



Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SQ
By email: Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk

12th March 2025

Re. Clarity on DDRB backpay & 25/26 GDS

Dear Minister

I wish to raise two important issues with you on behalf of GDPs; firstly, it emerged at a non-contract meeting last week held between BDA, BSO, SPPG & DoH that BSO will not be in a position to make backpay owing from DDRB 24/25 to General Dental Practitioners until May 2025 -not March as we had been led to believe, and referenced in correspondence received from your Department to all GDPs of 30th January. That correspondence stated, *“The desire is to make the initial payment in advance of 31 March 2025, however and exact schedule is still to be defined and there are a number of key tasks to be completed to make this achievable”*.

Hearing about a May payment date for GDPs - and not March goes against what we had been expecting. It will be very poorly received by practitioners.

Regardless of the complexities involved with uplifting an SDR, at this time when Health Service dentistry is already such an unattractive proposition, to receive backpay later than colleagues in salaried services at a time of considerable cashflow challenge, and with new National Insurance costs kicking in, and after considerable delay due to Executive difficulties in finding the funding to apply the recommendations, will be very negatively received indeed.

Furthermore, we must avoid a repeat of last year where GDPs were in the dark about precisely which of the various back payment elements they will receive, and when.

As well as appealing to you to ensure backpay owing is expedited for GDPs as closely as possible to the original March timescales, an urgent communication to GDP's is also needed to provide maximum clarity at this time around all aspects of uplifts to be received. This was the learning we had put forward after last year's fraught application of DDRB uplifts to GDPs.

Secondly, we are very mindful that we are just a few short weeks away from the end of this financial year, and GDPs still have no clarity over what additional schemes will be in place in

relation to Health Service dentistry 'options' for 25/26. As you will be aware, following on from our meeting with you, BDA representatives met with your officials on 25th February to respond to potential GDS funding 'options'. We also brought forward our own proposals from the profession which we consider, if implemented could enable practitioners and practices to maximise GDS Health Service activity, and in turn deliver better patient access, and crucially additional care to meet population need while improving oral health outcomes. These schemes should also help stem the exodus away from Health Service dentistry by supporting practice sustainability, while also rebuilding confidence among practitioners in the year ahead.

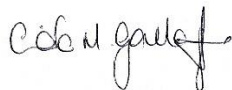
Minister, we believe you understand the importance of building on the measures introduced in 24/25 for the sustainability of this service. And, while we very much welcome your support to commission a Cost of Service review, Health Service dentistry needs maximum support now in the form of positive signals, and clarity for the year ahead.

Therefore, we ask for urgent clarity and support to be forthcoming at this time to practitioners who are formulating business plans and making decisions about how they navigate 25/26 with NIC and NMW wage increases adding to all the other cost pressures that providing dentistry in the year will bring to bear.

We urge maximum effort from your Department in order to sustain Health Service dentistry across Northern Ireland at this crucial time.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ciara Gallagher', written in a cursive style.

Ciara Gallagher

Chair, NIDPC