



Mr Tom Ferris
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Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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By email

17 May 2021

Dear Tom

The Scottish Dental Practice Committee met on 12 May and members expressed concerns about the lack of progress regarding a range of issues that we and BDA colleagues have been discussing with you and your team in recent months. We recognise that you and Scottish Government officials were not allowed to discuss policy matters during the pre-election period but colleagues are reporting growing anxiety among the profession about various issues.

I have set these out in some detail below and would appreciate clarification on the Government's position and plans.

1. Financial support

- There is increasing disquiet among colleagues that the tiered financial support may be introduced at short notice, leaving practices little time to adapt to the new arrangements. Practices need a sufficient lead-in time – at least 2-3 months – to prepare for the new system. I understand that the plans and timescale for the new arrangements will be set out in a PCA later this month – will SDPC be given the opportunity to comment on a draft?
- Practices need to know what activities will be measured to calculate their Covid support payments. As you know, we have argued against the proposal to adopt gross Item of Service as the only measure as this would exclude a considerable range of activities that dentists and their teams carry out but which do not attract a fee. While we recognise that this is an initial measure that is simple to monitor, we continue to press for other measures to be included in the monitoring of practice activity.
- Colleagues are expressing concerns that they have still not been provided with their practices' baseline data which will be used to monitor activity levels once the tiered financial support arrangements are introduced. They are aware that NHS Boards have this information – do you know when it will be shared with practices to allow sense-checking?
- Members are worried that introducing the tiered financial support during the summer months will impact on activity levels as many dentists and their teams plan to take

annual leave. This and other factors need to be taken into account when considering “exceptional circumstances”.

- As we have discussed with your team on a number of occasions, the current emergency financial support arrangements are producing an increasing number of problems. These include payments for dentists going on maternity leave, and difficulties in recruiting new associates and locums (as they don't know what income they will receive). These issues need to be resolved urgently and clearly communicated to the profession.
- Plans to introduce an intermediate funding model to replace the current emergency arrangements need to be developed urgently. As you recognise in your letter of 14 April, more sustainable financial support arrangements are required to allow practices to plan their finances. We look forward to joining the planned working group and to begin discussions as soon as possible.

2. Ventilation

- Clear guidance for practices is much needed and long overdue. When will the Scottish Government publish the results of its survey on ventilation, and what will be the next steps? The only way the Government can develop a robust picture of ventilation requirements is to commission a survey of each practice.
- The Minister's letter of 16 March stated “*it is clear that government support around PPE and ventilation of the estate is important in the coming period.*” Presumably this means that funding will be available for those practices requiring modifications to increase air flow and reduce fallow time between patients?

3. PPE

- Practices need to know whether the current arrangements to provide each stood-up surgery with a limited amount of free PPE will continue from July. The Minister's letter of 16 June suggests that this will be the case but dentists need confirmation that they will continue to be supported with appropriate PPE.

4. Payment for Covid vaccinators

- We have been seeking clarification on the disparity in payment for Covid vaccinators for several months. In early March, we were advised that a letter from Scottish Government to NHS Boards would be issued “imminently” but we are still waiting for the letter. Do you know when it will be sent?

5. Available treatments

- Can you clarify whether facial aesthetics and tooth whitening treatments can recommence following the easing of national restrictions?

SDPC Executive will meet with you and your team on 3 June but I look forward to your response to the above points at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



David McColl
Chair, Scottish Dental Practice Committee