



Mr Joe FitzPatrick MSP
Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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Mr Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer for Scotland
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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By email

29 July 2020

Dear Minister and Chief Dental Officer

Further to our discussion on 22 July, I would like to reiterate our stance regarding payments for completing courses of treatments that were started before lockdown in March.

There is widespread disquiet in the profession about the prospect of “netting off” the treatment payments from the Covid support funding. To clarify our position:

- There is a time lag (usually at least 3 months) between completion of a treatment course and receiving payment. Therefore treatments that were started before lockdown and have since been completed, or are still to be completed, will be paid at a later date
- We regard the Covid support payments as a way of keeping dental practices viable during the pandemic, as practitioners were “stood down” from face-to-face care and were therefore unable to earn money in the normal way. These emergency payments were intended to retain NHS staff – many of whom were redeployed to the wider NHS effort – and to ensure practices could survive during lockdown. It is important to note that many dentists continued to work in practice during this time, to triage, advise and prescribe for patients, maintain their practices, as well as carry out treatments in Urgent Dental Care Centres.

There is no “double counting” between these two funding streams. To use the analogy of, say, a self-employed plumber who carried out work before lockdown and was later paid for completing the work, they would not have this income “netted off” the separate government support during the pandemic.

For dentists facing what they regard as a form of government “clawback”, the financial sums involved are substantial. From discussions with a range of colleagues, a 3-surgery practice (for example) could face losses in the region of £30,000. At a time when practices are facing financial difficulties due to lack of patient charges, increased costs (for example, paying unfurloughed staff) and continued abatement of the average Item of Service, this will place many practices in financial jeopardy.

We therefore strongly urge you to reconsider “netting off” payments for completing treatment courses from the Covid support payments to provide much-needed assurance to practices.

I look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David McColl', with several loops and a trailing end.

David McColl
Chair, BDA Scottish Dental Practice Committee