



Mr Robin Swann MLA  
Minister  
Department of Health  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
Northern Ireland  
BT4 3SQ

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

**Re. DDRB uplift**

Dear Minister

We write reference the above issue to request an urgent update on the status of awarding the 21/22 pay uplift to salaried dentists and to independent dental contractors in Northern Ireland.

While Agenda for Change staff have received confirmation of their 3% pay uplift this week, our members continue to be in the dark on what pay uplift will apply. This is despite the welcome communication from you during the Summer committing to make the 3% award in full, subject to the necessary funds being made available.

As we approach the next round of the annual DDRB process, and indeed with remit letters from other nations having already been submitted, it concerns us that Northern Ireland once again lags significantly behind in having uplifts confirmed -and paid -in a timely fashion. While the Public Sector Pay Policy was set much earlier this year, and knowing the issue was also very much on your radar, delay has once again crept in.

We appreciate that the issues at play are not solely within Department of Health's control. That is why, in addition to clarity around this year's uplift we would also ask that the very damaging impact on staff morale -and on the erosion of the true value of any uplift -via a dysfunctional approach by the NI Executive approach to annual pay reviews -is raised once again with Executive colleagues. It is imperative that the Executive as a whole acknowledge the impact their inability to sequence funding appropriately has on the annual pay award process, and on staff, and we would urge you to continue to advocate with colleagues accordingly.

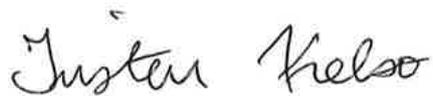
As you are aware, this unsatisfactory situation has been remarked upon by the Pay Review Body itself in recent reports, with Northern Ireland being singled out as an outlier as far as timings for pay uplift acceptance, and then added delays in the implementation process.

With DDRB recommendations published routinely at the same time each year, we would urge the NI Executive to act to produce more timely, and better sequenced uplifts. We would hope multiannual budgets will give more scope to facilitate a more timely process, and as such, the Finance Minister has been copied in.

Furthermore, we would also ask for assurances that the Christmas timeframe for payment of COVID Recognition payments to independent dental contractors/their team members remains on track.

We look forward to hearing from you on these issues, and to being in a position where we can advise our member base on timescales for payments being received. We simply must move away from a situation where each year, pay uplifts are received a full year later than to which they refer to.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tristen Kelso". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tristen Kelso

**BDA NI Director**

**Cc: Mr Conor Murphy MLA, Minister of Finance**