

E: NHSgeneraldentalservicesmailbox@gov.scot

Our ref: 202100175102
14 April 2021

Dear Phil,

Thank you for the letter of 10 March 2021 to Mairi Gougeon, MSP, Minister for Public Health and Sport about the future of NHS dental services. I have been asked to reply on her behalf.

We are attentive to the issues you have highlighted. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that NHS dental services are well placed to deliver remobilised services. It is widely acknowledged that the coronavirus pandemic has radically changed the way we deliver health and social care services in Scotland. We recognise that the dental sector has been amongst those most affected, due to the high usage of AGPs in dental treatment and associated operational challenges, including the wearing of enhanced PPE, the need to accommodate physical distancing, and fallow times.

This recognition has been demonstrated by the financial support provided to NHS dentistry by the Scottish Government throughout the pandemic. The emergency financial support measures include an increase in funding of £36m annually to NHS dentistry in the financial year 2020/21. We also estimate that at present the dental sector in Scotland is receiving £1.5m of free PPE per week. The budget process for 2021/22 includes this emergency support funding.

The Ministerial letter of 16 March summarised how the Scottish Government intends to take forward the remobilisation of NHS dental services. This reiterated our PCA communication from 26 October last year to introduce tiered funding support linked to levels of activity and patient registration. This is an important administrative element in rebuilding activity in those NHS dental services provided through the independent contractor model. The issues you have highlighted can only be addressed through appropriate remobilisation.

Second, that the financial support measures which were put in place at the end of March 2020 were not envisioned to be a long term funding solution for NHS dentistry. The letter confirms a position that was originally put to the BDA Secretariat by Scottish Government officials that there is a requirement for an interim financial arrangement to provide NHS dental practices

with reassurance about their funding arrangements to enable them to develop future plans for their businesses within the NHS.

We are also currently taking forward work to understand the ways in which Scottish Government can support the sector further. We are asking the profession to participate in a short survey to help us more accurately assess the needs of practices in relation to ventilation. More information on this can be found in the [CDO letter of 31 March 2021](#).

NHS Board remobilisation plans are also in place for the Public and Hospital Dental Services. Remobilisation for HDS and PDS is an integral part of NHS Board Re-mobilisation plans for 2021/22. Oral health improvement planning is also well advanced for those programmes such as the Scottish Government's flagship Childsmile Programme, which has made significant progress in improving the oral health of children in Scotland. The most recent NDIP report in 2020 showed that 74 per cent of P1 children had 'no obvious decay experience' compared to 58 per cent in 2008. Any commentary on the impact of the pandemic on child oral health needs to be seen against the progress that has been made prior to this present situation. The Childsmile Programme has continued to provide some services throughout the pandemic, and the intention is for a full restart from the new school year. I trust that you will appreciate that this particular programme is bound to the wider situation within the education sector and continuing to ensure the safety of children and staff.

Finally, I would like to reassure you that the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that patients are able to receive the NHS dental care and treatment they require in line with supporting remobilisation activity and public health policy.

I hope that this information will be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer