

New Year's housekeeping

As 2026 begins, many practices are already bracing for the familiar peaks and troughs in patient bookings. Some of these dips are predictable – seasonal slowdowns, school holidays, or the ripple effects of tighter household budgets that make patients hesitant to commit. Rather than viewing these troughs as setbacks, think of them as opportunities to sharpen your practice housekeeping and strengthen the systems that keep your diary efficient and resilient.

Predicting and preparing for troughs

- **Flagged pressures:** Patients may delay or cancel appointments when finances feel constrained. Anticipating this allows you to plan proactive recall campaigns or offer flexible booking options.
- **Seasonal patterns:** Identify quieter months and use them for efficiency reviews, staff training, or patient engagement initiatives.

Efficiency starts with the diary

Your diary is the engine room of the practice. Optimising it means fewer wasted slots, smoother patient flow, and happier staff. Key housekeeping steps include:

- **Clear cancellation policies:** Patients should know exactly what happens if

they cancel late. Transparency reduces frustration and protects your diary.

- **Pre-payment information:** Deposits or pre-payments for certain treatments help secure commitment and reduce last-minute dropouts.
- **Confirmations:** Automated reminders via text or email cut down on no-shows and keep patients engaged.

Measuring what matters

Efficiency isn't just about filling the diary – it's about measuring where you succeed and where you fall short.

- **Track cancellations, DNA (Did Not Attend) rates, and recall effectiveness.**
- **Review how quickly white spaces are filled** when they appear.
- **Show these metrics with your front-of-house (FOH) team** so they understand the ups and downs and why their role is vital.

Harassing short notice lists

White spaces in the diary are inevitable. The trick is to turn them into opportunities.

- **Maintain a short notice/cancellation list** of patients eager to cancel in earlier.
- **Train FOH staff to act quickly** when a slot opens – speed matters here.
- **Celebrate wins** when the team fills gaps; it keeps morale high.

Recall efficiency

Recall systems are often overlooked, but they're the backbone of patient retention.

- **Audit your recall processes:** are patients being contacted at the right time, with the right message?
- **Consider multi-channel approaches** – texts, emails, phone calls – to maximise reach.
- **Measure recall conversion rates** and adjust strategies accordingly.

Fees and conversations

Housekeeping isn't just about the diary – it's about the conversations you're having.

- **Are your fees correct?** Regularly review pricing to ensure sustainability and fairness.
- **Are conversations effective?** Patients value clarity. Train your team to explain treatment plans, fees, and policies with confidence and empathy.

NHS practices: Know your options

For NHS practices, 2026 may bring particular challenges. Understanding what contractual changes or funding pressures mean for your business is essential. Being in control of your diary and finances ensures you're not caught off guard.

Turning challenges into opportunities

Think of 2026 not as a storm to weather, but as a puzzle to solve. Every cancellation, every white space, every recall is a chance to refine your systems, instead of seeing challenges as lost time. Look at them as stepping stones – each one an opportunity to strengthen your practice, empower your team, and delight your patients.

A practical next step

If you'd like to start the year with a focused review, I'm offering a 30-minute 'Practice Optimisation Session'. This January, for free, we can look at your diary systems, cancellation policies, recall processes, and fee structures together. Small changes often deliver significant outcomes, and this session is designed to highlight where efficiencies can be gained.

To arrange your session, you can contact me through ADAM (Association of Dental Administrators and Managers) or via WhatsApp on 0794867296. ■

About the author

Lisa Barnham
is President at
ADAM and practice
management coach at
Practice Management
Matters.



Welcoming new faces in 2026!

At the end of 2025, BADN welcomed some new faces onto our Executive Committee, Panel of Representatives and Education Committee. Michelle Board and Joan Hitchcock stepped down as Chair and Immediate Past President respectively. Meanwhile, we welcomed Carolyn Roberts as President-elect and Rebecca Silver as Treasurer. Ruth Garity, previously our Treasurer, took on the role of Chairman. We also introduced new members to the Panel and Education Committee.

Carolyn Roberts is BADN's new President-elect. Carolyn began dental nursing in 1989, as a Saturday job at a local practice. She has worked in two GDS Practices between 1989 and 1998 and then in North Wales Community Dental Service since 1999. She is currently the Senior Dental Nurse for Anglesey and Gwynedd GDS clinics within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, covering 21 Community Dental Service clinics across the whole of North Wales and remaining clinical as well as moving up the management pathways. Her specialities are Sedation, General Anaesthetics, Special Care as well as patient and staff wellbeing.

Carolyn is currently part of the Senior Management and Improvement Team for NWGDS and has developed a local GDS Dental Nurse Peer Review Group. She has also been a member of the College of General Dentistry Dental Nurse/Oral Therapy Faculty Board since September 2024. A first language Welsh speaker, one of Carolyn's goals is to help increase membership of Welsh speakers in the profession by looking at developing resources in Welsh.

Carolyn is currently studying for a BSc (Hons) in Public Health and Wellbeing.

Carolyn's aspirations are to raise the profile of Dental Nursing in North Wales in both professional and academic aspects both locally and nationally. She is passionate about career development and committed to being an advocate for the profession.

Rebecca Silver RDN MSc is our new Treasurer. Rebecca is a multi-award-winning dental nurse with almost 15 years of experience working in dentistry. She has worked within the NHS and private dentistry as well as working with numerous dental specialists. She has dental nursing experience in assisting in endodontics, periodontics, oral surgery, orthodontics, conscious sedation, prosthodontics, implants, facial aesthetics and a range of dental treatment.

Rebecca has post-qualification certification in Oral Health Education and Dental Nursing Sedation. She obtained Fellowship of the British Association of Dental Nurses in 2023. Rebecca has also gained her Level 3 Award in Education and Training and is now enrolled on an assessor course.

Ruth Garity RDN is now Chairman and General Secretary, taking over from Michelle Board. Ruth began her dental nurse career on a VTS scheme in 1986 in Porthmadoc/Leith, North Wales, before joining the British Army in October 1988, working in various Dental Centres from Tidworth, Colchester and Warrimoor to warmer climates in Cyprus and colder climates in the Falkland Islands.

Following her military career, she has worked in both NHS, private and community settings in Chester and Colchester before returning to work for Delancey Primary Healthcare in a civilian role as a dental nurse in Colchester, Shorncliffe, Ormeau, Winchester and Alkerton. She is currently a civilian practice

manager at Pethbridge and holds NEBOSH qualifications in Oral Health Education and Radiography as well as being a keen dental nurse mentor. Ruth is the Armed Forces Representative for BADN and is an active member of the Education Committee.

On the Panel of Representatives, Industry Liaison Danielle Dellel has over nine years of experience in the dental industry. Danielle began her career as a dental nurse training at the Eastman Dental Institute, she later progressed into Clinical Management. In 2023, she gained a qualification in Dental Radiography.

In 2024, Danielle transitioned into dental sales, covering the South East of England. In this role, she supports dental teams with a strong focus on specialist dentistry. Danielle provides product training for the dental team and training for dental nurses on aseptic techniques for implant procedures, ensuring best practices are followed in line with current clinical standards.

Our Infection Control representative, Solana Neesham, is a highly experienced dental nurse with over 20 years in clinical, managerial, and educational roles, supported by multiple post-qualifications. She brings a rich breadth of knowledge gained across NHS, private, and community settings, complemented by wider experience in HR, mediation, and mainstream education.

A familiar face at dental shows and industry events, Solana frequently appears in webinars and educational sessions – always ready with a warm hello.

And on our Education Committee, Jo Dawson's journey in dentistry began as a Saturday job in 1990, and after working for years without realising there even was a qualification (it was voluntary and well-

funded) she finally qualified as a Dental Nurse in 2001. Since then, she has gained further qualifications in Dental Radiography and Oral Health Education, building a long and varied career in general practice, working across NHS, mixed, private, and specialist practices, both dependent and corporate as well as locum.

Through Awesome Oral Health CIC, a not for profit dedicated to improving oral health education and reducing dental inequalities, Jo leads innovative projects and campaigns that share positive smile messages and challenge misconceptions about 'healthy' snacks, supports schools with practical oral health resources, and collaborates with dental organisations to create sustainable change.

And below names on the Education Committee, Chitra Patel, having gained a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Education from India, has enrolled for IQA-Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process course.

Her career in UK started as a dental nurse and progressed as a dental nurse tutor, dental nurse course co-ordinator and dental adviser for NHS. She has been delivering and managing the National Diploma in Dental Nursing courses for more than 10 years. She is actively assisting NEBOSH as Internal Verifier for other courses providers of dental nursing qualifications. She has delivered Teaching of Dental Nursing Hours Medical Colleges in China since 2023. ■

About the author

Paul Swain MBE
is Chief Executive of
BADN

