



To: Ms Liz Kimmins MLA (Chair); Mr Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chair)
c/o Mr Keith McBride
Clerk, NI Assembly Health Committee
Room 410 Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Sent via email

28 June 2024

Re. 27th June DoH evidence session on General Dental Services

Dear Liz /Danny

Firstly, I wanted to thank you both for the commitment you have personally demonstrated to understanding the considerable issues impacting so severely on Health Service dentistry and dentists at this time, not least the recent opportunity afforded to BDA to brief the committee.

It is with a real sense of disappointment then, that the anticipated and important evidence session with Departmental officials in relation to General Dental Services was unable to go ahead yesterday afternoon.

We understand the DoH briefing could not proceed because the committee was no longer quorate. And, as we are rapidly approaching the Summer recess after the institutions having only been restored since February, it concerns us that this important session won't in all likelihood happen until the Autumn at the earliest, assuming it will be rearranged.

We are of course cognisant that there is an election campaign taking place; however, canvassing should not interfere with the elected and democratic duty of elected members.

We cannot overemphasise the importance and reliance representative organisations like our own, and the general public place upon our democratic institutions, in particular the Health Committee, to champion the very real issues our members and members of the public who increasingly can't access dental care are experiencing at this time.

Indeed, there is an irony at a time when Health is such a prominent issue on the doorsteps, that some of our own Health Committee members cannot spare the time to attend committee to work on resolving those very same issues which are devolved. Yesterday, a number of members chose not to attend a briefing that we consider was vital to the future direction of dental services here, at a time when direction is needed and when pressures at practice level are considerable. You will appreciate how incredibly disappointing this is received among the dental profession.

The committee has an important statutory function to hold the Department to account. That includes where their approach to stabilising a service is so apparently inadequate at practice level; it involves

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questioning why the Department thought it could bypass consulting meaningfully and on equal terms with the profession and its representatives.

Indeed, the consequences from this session not taking place are that the future of dental services in Northern Ireland remain in limbo; there is no onus on officials to engage with us to co-design the urgent and meaningful reforms needed to stabilise the service with the resources needed to get the job done.

As we stated in our evidence to the committee, dentistry here is at crisis point; we need help from Stormont, otherwise NHS dentistry will cease to exist.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tristen Kelso'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tristen Kelso
Northern Ireland Director