

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

David McColl
Chair, Scottish Dental Practice Committee
British Dental Association

c/o Mr Phil Grigor, National Director, Scotland
Philip.Grigor@bda.org

13 January 2021

Dear Mr McColl

Thank you for your letter of 27 November concerning the sustainability of NHS dental services in Scotland. As Minister responsible for dental services, I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we deliver all health care services in Scotland. The Scottish Government acknowledges that Dentistry has been amongst the hardest hit sectors of the work force because of the unique way in which high street dental care is funded and as a result of GDPs having to adapt to accommodate physical distancing, enhanced PPE and fallow times in connection with aerosol generating procedures (AGPs).

Ventilation is one of a number of other mitigations that may be employed to ensure the health and safety of patients and dental team members. My officials advise me that guidance has been published recently by Public Health England which draws on the expert advice from the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme (SDCEP). This makes a recommendation of a maximum baseline post-AGP fallow time of 30 minutes where the air exchange rate is unknown or known to be up to 5 air changes per hour (ACH). Where the air exchange rate is known to be 10 ACH or greater then this baseline fallow time may be reduced to 15 minutes.

Additionally, my officials advise that the Scottish Health Planning Note 36 Part 2 published in 2006 to provide guidance to both dentists and NHS boards details the minimum air exchange rate for a dental treatment room as 10 ACH. It is anticipated that all treatment rooms constructed or refurbished after publication of this planning note should already be compliant with this minimum standard.

I understand that in your regular discussions with the Dentistry team that the CDO had indicated there are no plans for a significant commitment to support funding for bespoke ventilation solutions in dental practices. The CDO has advised me, however, that in light of recent developments elsewhere in the UK, he recognises that the sector would welcome a clear statement on the matter and plans to issue a letter in the New Year.

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Recent advances in testing and vaccination have given us all some hope that some of the worst aspects of this pandemic may be further mitigated. We continue to explore these options as a way of securing a sustainable solution with a positive effect across all sectors of health care and the wider economy.



Mairi Gougeon

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