Dental *For All*

Affordable Access for Employees in a National Dental Crisis



Executive Summary

Accessing a dentist has never been harder.

The UK dental crisis is no longer just a public health issue; it is a workforce risk.

As NHS access collapses and private costs rise, employees are being forced to delay essential dental care, leaving them vulnerable to escalating health problems and financial strain.

For People Teams, the implications are clear: delayed treatment drives higher costs, increased short-term absence, reduced productivity, and diminished focus at work. What begins as a minor, low-cost issue can quickly develop into complex, high-cost treatment that impacts both the individual and the business.

Yet a strategic opportunity is emerging. With innovative, digital-first delivery models pioneered by organisations such as Toothfairy, reshaping access and affordability, dental benefits are now more scalable and cost-effective than ever before.

“Dental for all” is no longer aspirational; it is achievable and should be prioritised as a preventive health, wellbeing, and cost-control measure within a modern benefits strategy.

Our Impact:

Everyday we support organisations to make an impact to their employees.

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



The Impact of poor *dental health* on your workforce.

Delayed Access

73%

have delayed going to the dentist, allowing issues to escalate

Lost Days

23
million

working days are lost every year due to dental emergencies.

Delayed Access

6.5
hours

Employees who take dental-related sick leave lose an average of 6.5 hours, across multiple days

Chronic Costs

13x

Routine procedures can cost up to 13 times more when left untreated

For a 1,000-person workforce, this equates to hundreds of lost working hours annually, not to mention reduced productivity from employees working while in pain.

Championed by leading organisations:

McAfee Huel NHS LAVAZZA Jet2 UK Government BOEING Boots Nando's

The UK dental crisis is leaving employees vulnerable.



"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

90% of new patients fail to get an appointent

The UK Dental System is in crisis.

Growing access, workforce, and funding pressures affecting NHS dentistry mean that securing timely treatment has never been more difficult. In some areas, over 90% of new patients have failed to get
an appointment.

Years of underfunding and an outdated 2006 NHS dental contract have pushed many dentists to scale back or step away from NHS work in favour of private practice, leaving clear access gaps. Data from NHS England and the British Dental Association show falling NHS participation, long waiting times, and rising levels of unmet oral health needs.

The knock-on effects go well beyond teeth. Untreated dental problems can mean persistent pain, infection, poor sleep, reduced concentration, and ultimately time off work. For employers, this is showing up in absence trends, productivity dips, and growing employee frustration about the cost of going private.

At its heart, the crisis creates two major barriers for employees: affordability and accessibility, both of which warrant a closer look.



The UK Dental Crisis is leaving employees vulnerable.

Affordability

The cost of dental treatment has increased steadily over the past decade, driven by higher material costs, Government budget changes, and inflation in clinical overheads.

79% of colleagues already delay care.
25% delay because of cost.

With everyday pressures on financial wellbeing such as the cost of living crisis, council tax increases, student loan threshold freezing and energy bill hikes, dental procedures are likely to be continually deprioritised in favour of routine living costs.



Accessibility

Access to dental care is one of the most pressing healthcare challenges in the UK.

Around 90% of NHS dental practices across the UK are not accepting new adult NHS patients as of August 2022. Even private appointments are increasingly difficult to secure due to dental workforce shortages and demand outpacing supply.

> "For employees, this means waiting weeks or months for appointments, or abandoning care altogether."
>
> Matt Johnson - CRO Toothfairy



The Importance of Access

When employees can't access dental care easily, they delay treatment.

When employees delay treatment, issues progress and worsen into advanced conditions.

These advanced issues are what drastically impacts absence, productivity, performance, and treatment costs.

Minor issues like gingivitis or cracked fillings can then escalate into infections, root canals, or extractions, costing up to 13× more than early treatment.

Access, therefore, is a core cost control lever as well as a health and wellbeing solution.

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



Championed by leading organisations:

Huel NHS LAVAZZA Jet2 UK Government BOEING Boots Nando's

Poor dental access impacts more than just treatment cost

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

78% 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.



Access is the real cost control lever for employers

Employers understandably focus on cost when reviewing dental benefits. Benefits leaders are under pressure to justify additional spend on top of their existing dental benefits.

The key to predictable, lower costs in your dental offering is solving for access.

Access → **Intervention** → **Savings**

- Access encourages early intervention
- Early intervention prevents escalation
- Prevents treatment time and cost

When employees can't access dental care easily, they delay treatment.

Minor issues like gingivitis or cracked fillings then escalate into infections, root canals, or extractions, costing up to 13× more than early treatment.

These advanced claims are what drive NHS costs and private insurance premiums up.

By improving access, employers can reduce both the frequency and severity of issues for their people.



The current landscape of dental *benefits*

Demand

79%

of employees would take up dental benefits

but only

Supply

15%

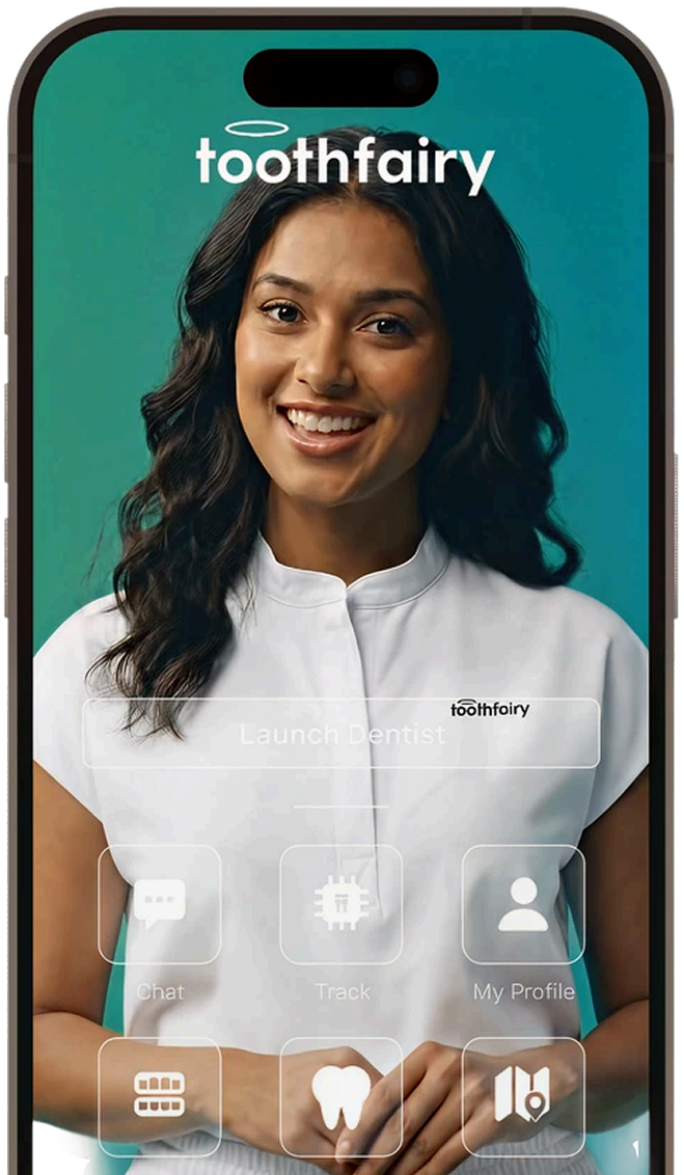
of businesses offer dental benefits

15-18% of employers offer some kind of dental benefit solution, whether that's an insurance offering, a dedicated benefit like Toothfairy, or a reimbursement scheme..

Yet in a recent employee survey carried out by BUPA, 79% of UK workers said that they would take up dental if their employer were to include it as part of their benefits offering.

For the 82-85% of Reward, Benefits, and Compensation leaders employers who do not have anything in place, this is now a huge opportunity for you to satisfy the demand within your own employee base.

And now, it can be affordable for all...



The UK Dental System Has Lagged Behind the Tech Curve

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.

Dentistry? Not so much. But now, it's changing fast.

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

Around 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.

70% of dental issues can be solved through digital means alone.



A Winning Dental Strategy

It's time to shift the employer mindset towards an access-driven, prevention-first dental benefits 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

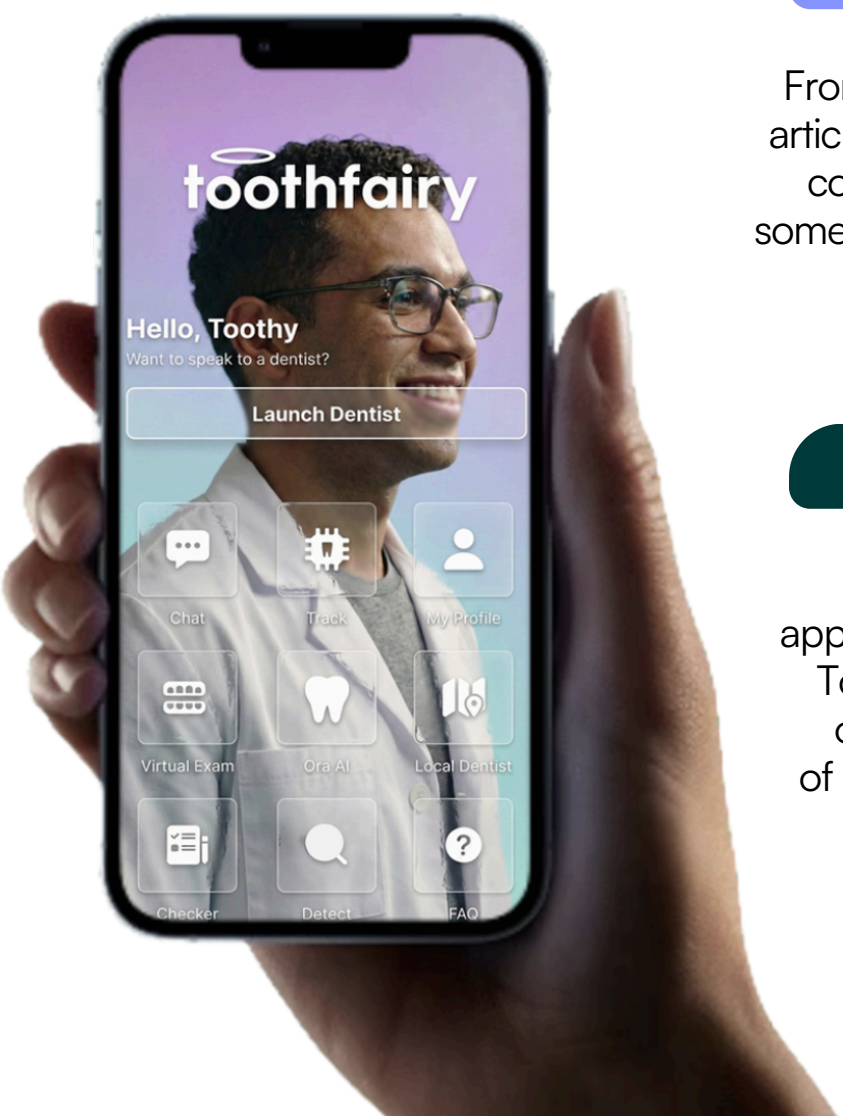
On-demand dentistry acts as the complete offering for your dental wellbeing strategy.

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

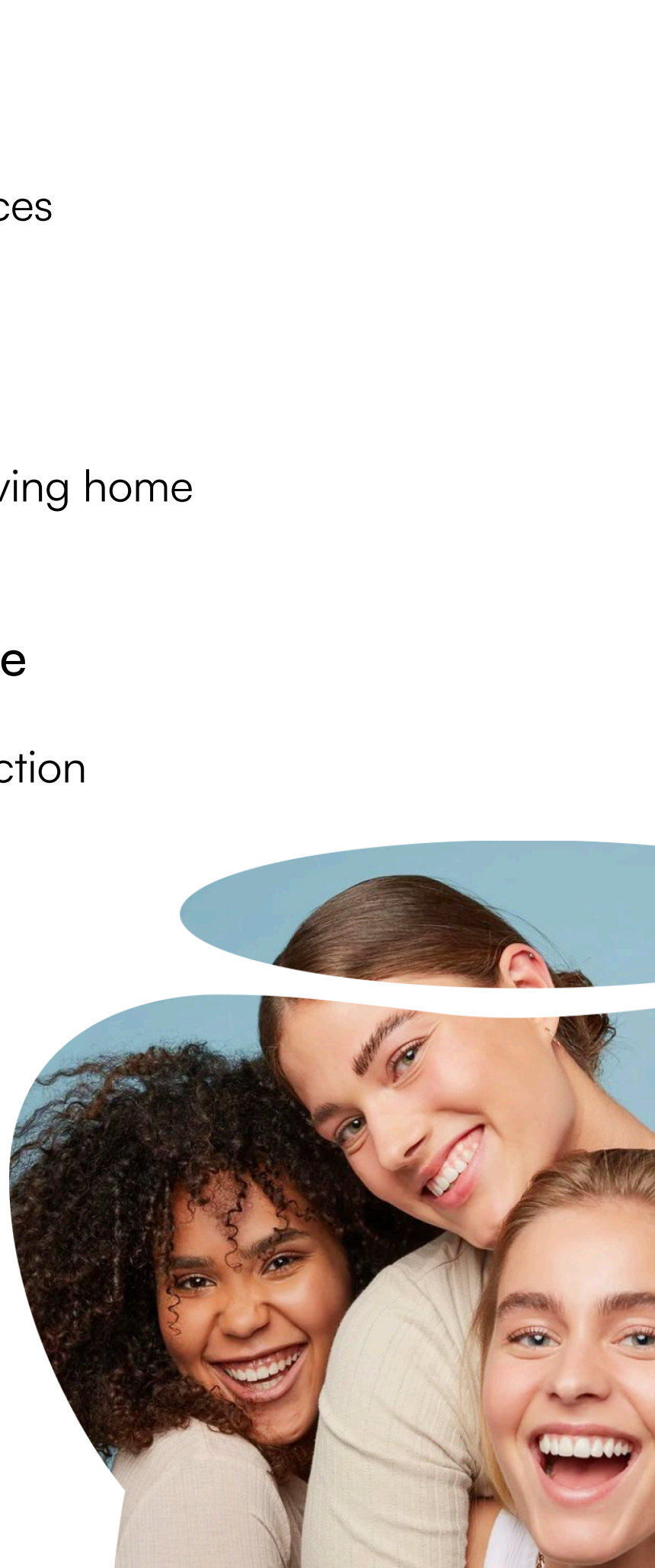
Immediate access to care increases satisfaction and engagement with benefits.

05

Stabilises Employer Costs

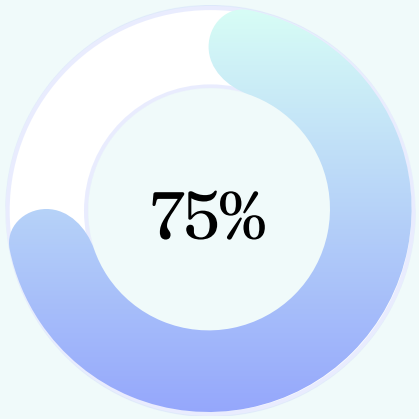
Fewer high-cost procedures mean more predictable insurance premiums.

toothfairy

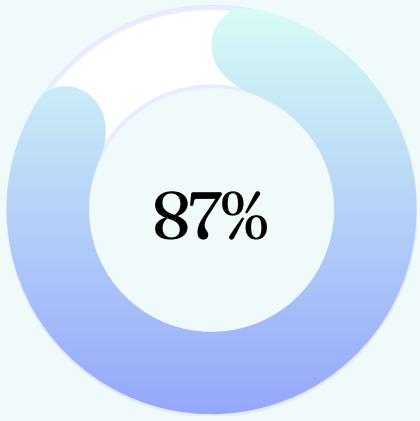


A new era of dental benefits

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

Book an intro meeting with Toothfairy to see how we can help your organisation improve dental access and build benefits for a modern workforce:

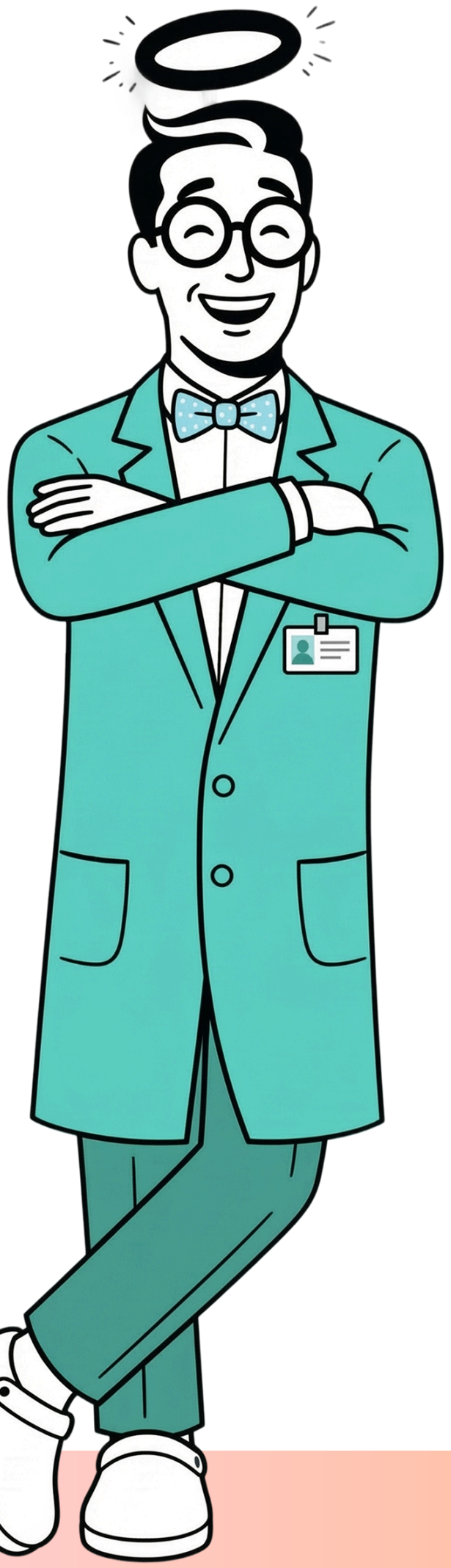
Scan above or

Click here

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

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

benefits@toothfairyapp.co.uk



FMC Dental Industry AWARDS WINNER App of the Year

WINNER HEALTH TECH DIGITAL AWARDS

COVER EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2024 WINNER OUTSTANDING VALUE ADDED SERVICE