

NHS provision

- **Have dentists increased NHS provision in the last 2 years? If not, could you describe any barriers which have prevented this from happening?**

The Area Dental Professional Committee discussed and agreed that the NHS provision had not increased in the last two years. A barrier to this was potentially due to the increase in private activities being carried out by new Dentists entering the profession, however, activity does vary between practices. The committee also agreed that GDP's have different priorities now i.e prioritising work life balance.

- **Is there evidence of new dentists setting up practices and offering NHS services? If not, why not?**

The number of NHS practices within NHS Ayrshire and Arran has reduced over the past year from 67 practices to 63 practices however there is evidence that existing practices have expanded to include the option of NHS service.

The Area Dental Professional committee was asked to comment on this and they agreed there were currently less practices offering NHS services. It was further noted that the use of therapists was more common now. The committee also suggested potential reasoning for this was due to dental professions having different priorities, including the shortage of Dentists.

- **Do you have any views on the [Scottish Dental Access Initiative](#) and whether it has been successful in facilitating the establishment or expansion of NHS dental provision?**

Feedback from General Dental Practices felt the SDAI is outdated with no real incentive to practices. It is no longer fit for purpose in the current climate and the process is too onerous.

- **Has there been any increase in registrations with the Public Dental Service in your board area?**

PDS Activity has increased and workforce has reduced. There is an increase in patient demand and PDS should be dealing with the more complex cases rather than emergencies. There is no evidence of an increase in registrations but there is an increase in referrals

Payment reforms

- **To what extent do the new fee levels, introduced in the 2023 payment reforms, reflect increased costs for dental services?**

The Area Dental Professional Committee were asked to comment on this question being asked, and agreed that it was currently too early to tell following the introduction of the new SDR, however, it was a step in the right direction. There does appear to be less check-ups which helps free up clinical time for dentistry.

- **How successful or otherwise is the new fee structure in facilitating the prioritisation of patient access? Please set out any examples within your answer.**

The requirement for prior approval is significantly increased and causing delay in treatment, both for the PDS and GDS services.

Multiple examples were provided to Martin Morrison and Tammy McAlpine in September 2024 by NHS Ayrshire and Arran health board.

A stage 1 complaint was also received into the board on 19 November 2024, which came directly from a patient regarding the length of time treatment has taken due to prior approval. Permission will be required to share this complaint

Staffing

- **Are there ongoing challenges with the recruitment and retention of dental professionals in Scotland? If so, how might these be addressed?**

The Area Dental Professional Committee agreed that there were challenges with recruitment and retention of Dental Professionals in Scotland and it was noted that generally, there needs to be increased funding for better resources and more training of dentists and therapists. It was felt that new graduates and associates have the pick of multiple jobs and a post in an NHS practice does not come close to the lure of a mainly private practice.

It was suggested that more Scottish undergraduates should have financial support with tuition fees to make it more attractive and in addition a review of relaxing the rules for overseas practitioners.

Prevention and improvement

- **Is there evidence to suggest dentists are doing more to focus on prevention in NHS dentistry?**

General consensus is that it has improved however very limited data to support this.

- **To what extent is the [Oral Health Improvement Plan, 2018](#), still driving reforms in dentistry?**

The Area Dental Professional Committee discussed and agreed the OHIP (Oral Health Improvement Plan) 2018, and some of the actions had been carried out, however, had not been badged as part of the OHIP 2018. It was noted that there was no central strategic drive under the OHIP Programme.

- **What are your hopes and expectations of what the Scottish budget 2025-26 may deliver in relation to dentistry when it is published on 4 December 2024?**

Improved resource, training more dentists and therapists