



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

By email

3 November 2020

Dear Minister

We write to you as Chair of the British Dental Association's (BDA) Scottish Public Dental Service Committee, and Lead of the BDA Scottish Hospital Dentists Reference Group, respectively.

During the pandemic, the focus on dentistry has, perhaps understandably, concentrated on ensuring the sustainability of the General Dental Service (GDS) as it accounts for about 90 per cent of the profession. With the announcement that the GDS can return to providing the full range of NHS treatments from 1 November, it appears that that the GDS is approaching a "steady state" although obviously with greatly reduced patient numbers.

With the emphasis having been on the GDS, we are concerned that the two main salaried branches of the profession – the Public Dental Service (PDS) and Hospital Dental Service (HDS), along with academic dentistry – have been largely overlooked by the Scottish Government in recent months. We are aware that NHS Boards have developed remobilisation plans for "standing up" local services but we are not clear about the extent to which these plans include the PDS or HDS.

We would therefore be grateful if you, as the Minister responsible for all aspects dentistry, could inform us what the Scottish Government's plans are for restoring the PDS and HDS to providing their usual service.

As we indicated in a previous letter, the PDS moved quickly to set up Urgent Dental Care Centres (UDCCs) in their local areas following the initial lockdown in March (including the closure of all dental practices for face-to-face treatment). With the assistance of redeployed GDS and HDS colleagues, the PDS has continued to provide an excellent service – in very difficult conditions – to patients requiring urgent care in these centres.

However, one consequence of the pandemic, including the continued operation of the UDCCs, is that the PDS colleagues have been unable to see their usual patients which has caused a significant backlog of unmet care. These patients include some of the most vulnerable groups in society. The HDS is slowly getting back to providing its usual service but at greatly reduced capacity.

Regarding academic dentistry, both the PDS and HDS support the delivery of dental education and training therefore any reduction in PDS or HDS capacity will negatively impact undergraduate training. Open clinics in dental schools present particular challenges and may require additional financial investment in the HDS and PDS estate. In addition, decisions made by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills about student term times and “staggered” approaches to Christmas holidays will affect the delivery of courses.

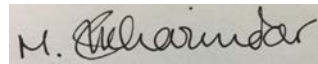
Given our concerns, we would appreciate it if you could give us an indication of what the Scottish Government’s medium- and long-term plans are for both the PDS and HDS, and for academic dentistry.

We look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Graham Smith
Chair, BDA Scottish Public
Dental Service Committee



Manar Elkhazindar
Lead, Scottish Hospital Dentists
Reference Group