



Thursday 21ST July 2022

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Minister
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3SQ
By email

Dear Minister

DDRB 2022/23 SDR uplift - Expenses

I am writing following the publication of the DDRB's report and its recommendation on pay of 4.5% to raise the matter of the expenses elements of the SDR uplift, which we would expect will shortly be the subject of consultation with the BDA.

We refer specifically to 10.57 of the recently published 50th DDRB Report¹, where the Review body makes clear their recommendations this year are net of expenses and do not take into account fluctuations in operating costs. They add that *'ensuring that dental practices' financial sustainability and dental earnings are not affected by such fluctuations is an important responsibility that lies with the governments, in agreeing expenses uplifts'*.

With inflation, as measured by RPI running in excess of 11 per cent and having risen sharply over the course of this year, it is clear that a token approach based on out-of-date inflation measures is not a viable solution to the soaring expenses elements of the uplift for 2022-23.

The same inflationary pressures experienced across the economy are impacting heavily on dental practices working to fixed fees to provide NHS care, with profound consequences for their ability to deliver care and recruit and retain dentists and staff. Without meaningfully addressing the expenses element, implementing a real-terms pay cut will have a devastating impact on the morale and motivation of the dental profession at a time when many are already having to consider whether they have a future in the NHS. The risk this poses to increasing oral health inequalities across the population should not be under-estimated.

Our analysis of data from NHS Digital, the ONS and our own surveys has allowed us to estimate the inflationary pressures that dentists are facing. For example, we have found that lab bills are increasing on average by 15 per cent and that nearly one-fifth of dentists have seen their utility bills rise by more than 50 per cent.

¹[Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration 50th Report 2022 – CP 716 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Expense	Utilities ²	Lab costs ³	Car & travel (Fuel)	General ⁴	Other ⁵	Total
Weighting	4.54	49.6	2.33	15.84	27.69	100
Percentage increase	35%	15%	25%	11.7%	0%	11.15%

On the basis of this analysis, across the UK we are proposing that an uplift of 15 per cent is applied by respective Departments in relation to staff pay costs and 11.15 per cent in relation to other expenses. This approach will ensure that the funding provided to practices to deliver NHS services is not cut in real terms.

After more than a decade in which associate dentists' incomes have been cut by in excess of 40 per cent in real terms, we appeal to the Department to ensure that dentists and dental practices have appropriate funding levels to deliver NHS care on a financially sustainable basis. This year more than ever, putting in place a mechanism that deals adequately with the soaring expenses element is imperative to meeting the true cost to deliver HS dentistry as we seek to rebuild and reform General Dental Services.

We would also respectfully ask that the process to implement this year's pay uplift be expedited to mirror the timescales traditionally followed in the other UK countries.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Crooks

Chair, Review Body Evidence Committee

Cc: Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary

Ms Caroline Lappin, Chief Dental Officer

Mr Robbie Davies, Director of General Healthcare Policy

Michael O'Neill – Head of General Dental & Ophthalmic Services

Michael Donaldson - Head of Dental Services, SPPG

Donncha O'Carolan - Regional Lead for GDS and Governance, SPPG

² Based on BDA survey information

³ Based on BDA survey information

⁴ RPI May 2022

⁵ Other includes interest, other premises costs, net capital allowances, bad debts, advertising costs etc where information was not available and therefore no change in cost calculated