

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Ciara Gallagher, Chair BDA NIDPC
Tristen Kelso, NI Director, BDA
Via e-mail: Johan.Warwick@bda.org

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Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-0385-2025/
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Date: 9 July 2025

Dear

Ciara,

Thank you for your letters of 12 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 regarding the payment of the 2024/25 General Dental Services uplift, investment options for 2025/26 and general concerns around health service dentistry in Northern Ireland.

I understand your frustration regarding the DDRB backpay date and I regret any ambiguity around the timing and communication of the DDRB uplift and subsequent backpay arrangements. Our intent was to have this implemented by March but unfortunately this was not operationally possible.

I trust that the backpay has now been processed and paid, and if there are any other queries, please raise them with my officials in General Dental and Ophthalmic Services, SPPG or directly with BSO.

Going forward we will aim to be clearer and more timely when communicating with you and the wider profession on these important matters. Following publication of the latest DDRB report, I have accepted the recommendation of a 4% increase to SDR fees for 2025/26. Furthermore I have issued a Ministerial direction on health service pay, in the face of a significant deficit in the health budget. This is part of my promise of better outcomes for both patients and the HSC workforce, including dentists.

Regarding your concerns with GDS investment in 2025/26, as discussed in our meeting of 27 May 2025, I have approved implementation of the following investment;

- Continuation of the Enhanced Child Examination Scheme;
- The continuation of 30% enhancement to fees paid to dentists for Health Service fillings, extractions and root canal treatment for 2025/26. These fees will also be increased by 4.85% to bring them in line with the other fees in the SDR, which were increased in April 2025.
- The allocation of £1.6m to provide additional support to dental practitioners who continue to provide Health Service dental care for their patients. The intention is that this funding will be distributed to individual practitioners in proportion to the level of Health Service work completed. My officials will be reaching out to you with further details and seeking input in early course.

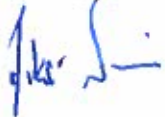
Along with this, I have approved the expansion of the Happy Smiles programme, with a further investment of £400k.

Finally, I have allocated funding towards the mitigation of the increase in employers National Insurance contributions for Family Health Services. This includes £2.5m for General Dental Practitioners. The initial proposal is that this funding will be paid to practices to help with this additional cost and again my officials provide additional details once available.

Hopefully this will help address both the practice sustainability issues and reassure GDPs that we want to support them in providing the highest quality health service treatment to those who need it most.

I trust you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', is written over the 'Yours sincerely' line.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health