

The future of BADN: Your voice, your decision

BADN members should have recently received an email from BADN Chairman Ruth Gurney IDN, informing them of a proposal received from Community to merge the two unions.

This is not, of course, a decision that can be made by any individual or, indeed, by the Executive Committee – BADN is a democracy, not a dictatorship! In fact, Exec Committee decisions are made, if at all possible, by consensus and, if not, by a majority vote. No one member of the Exec takes precedence or has decision-making rights. And on a matter of this magnitude, which will determine the future of the Association, it is the members who must decide.

Employment rights update

As of April 2020, the Employment Rights Act will bring three major changes to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) – what every employer has to pay employees when they are off work due to sickness. Currently, SSP is only paid after the employee has been off work for three days. So, for those three days, they might have received no pay at all, with SSP paid from the fourth day. From April 2020, they will receive SSP from the first day of sickness.

Second, the removal of the Lower Earnings Limit (£13) means that all employees, including part time and those paid irregularly, will receive SSP. At the moment, employees must have average weekly earnings (AWE) of at least £126 to qualify for SSP. Third, the new SSP rate for lower earners means that employees earning less than a specified income threshold – which has yet to be determined – will receive 80% of their weekly salary. So, all dental nurses (who are employed) will be entitled to SSP from the first day of sickness – and, very probably, more than they are receiving at present.

So, in a few weeks, current paid up Full and Student members will receive a ballot form in the post (it has to be via the post as government regulations do not allow union ballots to be held online). The ballot will be conducted by an independent third party: Gvica, formerly the Electoral Reform Society.

To assist members in making an informed decision, a Coffee CatchUp was scheduled for members at the end of February with Tiffany Giles, Deputy Operations Director of Community, who explained who and what Community is, while also answering any questions.

There will also be several other emails sent to members, explaining what Community is offering and what the proposed merger would mean to BADN members, should they agree to it. A FAQ sheet will be available shortly on our website; and members can send questions to enquiries@badn.org.uk.

The Association was founded in 1940 as the British Dental Nurses' and Assistant's Society. It underwent a few minor name changes, until dental nurses became known as Dental Surgery Assistants, due to objections to use of the term 'nurse' from general nurses – when it became the Association of British Dental Surgery Assistants (ABDSA). The badge/logo was, at that time, the famous 'star' badge (if you still have one, hold on to it – I am convinced they are going to be worth a bit in the future), but changed in 1990 to the oval yellow badge with ABDSA at the centre. In 1994, the Association reclaimed the title 'dental nurse' and the Association became the British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN) with the current badge/logo. It had become an independent trade union in 1978.

Just for the avoidance of doubt, I should like to say at this point that I do not, as Chief Exec, have a vote – neither in Exec Committee decisions nor in the forthcoming ballot. And neither do the other two members of BADN staff.

In fact, I shall be retiring within the next 12 to 18 months. I have enjoyed my 35 years with the



Association, although I won't deny it has been stressful at times! I have worked with some wonderful, passionate, dedicated women who gave freely of their time and expertise as Presidents, Councillors, Exec members, Representatives or Officers – not to be famous on social media, get likes on Instagram or to be big fish in a relatively small pool – but because they genuinely wanted to improve the lot of their fellow dental nurses and support the dental nursing profession! I shall greatly miss it when I go and would like to feel that I have left it in safe hands.

BADN will be at all the usual major Shows in 2020 – starting with Dental Showcase at Excel in March – so come along and say hello! ■

About the author

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Fawn in the headlights

I recently ran a leadership course for 12 Practice Managers. We called it 12 PMs and 12 Hard Truths, not to be dramatic, and certainly not to complain, but because there are realities in dental practice management that we have to face head on.

This is one of the most regulated sectors in the UK. That isn't going to change. CQC expectations, compliance, HR issues, patient complaints, recruitment pressures, financial targets – it's constant. And alongside all of that, there's the emotional weight of the job. Supporting stressed clinicians. Managing anxious patients. Holding teams together when morale dips. It's a lot.

One of the biggest shifts in the room happened when we stopped waiting it were different.

The pressure isn't going away. The regulations won't suddenly relax. Patients won't become less demanding. When we accept that, rather than resist it, something changes. We stop wasting energy

fighting reality and start focusing on what we can control.

Another hard truth: leadership isn't about being liked. It's about being clear. Teams don't need a best friend; they need consistency. They need to know where they stand. Avoiding difficult conversations doesn't keep the peace – it creates uncertainty. Calm, direct leadership builds trust far more effectively than people-pleasing ever will.

We also explored stress responses: fight, flight and freeze – and the less talked about 'fawn'. In practice management, you can see all of them. Fight might look like defensiveness in a compliance meeting. Flight can show up as putting off a difficult conversation. Freeze appears as indecision. Fawn is the one many managers recognize in themselves: over-accommodating, saying yes when they mean no, softening standards to avoid conflict.

In a regulated environment, that fawn response can quietly cause problems. Standards slip. Boundaries blur. Accountability weakens.



The key is awareness. When managers understand their own stress patterns, they can respond rather than react. When they regulate themselves, the whole practice feels steadier. The tone shifts.

What struck me most was this: when managers faced these hard truths honestly, the role didn't feel heavier. It actually felt lighter. Not because the responsibility disappeared, but because they stopped fighting it.

We can't change the regulatory framework. We can't remove all pressure. But we can invest in developing our managers properly – not just in systems and compliance, but in leadership skills. Communication. Boundaries. Emotional regulation. Decision-making.

That investment isn't a luxury. In dentistry, it's essential.

When we accept what we can't change and improve what we can, we lead more clearly and more calmly. And quietly, without drama, we become more effective.

And perhaps, just as importantly, happier in the role too. ■

About the author

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

