



Ms Kate Forbes MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

By email

22 April 2020

Dear Ms Forbes

The British Dental Association (BDA) is seriously concerned about the financial viability of wholly or mainly private dental practices in Scotland during the current pandemic crisis.

We welcomed the Scottish Government's announcement that it would provide financial support to largely NHS practices (80% of average Item of Service income, plus patient contributions), and the recent clarification that mixed practices may also apply for government funding to cover the private element of their income. However, in replies to correspondence from individual private practitioners, the Chief Dental Officer has stated that the Scottish Government will not provide any direct funding for private practices and directed such practices to the range of other government support.

This leaves wholly or mainly private dental practices in a precarious position. The Chancellor's statement on 26 March regarding support for self-employed workers effectively excluded dentists and the BDA has since [written to the Chancellor urging him to remove the £50K threshold](#). We are continuing to press the Chancellor to extend UK Government support to all self-employed workers, as other sources of government funding are highly unlikely to be sufficient to maintain the sustainability of many private practices.

In presenting the circumstances dentists find themselves in, I would like to highlight the stark Scottish findings of a UK-wide survey of practices recently conducted by the BDA:

1. With all routine care now suspended 68% of Scottish practices reported they can only remain financially sustainable for 3 months or less. Nearly 1 in 8 (11.9%) estimate they can only survive the month.
2. Only two in five (39.5%) estimate they will be placed to restore pre-pandemic levels of patient access.
3. A quarter of practices that responded have already attempted to secure a government backed interruption loan, but 86% of applicants were unable to secure credit. Almost a third (30%) of those who failed have already had to seek commercial loans to stay afloat, at reported rates of interest of over 20%.

It is essential that NHS dentistry in Scotland remains sustainable to meet the high patient demand that will inevitably be there once the pandemic subsides. The BDA urges the Scottish Government to ensure private dental practices are included within all those support measures for other businesses in Scotland to help them remain viable during the current crisis.

I believe a number of private dentists have already contacted you directly to seek financial support and to stress the urgency of the situation. I look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David McColl', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

David McColl
Chair, BDA Scottish Dental Practice Committee

cc. Mr Joe FitzPatrick, MSP
Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing

cc. Members of the Scottish Parliament

cc. Members of Parliament in Scotland