

**From the Permanent Secretary
and HSC Chief Executive**



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Dear Tristen

Thank you for your email of 17 June 2022, regarding our meeting of 16 June 2022 and the progress of Dental Contract Reform, and the follow up email from Ciara Gallagher of 20 June 2022, regarding the cost of Health Service Dentistry.

Let me begin by expressing my thanks for the constructive and informative meeting; I found it very valuable to listen directly to the key issues facing dental practices at the present time. While the issues raised during the meeting and in subsequent communications are clearly causing concern, it is encouraging to hear of the co-operative engagement ongoing between the Department and the BDA, via the formal engagement channels that have been established.

I hope that our meeting, previous meetings with the Minister, and the establishment of the General Dental Services Contract Reform Group demonstrate the commitment within the Department to ensure that the future of Health Service Dentistry is secured.

It is clear that Health Service Dentistry is facing a number of challenges that are impacting both dental professionals and patients and that this increasingly leads to stress and frustration for all affected. Rising costs, workforce considerations, addressing health inequalities and a desire to move towards preventative treatment, while managing the treatment backlog caused by the pandemic, need our attention. I am also conscious that we continue to address these challenges in a very difficult financial context that is putting pressure on services across the wider Health Service.

I understand that your correspondence was discussed at the recent Contract Reform Group meeting and that the Head of Dental & Ophthalmic Policy and the Chief Dental Officer will engage with you regarding the specifics of the expenses and earnings issues you have raised. Further, I am pleased to hear that the group agreed that wider engagement on the issues facing patients and practices will also be a priority, with surveys being prepared over the summer months.

In the short term, I trust that the continuation of the Rebuilding Support Scheme into the second quarter of the year will help to address some of the immediate pressures being faced, with engagement continuing on what medium and longer terms options available.

I look forward to a continued positive collaboration with the BDA as we work together to provide the best service possible for patients.

I trust you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely



Peter May