

Jenni Minto MSP  
Minister for Public Health and Women's Health  
*Sent by email*

20 July 2024

Dear Jenni,

Following the implementation of Payment Reform on 1 November 2023, we have canvassed dentists to find out what the changes have meant for them and the millions they treat across Scotland.

Just over a year ago the Scottish Dental Practice Committee and the Scottish Government entered formal negotiations on the new fee structure and Payment Reform. This moved at pace within a challenging fiscal environment. We were clear that the previous funding model was unsustainable, as surging costs had left dental practices delivering some NHS care at a financial loss and this was threatening the viability of dental practices.

Two thirds of dentist respondents tell us the new system represents an improvement on the previous Statement of Dental Remuneration. Given the critical place dental services were in, that verdict is welcome news.

However, while we have secured needed improvements, the overwhelming majority of dentists – 9 in 10 – are telling us this simply cannot be the final destination for NHS dentistry in Scotland.

Dentists have told us reform fall short on access, inequalities and prevention. Changes might make practices more sustainable today, but they do not provide the foundations for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century service.

Clearly the impact of Payment Reform must be closely monitored. But there are also wider concerns that reform has not met the Scottish Government's stated intention to provide "greater clinical freedom in a high trust, low bureaucracy model". Just 38% of dentists told us that the new system reduces bureaucracy, with 34% agreeing it increases clinical freedom.

The stated ambition as set out in the previous First Minister's Policy Prospectus was "[sustained and improved equitable national access to NHS dentistry](#)". You have stated that "[there remains further work to do to ensure the long-term sustainability of dental businesses, and I look forward to working with you as we test and refine the system post launch](#)". These are promises that must be kept.

Workforce challenges are now being felt acutely across the sector and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Scotland cannot have NHS dentistry without NHS dentists – and this service must be a place which can recruit and retain talent, where graduates have a chance to build a lifelong career.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



David McColl  
Chair, Scottish Dental Practice Committee  
CC Tom Ferris, Chief Dental Officer