

Your trade union Your voice

As your trade union, we are the only recognised body with negotiating rights. We've always been in your corner and through the pandemic it's been no different; we'll continue to speak up for the profession and work tirelessly to try and get Governments to wake up to the immense challenges faced by private and mixed practices.

Together, we are stronger.



Richard Graham
Chair of Northern Ireland
Dental Practice Committee

MARCH

We lobby Health Minister Robin Swann asking for clarification on exactly how the Government will be supporting dentists through this extremely difficult time. What do their COVID-19 mitigations mean for dentists? Where is the communication?

We flag the **urgent need for COVID-19 support measures** once again with Health Minister.

We present **robust evidence** to the Assembly Health Committee. Included in our asks are mitigation measures for the GDS practitioners.

APRIL

Unsatisfied with dentists being excluded from wider business support measures, we **raise this with Economy Minister Diane Dodds, and circulate this to all MLAs**. Many are extremely supportive of our requests.

We get behind a powerful letter from Fleur Anderson, MP, **requesting financial business supports for over three-quarters of dentists who will not receive support** from Government schemes. We circulate this to other local MPs, encouraging them to co-sign.

JUNE

We write to the Health Minister, Economy Minister and Finance Minister to **highlight the serious plight of Private Dental Practice** from the introduction of new, restrictive operating procedures.

We provide in-person, oral evidence to the Health Committee that **mixed and private dentistry in Northern Ireland** is receiving inadequate support.

JULY

We engage MLAs from across the political spectrum both prior to and following our evidence. With 58 questions tabled since the beginning of June, and six relating specifically to private dentistry, **we push politicians for decisions surrounding the most pressing issues facing general practice**, including: PPE, financial support and the re-establishment of general dental services.

You tell us about your experiences through our survey. You clearly articulate the serious impacts of the pandemic, particularly on high street dental practices.

We push to meet with the Health Minister Robin Swann, to **highlight the interlinked nature of high street and private dentistry and the immediate support** we need in this space.

Our chair of BDA Northern Ireland Dental Practice Committee, Richard Graham, speaks to Stephen Nolan on his eponymous BBC Radio Ulster Nolan show, sharing the grave financial concerns for dentists in Northern Ireland.

Our Principles of Risk Assessment training module is launched through our CPD Hub to support dentists while practicing and navigating the unknowns.

We write to First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill **about the lack of support for the profession**. We send this to all MLAs and encourage you to add your voice to the cause.

Our MLA letters and support result in large-scale press coverage of the dental issues across numerous broadcast channels including *BBC NI News, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Radio Ulster, and Belfast Live*.

SEPTEMBER

We correspond with the Health Minister for consistency, regarding DDRB to share our private and resilience research. The Minister indicates that he will make BSO staff available to administer any support scheme payments that the Minister for Economy might provide.

An Assembly question is posed by Colin McGrath MLA, asking the Minister of Health to follow up his request that Diane Dodds, Economy Minister **establish a business support programme specially for private dentists**.

There is hope. We continue to work with elected representatives such as John Stewart MLA, to **ensure the plight of private dentists is considered**. During the Assembly motion on 15 September, private dentistry is included in his opening remarks, demonstrating that **private dentists have not been forgotten**.

OCTOBER

We push the situation of private dentistry to the Economy Minister, yet again.

The scheduled 8 October evidence session from Michael Donaldson, Acting CDO, does not take place. However, we submit our briefing to **Health Committee members and MLAs, highlighting the immense pressure private practice is under and to ensure dentistry stays on the radar**.

NOVEMBER

The Northern Ireland Dental Practice Committee meet to discuss GDS activity and support for dental practice.

We begin compiling our DDRB submission for 2021-22, focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on dentistry, including mixed and private practice.

DECEMBER

The NI Committee Chairs meet remotely with the Acting CDO to **discuss future priorities in dentistry**, for both mixed and private practice.

Collectively we shout and are thrilled to achieve an additional £3.8m PPE funding and an extra £5m to maintain the Financial Support Scheme to the end of the financial year.

Further engagement sees the development of the FFS2 which will see patient contributions and abatement funding continue until the end of the financial year. There will be no abatement applied, on condition that 15% Item of Service activity is reached, starting from the January-February payment cycle. A sliding scale of abatement will be applied where activity levels are lower than 15%.

We continue to fight for the future of dentistry in Northern Ireland, into the new year and beyond.

10 months of consistent engagement with elected reps and officials

9 members on the NI Assembly Health Committee

8 formal meetings of NI Dental Practice Committee

7 MPs co-signing Fleur Anderson MP's 'Safeguarding the future of dental surgeries' letter

6 Assembly questions written on private dentistry (69 Assembly questions on general dentistry)

5 meetings of the GDS re-establishment group (plus, many more internal meetings)

4 letters to Economy Minister Diane Dodds

3 letters to Health Minister Robin Swann relating to private dentistry, (plus many more related to COVID-19)

2 evidence sessions at the NI Assembly Health Committee

1 in-person meeting with Health Minister Robin Swann about the issues facing dentistry