. Early gum disease becomes a chronic condition. Without intervention, every dental issue only gets worse. This makes dentistry fundamentally different from most areas of healthcare, and the consequences of inaction uniquely costly for employers.

Second, the Dental Crisis is a symptom of the system designed to provide care collapsing. Even when employees try to access care, many simply cannot get support quickly enough, or can't afford it at all.

Third, only around 15% of UK employers offer dental benefits, often limited to senior colleagues only. These benefits only truly address the challenge of affordability, and still rely on a system with broken access to treatment pathways.

The result? For UK organisations, dental the single most frequent unmanaged health risk in your workforce.

Employees Want Dental Care:

Demand

79%

of employees would take up dental benefits

but only

Supply

15%

of businesses offer dental benefits

Dental is a Window Into *Overall Health*

Listen to Toothfairy CEO, Co-Founder and Principal Dentist Dr. Deepak Singh-Aulak discuss this topic:

Many dental issues often don't only concern the mouth...



"Nearly 9 in 10 of all large systemic medical conditions will have some oral manifestation; they will have some sign in the mouth."

— DR DEEPAK AULAK, CEO, CO-FOUNDER, AND PRINCIPAL DENTIST, TOOTHFAIRY

Oral health is directly linked to wider physical and mental health. Chronic gum disease creates persistent inflammation connected to cardiovascular disease, diabetes complications and weakened immune response. Dental pain disrupts sleep, increases fatigue and reduces cognitive performance.

The mental health impact is equally significant. Ongoing dental problems lead to anxiety, low mood and loss of confidence. Avoidance of care compounds the cycle. What starts as a minor issue can escalate into emergency hospital admissions and antibiotic use that early intervention would have prevented.

Dental can be a common window into overall health and wellbeing, and dentists are commonly flagging wider issues during routine exams.

Unmanaged dental conditions do not stay "just dental" for long, either. They can progress into larger concerns, external to oral health, if left untreated.

Closing the *23,000,000* Day Gap

The heart of the problem facing employers is **access.**

21% of UK employees avoided dental appointments in 2023 due to cost. But even for those willing to pay, finding an available appointment is increasingly difficult.

When routine care disappears, small issues become emergencies. A simple filling becomes a root canal. Early gum inflammation becomes advanced periodontal disease. And because dental conditions do not resolve on their own, the longer an employee waits, the worse the outcome.

Dental inequality also mirrors income inequality. Higher earners access private care. Lower earners rely on a system that increasingly cannot serve them, creating an unintended benefits equity gap that sits uncomfortably alongside DEI commitments.

For Workplaces:

Reduced sickness and absence

1 in 3 BUPA

Workers have taken take time away from work due to oral pain.

6.5 hours lost

Patients who take sick leave due to dental pain miss an average of 6.5 hours.

Engagement & productivity

73% BUPA

Of patients have delayed going to the dentist due to time constraints and costs.

>2 in 5

Delaying treatment as they were worried about needing time off work.

Attrition and retention

77% METLIFE

say dental insurance is important or extremely important when deciding whether to stay with their employer.

31% DENTISTRY.CO.UK

say they have experienced a negative response from their employer when asking for time off for dental treatment.

Closing the *23,000,000* Day Gap

The outdated belief that all dental interaction must be in person is being challenged.

70% of dental issues can be solved with *digital access.*

Think about the last time you had a dentist appointment.
Did you have to leave the house? Book time off? Sit in a waiting room?

Now compare that with digital-first delivery mechanisms of mental health support, GP consultations, physio and pharmacy. Digitisation has slashed costs, increased access and transformed delivery across healthcare.

Thanks to new delivery mechanisms like Toothfairy, 70% of dental issues can now be managed remotely through virtual consultations, live chat, AI-powered assessments and digital triage. Prevention, advice, monitoring and even early diagnosis can be delivered without leaving the desk, office, or front line.

By removing costly clinical overheads, digital-first dental engagement models are not only making dental benefits scalable and flexible, but also affordable in a way that was not possible before. Employers can offer access, triage, preventive support, and treatment, without employees needing to leave their desk to actually use the services.

Digital access is scaling deliverability, reducing costs, and protecting workplaces.



A Winning Dental Strategy

At the heart of a winning health & wellbeing strategy

Key characteristics of a winning dental strategy

- Solves for access through new app-based technology, allowing rollout and usage across total workforces.
- Encourages proactive intervention and issue prevention, stemming issue and cost escalation.
- 70% of cases solved through digital engagement, keeping employees healthy and at work. No phone calls, no waiting rooms.
- Digital-first engagement removes costly overheads from traditional dental benefits, making support affordable.



A winning strategy encourages proactive intervention and issue prevention, stemming issue and cost escalation.

Introducing

toothfairy

A new era of dental benefits

WINNER
ADDED BENEFIT
COVER

WINNER #1
APP OF THE YEAR

WINNER
DIGITAL HEALTH

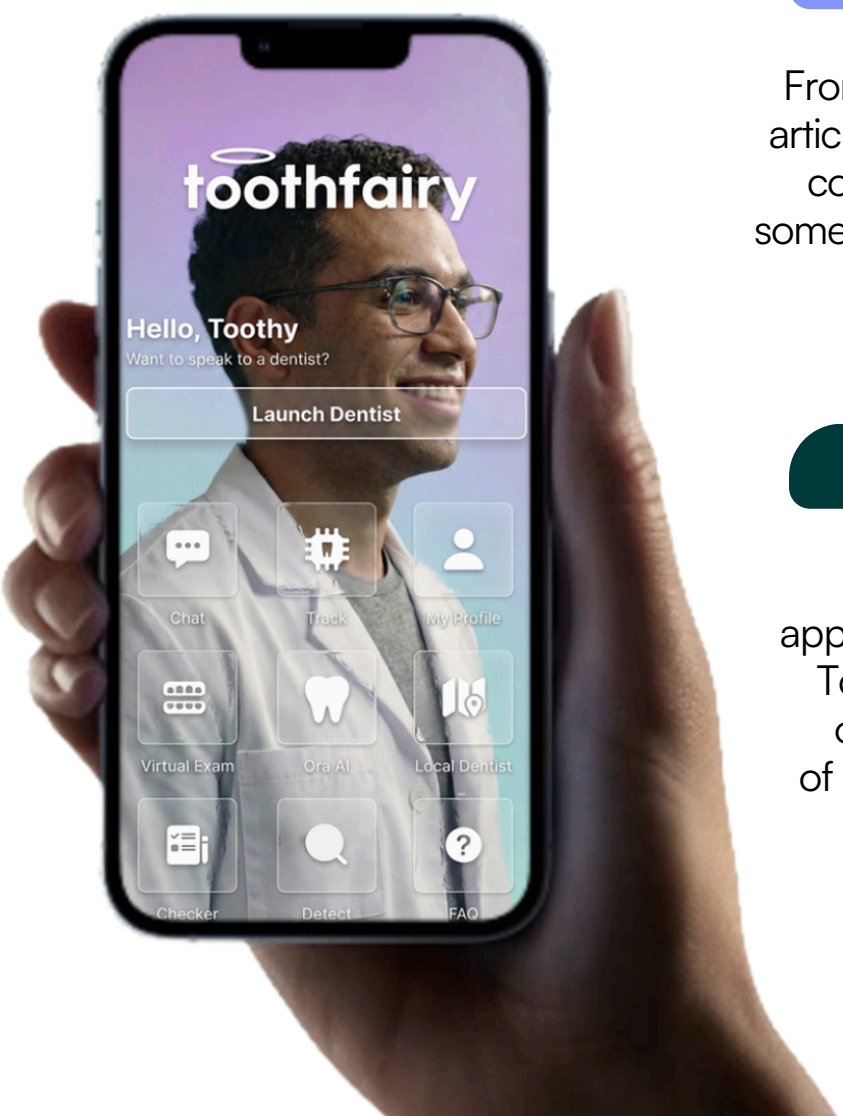
On-demand dentistry acts as the complete offering for your dental wellbeing strategy.

Dentist Connect

Patients can chat with a dentist and get oral health advice and guidance on demand, helping to prevent more serious issues.

Virtual Exam

Patients can conduct in app exams to pick out early signs of gum disease, cavities and oral cancer.



Prevention

From in app videos, to articles and discounts of cosmetics, we have something relevant for all.

Clinic Finder

If an in-person appointment is necessary, Toothfairy can source one from a network of clinics across the UK.

A dentist available for every problem. Ready to assist.

Swelling
Antibiotics

Sensitivity
Fluoride prescription

Wisdom Teeth
Diagnose & prescribe

Stained Teeth
Cleaning aids / smoking cessation

Pain
Diagnosis & high strength painkillers

Screening
Gum disease, recession, cavities

Emergencies
Painkillers, antibiotics, anti-septics

Bleeding Gums
Cleaning aids / oral health knowledge

Grinding / Stress
Custom made stress guard & monitoring

Recession
Correct technique & fluoride therapy

General Advice
Treatment planning & diagnosis

Second Opinions
Treatment advice, costs & alternative treatments

Access I Affordable I Preventative I On-Demand

Why the on-demand dental care model works

On-demand dental care delivers digital-first support, using in-person NHS or insured treatment only when hands-on care is truly needed - making physical intervention the exception, not the default.

01

Reduces Disease Severity

Early digital intervention prevents minor issues from becoming major claims.

02

Prevents Chronic Issues

By filtering cases digitally, the system reduces unnecessary in-person appointments.

03

Cuts Time Off Work

Employees resolve most issues without leaving home or the workplace.

04

Improves Employee Experience

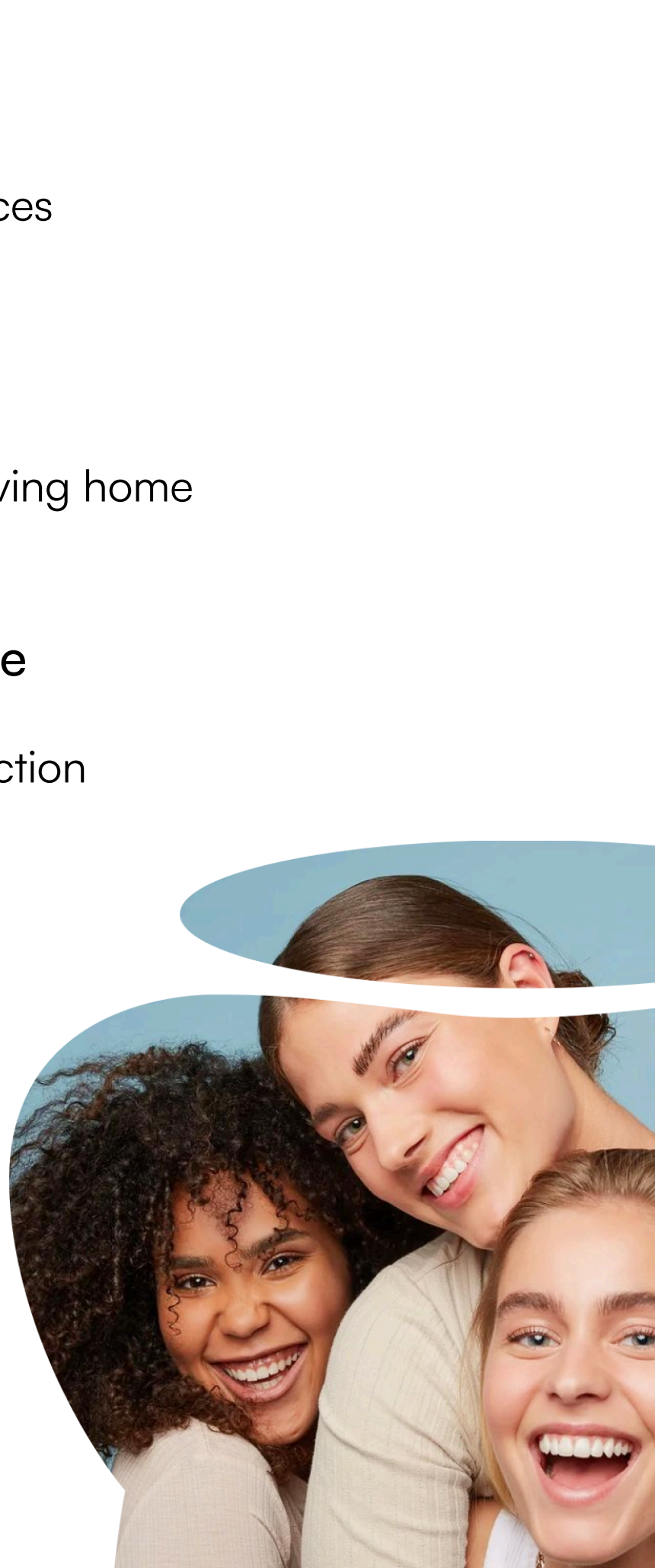
Immediate access to care increases satisfaction and engagement with benefits.

05

Stabilises Employer Costs

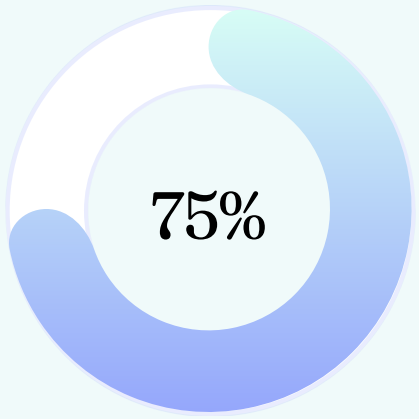
Fewer high-cost procedures mean more predictable insurance premiums.

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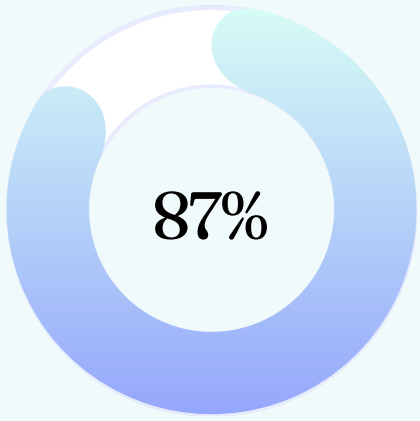


A new era of dental benefits

Survey at our partner companies showcased



Now more confident at managing their oral health



Report the app can help them reduce dental disease

Access I Affordable I Preventative I On-Demand



Debbie Fennell

Senior Benefits Manager, DHL

★★★★★

“Engagement in our dental benefit of Toothfairy is growing as both lengthy NHS waiting lists and employee worries about access to dentists have increased, and this benefit is helping to alleviate concerns, give access to dental advice and prevent time off work”

Christopher Bow

SSE

★★★★★

“With many dental practices closing or not taking on additional patients, Toothfairy is a fantastic benefit to allow our staff access to emergency dental treatment which has prevented lengthy time off work due to dental problems.”

Julie Hughes

Senior HR, Jet2

★★★★★

“With many dental practices closing or not taking on additional patients, Toothfairy is a fantastic benefit to allow our staff access to emergency dental treatment which has prevented lengthy time off work due to dental problems.”

Thank you for reading

Find out exactly how much dental issues are costing your business here. Simply enter a few details about your workforce, and our calculator will give you an immediate, accurate, data-backed estimate of your annualised absence costs caused by dental issues:

If you have any questions about Toothfairy, please contact us.

https://toothfairyapp.co.uk/for-business

benefits@toothfairyapp.co.uk

