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DENTAL OFFICER
ENGLAND

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CURRENT STATE

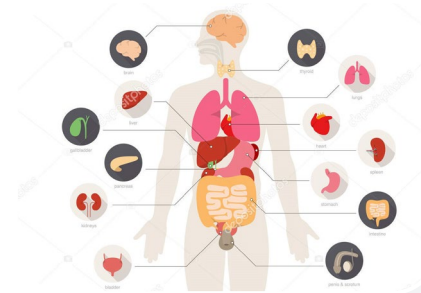
ORAL HEALTH AND
DENTAL SERVICES
2025



Addressing oral health
inequalities



Developing the 10 Year Health
Plan



Integration of oral health into
general health



Supporting the wellbeing of the
entire dental team



Promoting skill mix and
numbers of a collaborative
and inclusive dental workforce



System transformation: ICSs
and PCNs



Enabling patient safety and
quality



Providing high quality, safe,
clinically-effective, innovative
care



Enabling digital healthcare
technology



Managing clinical, population
and misinformation trends



Dental System Reform



Climate sustainability

Mental resilience

- Mental resilience is the ability to adapt well when faced with significant stressors or difficult events
- It's about maintaining mental wellbeing despite adversity and bouncing back from difficult experiences.

How to build mental resilience

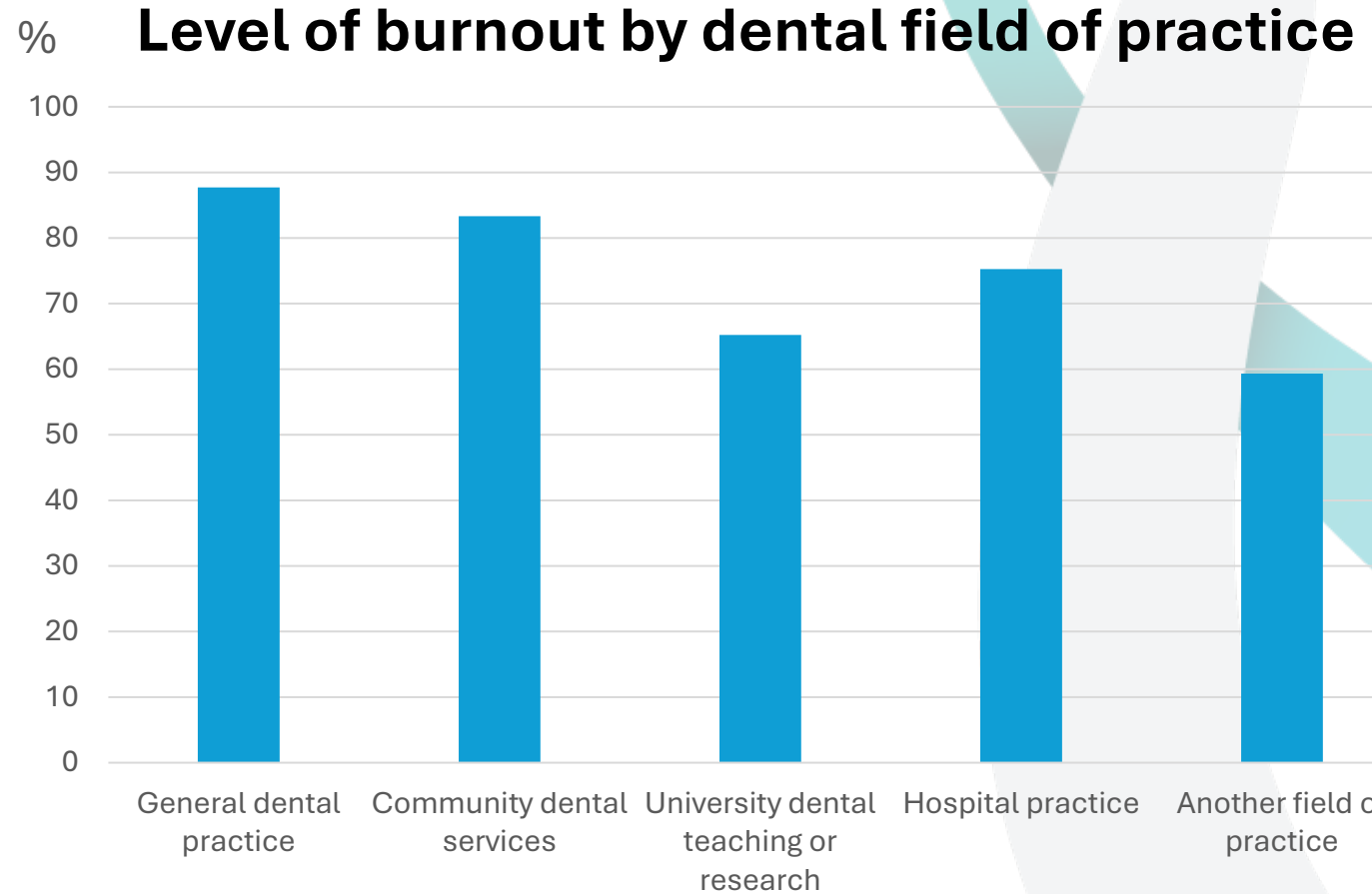
Building resilience involves developing the ability to bounce back from difficulties and adapt to change.

- Developing coping mechanisms
- Foster positive relationships
- Practice self care
- Cultivating a growth mindset
- Seek support when needed

What's the problem?

Collin. V, Toom. M, O'Selmo. E et al. A survey of stress, burnout and wellbeing in UK dentists. *Br Dent J* **226**, 40-49 (2019)

Across the profession, dentists are experiencing significant levels of burnout, stress and dissatisfaction.



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| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Governance | Relating to organisational and regulatory aspects |
| Perceived persecution | Worries about persecution from the regulatory and government as well as by the media and patients |
| Lack of support | Feeling unsupported, both from national regulatory bodies and the government as well as practice management locally |
| Professional constraints | Perceived lack of control, working arrangements and isolation |
| Shifting cultures | Concerns over a corporate mentality – placing profits above patients |
| Staff Issues | Managing staff, interpersonal conflict, inexperienced staff |

OCDO Workstream priorities



Provide cross-government advice for both the private and public sector

Support NHS dental contract reform, working with NHSE and DHSC



Advocacy for patients

Advocacy for the profession



Oral and general health interface - 'Putting the mouth back into the body' – there is a bidirectional relationship between oral health and most general health conditions. Dentistry should be considered within general health.

Addressing health inequalities in line with Core20PLUS5 and advocating for improved access to oral health as part of these pathways.

Promoting patient safety and care quality

Advocating for digital integration

Supporting skill mix – making the workforce plan a reality

Supporting development and wellbeing of the whole dental workforce

Promoting right touch regulation and a fair clinical negligence system

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OCDO objectives

3 out of 8 of OCDO's objectives relate to wellbeing and patient safety

- Project Sphere
- Primary Care Patient Safety Strategy
- Association's and Societies Roundtable
- OHRSLF
- Dentistry and Oral Health bulletins
- Public statements

OCDO 1

Patient safety and quality

OCDO 3

Right touch regulation and fair clinical negligence system

OCDO 4

Development and wellbeing of the whole dental workforce

Your NHS dentistry and oral health update

25 April 2025

A focus on mental wellbeing

Dear Ross,

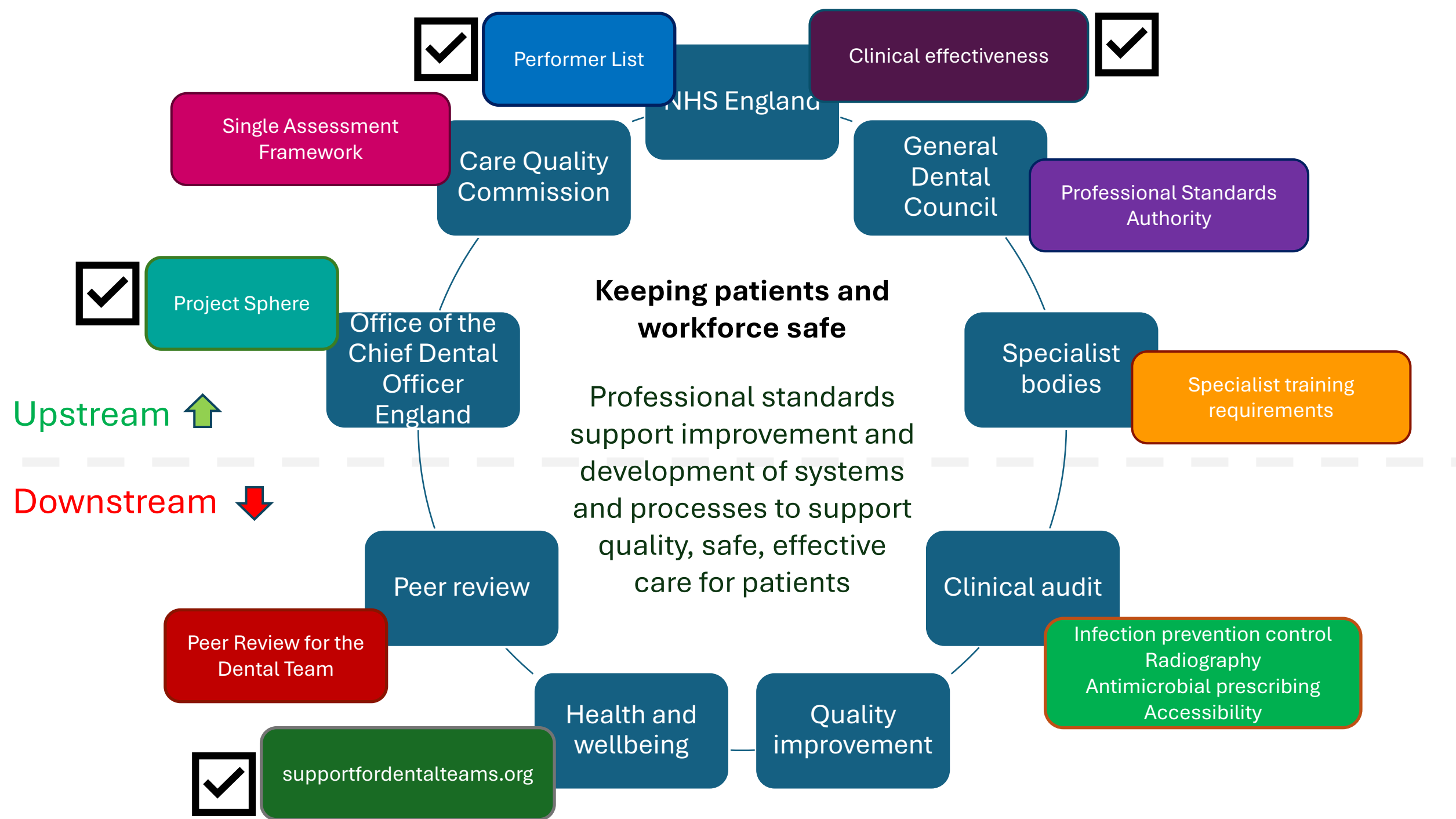
With Mental Health Awareness Week approaching on 12 May, this bulletin shines a spotlight on key resources available to support the mental health of dental teams, and highlights the excellent work being undertaken by organisations and qualified professionals across the sector in promoting and embedding wellbeing in the workplace.



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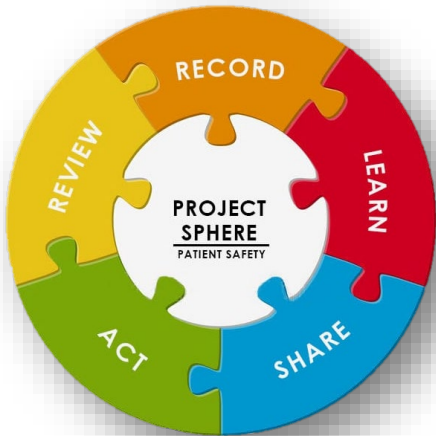
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Project Sphere – Aims

Our aim is to change
from *blame culture* to
*a learning from
experience culture*



Promoting patient safety in **primary dental care**

Regulators, indemnifiers, practitioners and patient voice in **the same room**

Improve **infrastructure** for recording patient safety events

Implement **templates** to share and enhance **learning** from safety events

Support practitioners, reduce fear and encourage recording

Project Sphere - Achievements



Input into NHSE Learn from Patient Safety Events (**LFPSE**) service for incident reporting

Input into NHSE primary care patient safety **strategy**

Continued development of NHS **Patient Safety Syllabus** Training on E-Learning for Health (E-lfh)

Creation and publication of **huddle sheets** – encouraging reflection on and reporting of incidents

Indemnity consensus statement

Project Sphere – Human Factors

- **Tackle misconceptions** within the profession by promoting communication/interfaces between regulators and indemnity advisors
- Ensure **psychological safety** of the dental team
 - Acknowledge the impact of litigation fears on staff wellbeing
 - Move away from blame culture – change attitudes within the profession
 - Encourage incident reporting and reflective learning – identify barriers
 - Promote duty of candour
 - Ensure practitioner support
- Promote diversity / **inclusion** / civility between staff and with patients
- Promote **communication**
 - Interface between primary care and other areas e.g. secondary care
 - Regular meetings between stakeholders



Safe
culture

Project Sphere – Guidance and Education

- Encourage **incident reporting** and reflective learning
 - To improve current recording mechanisms to create an appropriately supported infrastructure for recording patient safety events in dentistry
 - Promote safety mechanisms within dentistry such as Freedom to Speak Up
- Embed patient safety into **undergraduate training**
- Advocate for **safe digital processes**
 - Access to summary care records
 - Electronic prescribing practices
- **Proportionate regulation** and a fair clinical negligence system
- **Promoting guidance** for dental patient safety
 - [WT&E Patient Safety Syllabus](#) and training
 - [GDC Safe Practitioner framework](#)



Safe
systems

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Regulatory Board

Oral Health Regulatory Strategic Leadership Forum



**General
Dental
Council**



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*Oral Health Regulatory
Strategic Leadership Forum
(OHRSLF)*



- Regulators of dental services across England work in **partnership and collaboration**
- Focus on a **strategic shared view** of safety and quality for patients and professionals
- To **connect** over and debate topical issues, **share** learning and understanding
- To **influence** quality improvement, safety improvement, service integration, and system-level change across England
- To **reduce** bureaucracy and double jeopardy
- To **support proportionate** regulatory response
- Promote a **national support scheme**

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Have you seen this?

- This climate of fear can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of regulation. The threat of fitness to practise can impact a dental professional's confidence, reduce the dental procedures that they are willing to undertake and might also result in their leaving the profession – all of which can have a serious impact on patient access and patient care.

Have you seen this?

- Over the years, a climate of fear has grown within dentistry. We understand that this has, at least in part, been driven by mistrust and fear of regulation, and in particular of the fitness to practise process.
- Our research suggests that this starts early in a dental professional's career, as their perceptions of the GDC decline quite sharply post-qualification – with terms such as 'fear' frequently associated with regulation.

Fitness to practise is adversarial and can impact dental professionals' mental health and wellbeing

We know that the fitness to practise process can negatively impact the mental health, wellbeing and confidence of dental professionals. Our research demonstrates that very clearly, and shows in particular that the threat of fitness to practise proceedings, and prolonged case resolution times are key causes of stress in dental professionals.¹ Not only does this impact the trust that the profession and our partners have in the GDC, but it can have a direct impact on patient care, and is likely, over the long term, to affect career choices and retention.

A climate of fear exists within dentistry, driven by mistrust of regulation

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Developing a learning culture in our approach to regulation by:

- Using our own research and insight, and working with partners, continuously identify sources of learning, including analysing fitness to practise data to provide insight into areas of practice risk.
- Feeding this learning into development of professional guidance and maintaining the lifelong learning scheme.

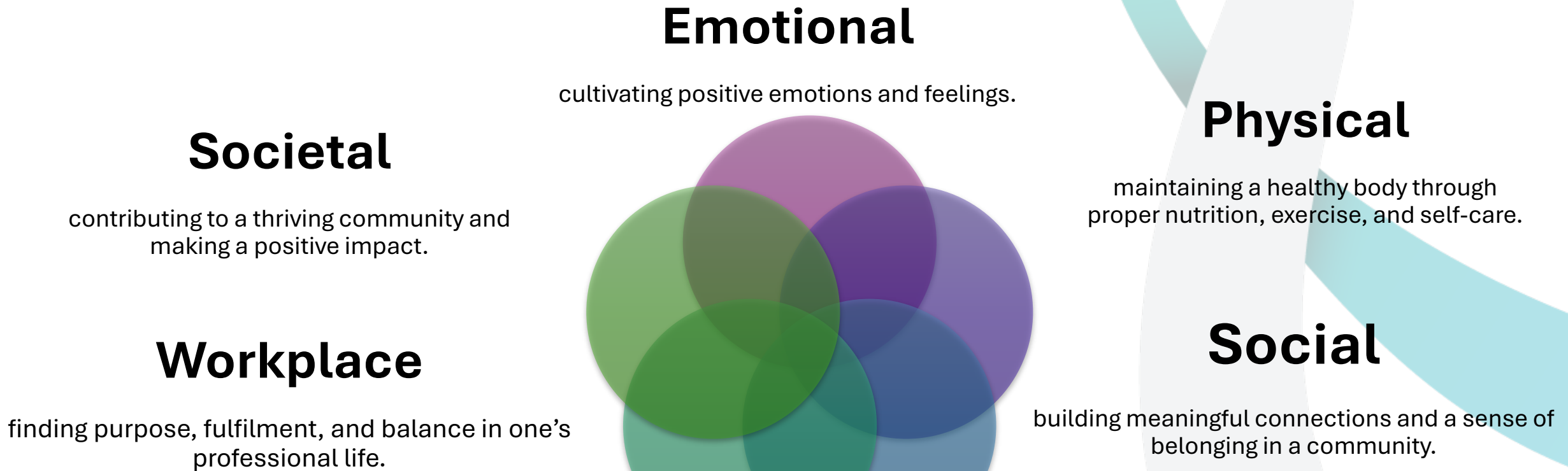
Addressing the climate of fear within dentistry and increasing trust in regulation through enhanced communications and engagement with the profession and our partners by:

- Strengthening our engagement with student and trainee dental professionals, the professions and our partners.
- Maintaining a transparent and constructive dialogue about what we are doing and why.

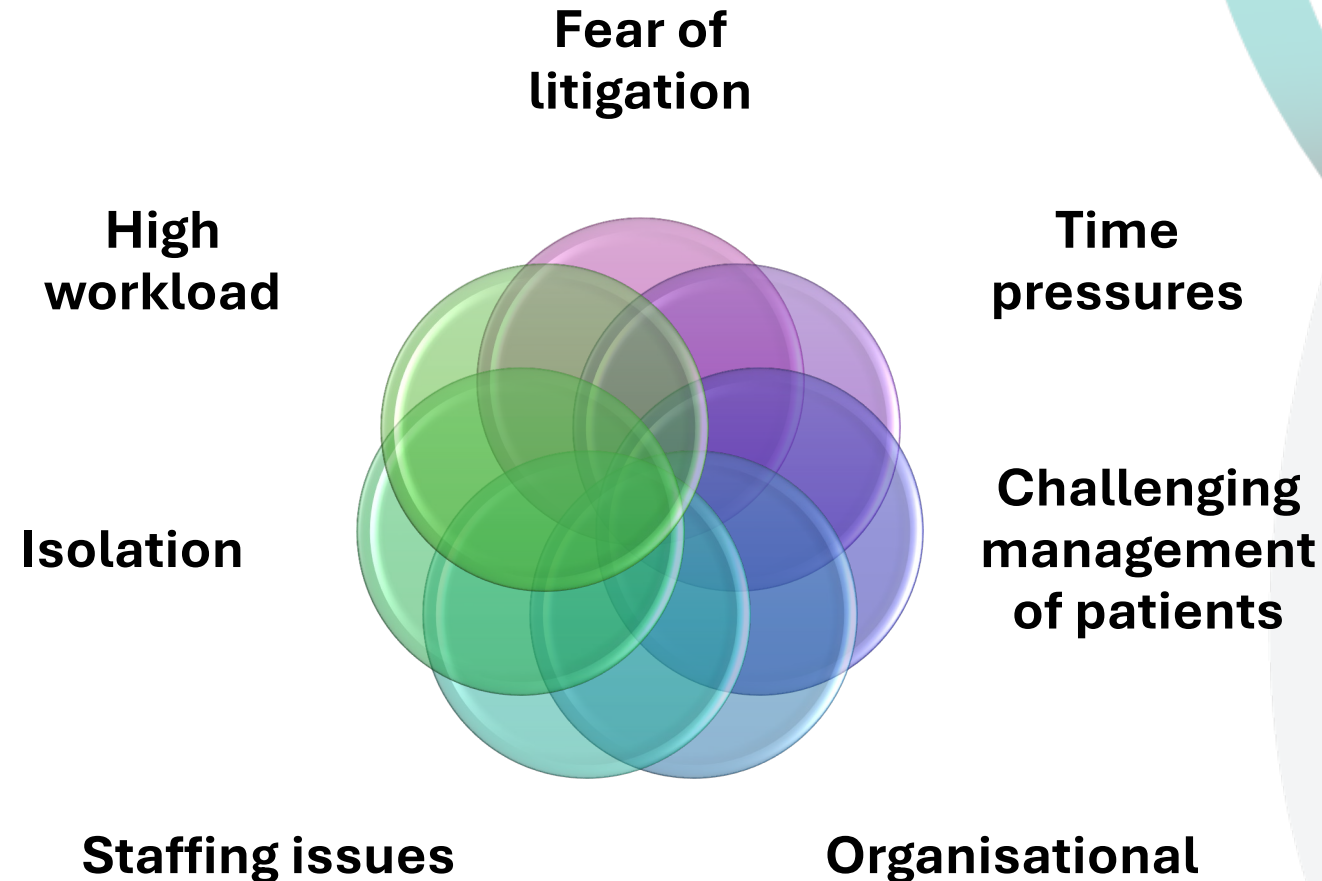
Working with dental professionals and our partners to better understand the elements of the current process that have the most negative impact on mental health and wellbeing of those involved, and work collaboratively to address them. This will include:

- Using research, evidence and data, as well as ongoing engagement with dental professionals to ensure that we understand the impact of the various elements of the process on everyone involved in fitness to practise.
- Working with professionals, partners and stakeholders to develop, test and evaluate ways of reducing that impact, both by seeking to make changes to the process and by enhancing the available support.

Well-being: a multi-dimensional concept



Workplace challenges threatening wellbeing



Key areas affected by poor wellbeing



Impact of poor wellbeing

Arora et al. 2010, Gorter et al 2000

- Impaired clinical performance
- Poor outcomes
- Compromised patient care

Clinical performance

- Decreased empathy
- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalisation - cynical attitude towards patients
- Reduced personal accomplishment

Burnout

- Absenteeism
- Sick leave
- High staff turn over

Engagement

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Economics of wellbeing: NHS Staff sickness

sickness absence
-10.3 million
working days/ year.

Direct cost of
absence - £1.7
billion / year.

80% staff report -
damaging impact
of the quality of
patient care.

Benefits



**Potential benefits of reducing sickness absence by 1/3 =
£555 million savings / year**

- Gain of 3.4 million working days /year
- Reduction in
 - indirect costs for temporary staff (£1.45 billion/yr)
 - staff turnover (recruitment costs £4500 per person)
 - ill health retirement cost (£150 million /yr)



Healthy employees

**Less likely to take
sick leave**

**More likely to
perform at their
best -higher
overall output**

**Better quality of
work**

**Wellbeing =20%
productivity
increase**

Promoting wellbeing in the workplace

It is the Right
thing to do

- Enhanced Productivity
- Reduced health care costs
- Improved satisfaction
- Improved retention
- Enhanced reputation
- Ethical considerations

Smart thing
to do

Stress, in itself, is not harmful

The difference
between a
stressful situation
and a **challenging**
one is our
perception of:

Our ability to manage it

The level of control we feel we
have

The meaning, significance and
consequence it has for you

Breaking the stigma

Common myths about therapy

Therapy is only for those who are struggling

I should be able to handle it on my own

It will make me look weak

Reality

Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness

Therapy is just like a physical or dental health exam – it's about maintenance and prevention

Breathe

Introducing BREATHE: A Single Point of Contact

In collaboration, OCDO have produced a **wellbeing platform**.

The platform is **completely free** and is designed for **all members** of the dental team.

The site was **launched in March 2025** at the BDIA Showcase.

For Every Career Stage

Completely Free

Proactive and Preventive

Flexible and Accessible

Multi-Format Learning

Designed for Dentistry Specifically

Science-Backed Strategies

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Going ahead

The site is constantly evolving... please do feedback ideas



**Visit
now!**



www.breathedentalwellness.org

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Thank you



With thanks to Rana Al-Falaki, Jackie Cooper and Shannu Bhatia



CDO webinar

**Wednesday
2 July 2025**



**Dentistry &
oral health
bulletin**

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