



Mr Humza Yousaf MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
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By email

17 June 2021

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Thank you for meeting with us last week. We found the discussion useful and we look forward to further constructive meetings in the future.

We would like to reiterate some of the concerns we raised last week as these are priority issues facing the dental profession.

- We have long argued that the Scottish Government needs to introduce a wider range of measures than just gross Item of Service (IoS) to monitor practices' activities. David's example about backlog of children requiring examinations in his practice – and the length of time it would take to subsequently treat them – is a case in point. These examinations do not attract a fee (so would not count towards gross IoS) and dentists should not be put in the invidious position of having to choose between generating IoS and providing essential dental care.
- The current financial support model was introduced at short notice 15 months ago in response to an emergency situation. We welcome the recognition in your letter of 15 June that there is an urgent need for a more sustainable funding model as practices are currently unable to plan their finances and both practice owners and associates need clarification to allow practices to recruit new dentists. When a dentist leaves a practice, difficulties in recruiting a replacement are adding to the pressure on the remaining dentist(s) as the number of patients registered to the practice remains unchanged.
- There is already a colossal backlog of unmet dental care need as a result of the pandemic. All parts of the profession are under pressure and any increased demand on the General Dental Service as a result of the pledge to abolish NHS dental charges will have knock-on effects on both the Public Dental Service and the Hospital Dental Service in terms of referrals and unregistered patients.
- We have already signalled our willingness to work with the Scottish Government on its plan to abolish patient charges over the course of this Parliament. This includes securing additional funding to replace patient charge revenue (currently £75 million per year but which could rise to £100 million due to an increase in demand for treatment).
- It is essential that the Scottish Government manages patients' expectations about limited access to routine dentistry – at least for the foreseeable future – as dentists are only able to see a limited number of patients each day.

- The new long-term financial model needs to ensure NHS dentistry is sufficiently resourced to remain sustainable and accessible to all those who need it, regardless of income, and is an attractive career choice for the next generation of dentists.
- As restrictions are eased, there needs to be a more proportionate approach to follow time following aerosol generating procedures which is reflected in revised standard operating procedures regarding the use of enhanced PPE. The BDA wrote to the four UK Chief Dental Officers last week asking them to approach SDCEP to develop a roadmap out of restrictions.
- We welcome the Scottish Government's recent announcement that it will allocate £5 million to help practices invest in ventilation equipment to increase patient volumes but we await details of the conditions applied to the scheme. The scheme needs to be light on bureaucracy and easy to comply with, and to cover those practices who have already installed portable units or air cleaners (such as HEPA filters) when they were unable to improve ventilation by other means in the short term, following guidance from the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme (SDCEP).
- The Scottish Government needs to deliver a sustainable dental workforce to meet the expected increase in demand, and to address issues such as the disruption to dental school graduations and the possible impact of Brexit on access to dentists in particular areas of Scotland.
- Finally, we reiterate our [election manifesto](#) call to tackle long-standing oral health inequalities, as these will have widened during the pandemic and could widen further as an unintended consequence of the free dentistry pledge.

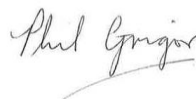
We welcome your offer to meet with BDA representatives on a regular basis and would like to arrange a meeting with the Chairs of our committees soon. We would also like to reiterate the invitation to you to visit David McColl's practice to see at first-hand how an NHS dental practice operates.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely



David McColl
Chair, Scottish Dental Practice Committee



Phil Grigor
National Director, BDA Scotland

CC. Mr Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer