

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Tuesday, 10 December 2024
35th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

NHS Dental Services

Background

1. The Covid19 Recovery Committee undertook an inquiry into the [Recovery of NHS dental services](#) in 2023. The inquiry tracked progress on the aims set out in the [NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026](#), which included a commitment to return NHS dentistry services to pre-pandemic levels.
2. Following that scrutiny, and the [decision](#) by the Parliament that the Covid19 Recovery Committee should be wound up, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health [wrote to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) on 18 October 2023. This correspondence provided updates on the questions posed by the Covid19 Recovery Committee's inquiry, and on the progress of the Scottish Government's NHS dental payment reform.
3. On 24 October 2023, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee undertook scrutiny of the [National Health Service \(General Dental Services\) \(Miscellaneous Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#). The Committee took evidence from the Minister on the instrument, and the Scottish Government's then upcoming plans to implement payment reform of dentistry services in Scotland on [1 November 2023](#). The Minister [told the Committee](#) that "the changes will support the introduction of the most significant reform to NHS dentistry in a number of years, and it is our intention that the reform will help to sustain and improve patient access to NHS dental services for the long term."
4. This [SPICe Spotlight blog: NHS Dental Services in Scotland – Braced for change](#) explains how NHS dental services operate in Scotland, and highlights some of the challenges while outlining the reforms that were introduced from 1 November 2023.
5. NHS Education for Scotland have recently published the [2024 dental workforce report](#). This is the latest in a series of dental workforce reports that aim to inform workforce planning for dental services in Scotland and has been supported by NHS National Services Scotland, Public Health Scotland and the Health Workforce directorate of the Scottish Government Health and Social Care directorates. The report examines past trends in the supply of dentists and DCPs to inform estimates of the supply of dental services.
6. Public Health Scotland publishes quarterly NHS dental data monitoring reports, the most recent having been published on [26 November 2024](#). This relates to the initial transitional period of payment changes and provides an early overview of certain metrics of activity and spend since reform introduction. This release also reports on patient participation (contact with NHS primary dental

care) over the previous two years; looking across both the old and new payment arrangements.

7. [Childsmile](#) is a national programme designed to improve the oral health of children in Scotland and reduce inequalities both in dental health and access to dental services. Evaluation of this programme has resumed post-pandemic, with [reports published in January and December 2023](#).
8. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee wrote to a number of stakeholders in November 2024 to seek views on the status of NHS Dental Services in Scotland. A copy of this letter is included at **Annexe A**. The Committee received the following responses:
 - [British Dental Association](#)
 - [NHS 24](#)
 - [NHS Ayrshire and Arran](#)
 - [NHS Dumfries & Galloway](#)
 - [NHS Education for Scotland](#)
 - [NHS Fife](#)
 - [NHS Forth Valley](#)
 - [NHS Grampian](#)
 - [NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#)
 - [NHS Highland](#)
 - [NHS Lanarkshire](#)
 - [NHS Lothian](#)
 - [NHS National Services Scotland](#)
 - [NHS Orkney](#)
 - [NHS Shetland](#)
 - [NHS Tayside](#)
 - [Public Health Scotland](#)
 - [Scottish Dental Association](#)
 - [Scottish Dental Practice Owners](#)

Today's meeting

9. During today's meeting, the Committee will take evidence from the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, the Director of Primary Care and the Chief Dental Officer for Scotland.

Clerks to the Committee
December 2024

Annexe A

20 November 2024 Dentistry in Scotland

I am writing to you to seek your views on the status of dentistry in Scotland. Earlier this session, the Covid19 Recovery Committee undertook an inquiry into the [Recovery of NHS dental services](#). Following that scrutiny, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health [wrote to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) on 18 October 2023 providing an update on the questions posed by the Covid19 Recovery Committee's inquiry, and an update on the progress of the Scottish Government's NHS dental payment reform.

On 24 October 2023, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee undertook scrutiny of the [National Health Service \(General Dental Services\) \(Miscellaneous Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#). The Committee took evidence from the Minister on the instrument and the Scottish Government's plans to implement payment reform of dentistry services in Scotland on [1 November 2023](#). The Minister [told the Committee](#) that "the changes will support the introduction of the most significant reform to NHS dentistry in a number of years, and it is our intention that the reform will help to sustain and improve patient access to NHS dental services for the long term."

The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has invited the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health to speak to the Committee about dentistry in Scotland at its meeting on 10 December.

To aid the Committee's scrutiny, we are writing to seek your views on dentistry in Scotland, and in particular:

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?
- Is there evidence of new dentists setting up practices and offering NHS services? If not, why not?
- 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?
- Has there been any increase in registrations with the public dental service in your board area?

Payment reforms

- To what extent do the new fee levels, introduced in the 2023 payment reforms, reflect increased costs for dental services?
- How successful or otherwise is the new fee structure in facilitating the prioritisation of patient access? Please set out any examples within your answer.

Staffing

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

Prevention and improvement

- Is there evidence to suggest dentists are doing more to focus on prevention in NHS dentistry?
- To what extent is the [Oral Health Improvement Plan, 2018](#), still driving reforms in dentistry?
- 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?

The Committee would be grateful if you could please provide your views in Word format by no later than **midday on Monday 2 December 2024**.
I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Clare Haughey MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee