

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

Mr Graham Smith
Chair, BDA Scottish Public Dental Service
Committee

Ms Manar Elkhazindar
Lead, Scottish Hospital Dentists Reference Group

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

10 November 2020

Dear Mr Smith and Ms Elkhazindar

Thank you for your letter of 3 November concerning Scottish Government plans for PDS, HDS and academic dentistry.

As you are aware, tough restrictions during lockdown, reflecting concerns about the potential for virus transmission within the dental setting in relation to the use of aerosol generating procedures (AGPs), necessitated the closing of high street dental practices and the transfer of urgent care to a number of Urgent Dental Care Centres (UDCCs) across Scotland. I have publicly acknowledged that the swift action and agility of the PDS and HDS service in standing up a quality urgent and emergency NHS dental care service delivered through UDCCs, to a much broader patient base, was a remarkable feat under the most difficult of circumstances.

While I welcome the resumption of the full range of NHS treatments from 1 November 2020, we have been careful in our patient messaging to highlight that dentists will not be able to see the same numbers of patients as before the pandemic. I would hope that in the coming months, demand for UDCCs from high-street practitioners should reduce, restricted to those patients who have an urgent dental problem and are exhibiting symptoms of coronavirus or thought to be a COVID-risk. But I am also mindful that dental capacity will remain suppressed against a backlog of care and treatment from patients who are waiting to be seen.

There are a number of challenges that were significant before the pandemic but because of the emergency situation and cessation of services, have been made more acute. I anticipate that we will see an increasing range and number of referrals to the HDS and PDS. Particular challenges around ensuring domiciliary care services are fully remobilised, child oral health, including procedures involving general anaesthetic are some of the issues that we need to address in the short- to medium-term.

We are therefore monitoring the situation closely, the HDS and PDS services are integral part of the overall NHS model of remobilisation and in this emergency situation an essential

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additional capacity resource. In the medium- to longer-term, as the sector stabilises, both services will revert back to the pre-covid roles, and the Government and stakeholders can turn to the business of working collectively to introduce a new model of care for NHS dentistry.

In view of the circumstances there is now appetite within the sector for significant reform, and the new model will focus on a prevention based care package. Also, there is a major challenge around oral health inequalities and the need to ensure that patients receive the appropriate care for their oral health condition. Our proposals include an Oral Health Assessment of patients and that in turn will drive different treatment pathways for the patient. The PDS will be part of this new model focusing on those patients that cannot access care from their high-street dentist, vulnerable adults, more complex care procedures and domiciliary care. HDS will also interface with this model through their specialist and referral function.

You also ask about our plans for academic dentistry. Tom Ferris, the Chief Dental Officer (CDO), advises me that he is involved in regular discussions with the various Deans of Dental Schools. They are working together to ensure plans are in place to help support the successful completion of studies for the graduate cohort of 2021. I understand that these ongoing discussions have included mitigation, infrastructural change and testing.

My officials also advise me that your letter is timely, as the issues you raise formed part of a discussion during a recent meeting between the Scottish Government and the SDPC and my officials committed at that time to engage further with you. With this in mind, I would ask that you contact Liz McLear at the office of the CDO on email Elizabeth.McLear@gov.scot to arrange an agreeable time to meet.



Joe FitzPatrick