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Sent by email: PS.Ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

26th March 2026

Re. Implementation of Recommendations from the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRDB) for 26/27

Dear Michelle and Emma

I write following the publication yesterday of the [fifty-fourth DDRB Report](#) and associated recommendations on doctors' and dentists' pay. These comprise a 3.5% uplift for Hospital Dentists and 3.75% for salaried dentists working in Community Dental Services (CDS), as well as 3.75% on the pay element for general dental practitioners from 1 April 26.

Two additional recommendations to governments include a Review of Pay and Progression for salaried dentists working in CDS, and an Index of Dental Costs for General Dental Services (GDS).

Recommendations on pay have already been accepted by HM Government for England, and in principle in Wales. In contrast, we understand the position for Northern Ireland is wholly dependent on a Northern Ireland Budget being agreed, which is ultimately the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive.

The wholly unacceptable delay in last year's pay uplifts being paid to dentists due to Executive disagreement -almost a year late -must be avoided at all costs in relation to the 26/27 pay round.

While the Health Minister and his officials have committed to taking all preparatory actions to work to achieve a quick turnaround of pay uplifts by May/June, we understand that without an Executive agreed Budget, implementation of pay uplifts will be on hold.

We would emphasise, once again it appears that healthcare workers, including dentists who are providing vital public health services under immense strain are going to be negatively impacted by delay due to lack of agreement and collective responsibility at Executive level.

We have been calling for and fully support the Health Minister's commitment to make pay the first priority of DoH spend in 26/27, not the last. We urge you as joint leaders of this Executive to move to agree a Budget to ensure pay uplifts can be applied as intended at the start of the financial year.

Finally, we wish to once again put on record the existential threat which Health Service dentistry in Northern Ireland faces at this time in the absence of adequate funding to stabilise and reform

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the service. This is precisely why for the first time in decades, DDRB has made a differential pay recommendation for dentistry. Quoting from the 54th DDRB Report:

“We see a different situation for dentistry than the other parts of our remit, with significant workforce issues, persistent under-delivery of NHS care, poor access for patients, and a lack of attractiveness of NHS dentistry, driven in large part by the underlying contracts”.

“As we have stated in previous reports, substantial reform to the contracts is needed to make NHS dentistry attractive”.

In relation to Community Dental Services, the DDRB Report makes the following observations:

“This is a neglected service under severe strain which is picking up the slack from the under-provision of high street dentistry, and which supports the health of some of the most vulnerable patients in society. Again, we recommend that governments review pay and progression for salaried dentists working in Community and Public Dental Services to assess whether the reward structure is appropriate to support recruitment, retention, and service delivery”.

Working collectively to put a budget in place and enabling ‘on-time’ payment of what are very modest pay uplifts at the start of the financial year, is the very least this Executive can do now to demonstrate an immediate commitment to dentists and other health workers who continue to provide vital health services to the population of Northern Ireland.

Moreover, once again we appeal for renewed Executive leadership in tackling the root cause of a rapidly disappearing NHS dental service here, that is a fundamentally flawed and unviable contract model which bears no resemblance to the cost to provide care at practice level.

We appeal for whole-Executive support of the findings and logical follow-through of the DoH commissioned Cost of Service Report into General Dental Services which will be imminently received by the Health Minister; moreover, we urge the Executive to fully support moving to expedite a process of dental payment reform with BDA as a matter of urgency to try to stabilise and reform dental services here in the time that is left of this mandate. This is vital at a time when we have witnessed 389,132 fewer patients registered with a HS dentist since 2023, and a 40% reduction in HS dental treatments compared with pre-pandemic.

This Executive rallied previously on behalf of the dental sector when we were faced with an existential crisis from a looming EU Amalgam ban; similarly, supporting urgent and decisive payment reform in conjunction with BDA, such as what has been achieved in Scotland could result in a positive legacy of putting Health Service dentistry on a stable footing for future generations.

My members would appreciate an early response to the issues raised.

Yours sincerely



Tristen Kelso

BDA Northern Ireland Director

Cc: Mike Nesbitt, Minister Department of Health

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