

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



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Dear

Tristen

I am writing to provide an update on my recent decision to provide additional investment of £8m (£5.25m recurrently) in General Dental Services (GDS) for 2026/27.

I fully recognise the significant pressures currently facing the dental profession, and the importance of both maintaining stability and safeguarding access to General Dental Services for our population. I have therefore agreed a number of measures for the coming year which are intended to provide immediate support and signal my commitment to working constructively with the profession.

A number of these measures have been taken in direct response to feedback from both the British Dental Association and the GDS Reform Advisory Group, reflecting the issues raised by the profession and the constructive engagement that has taken place to date.

The approved measures include:

- continuation of the Activity Support payment for 2026/27, with funding increased to £2million
- recurrent continuation of the 30% enhancement for fees associated with FERC treatments

- recurrent continuation of the Enhanced Child Examination Scheme
- commissioning of a new Emergency Dental Clinic in the Western area
- an additional 6 Dental foundation training places

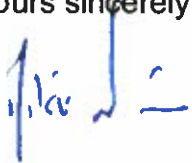
I recognise that these measures on their own will not address all of the challenges facing GDS, however, I hope they will be welcomed as a meaningful and tangible step within the current financial context facing Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. It is my clear intention that these actions will help to support service stability in the short term while my Department works at pace and in partnership with the profession towards longer-term reform.

I am keen to explore what further support may be possible in-year to support GDS and am hopeful that once a budget for 2026/27 is agreed, there will be scope to consider additional actions during the year.

Alongside these immediate measures, work is continuing on the Cost of Service review which will play a key role in informing longer-term decisions on the future direction of GDS. The Department has received a draft copy of the review and officials are currently undertaking a detailed analysis. I hope to be in a position to share the outworkings of the review in due course.

I welcome the continued engagement of the profession as we work together to consider longer-term options for General Dental Services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health