



Mr Joe FitzPatrick MSP  
Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

**By email**

30 June 2020

Dear Mr FitzPatrick

I write to you as Chair of the British Dental Association's (BDA) Scottish Public Dental Service Committee.

As you will be aware, following the Chief Dental Officer's announcement on 23 March that all routine dental care should stop immediately, the Public Dental Service (PDS) moved quickly to set up Urgent Dental Care Centres (UDCCs) in their local areas. PDS colleagues did an excellent job in setting up around 60 UDCCs across Scotland by the end of March to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. Without these centres, no dentistry would have been provided in Scotland during the pandemic crisis.

The current crisis has shown how essential the PDS is, not just in an emergency but also in its 'usual' role of treating the most vulnerable in society, including the elderly, adults with disabilities and children with special learning needs. These and other groups will need the PDS more than ever once the pandemic subsides to treat the massive backlog of dental problems that have accumulated over the past three months.

I am therefore writing to you to seek your assurance that the 2020-21 PDS budget will at least match the 2019-20 budget to ensure the PDS has sufficient capacity to meet patient demand. The BDA has previously [expressed concerns about the future of the PDS in Scotland](#), including on-going funding cuts. There was a 14.1% reduction in funding (cash terms) between 2014/15 and 2018/19, and a 15.4% drop in the number of PDS posts during this period. Continued reductions in PDS capacity and the departure of experienced staff may jeopardise the long-term viability of the service, and will certainly impact negatively on patient care.

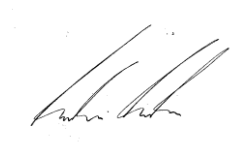
I have heard unofficially from colleagues that the Scottish Government will ask NHS Boards to make a 5% cut to PDS budgets in 2020-21. Following the outstanding effort of the PDS in the past few months, this cut would be seen by the service – as one colleague bluntly put it – as a “kick in the teeth”. I would be grateful if you could provide much-needed reassurance to the PDS that the Scottish Government values the service and will not be seeking such a cut. The PDS was under pressure before the pandemic crisis, and that pressure is sure to grow

as the service treats the immense backlog of patient care. It is essential that we have the resources to do so.

The PDS has provided, and continues to provide, a safety net for dentistry in Scotland during the current crisis. Without sufficient funding, there is a real risk that this safety net will not have the capacity to deal with a further 'spike' in Covid-19 cases, or to treat the growing number of vulnerable patients requiring vital dental care.

I look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Smith', is positioned above the typed name.

Graham Smith  
Chair, BDA Scottish Public Dental Service Committee