



Department
of Health &
Social Care



Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

By email: pubaccom@parliament.uk

11th February 2025

Dear Chair,

Re: NHS Dentistry

We are writing to you to make you aware of an error that has been identified regarding the modelling supporting [Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry](#), published on 7 February 2024. This has been identified as a result of preparation for the upcoming Public Accounts Committee on 13 February 2025. This error is not material to the delivery of the plan but it is important you are aware in the context of NAO's report published on 27 November 2024.

The error related to the number of 'new' patients accessing treatment under the New Patient Premium (NPP) proposal. The calculations supporting the plan omitted the costs of the NPP for new patients who would have been expected to be treated in 2024/25 without the NPP being in place, and did not fully take into account the impact of patient charge revenue on the overall financial envelope available for this initiative.

NHS England made a broad planning assumption that relied on a £200m underspend against dental ringfences in 2024/25, which led to the commitment by government of additional funding to the NHS in order to allow this £200m to be spent on initiatives contained in the Dental Recovery Plan. We estimated that 1.13 million new patients could be seen within the £200m of new funding, however the after correcting for the error above, our revised calculation now confirms that ~690,000 additional treatments were in fact affordable.

Our estimate is that the cost of the originally modelled 1.13m additional new patients would cost ~£33m on top of the £200m planning assumption, so we remain confident that the 1.5m additional treatments set out in the plan and communicated to ICBs were achievable as set out in the publication, given the overall activity trends in the

sector and the £392m actual underspend which occurred in 2023/24 in the lead up to its implementation.

Even after correcting for this error, the evidence shows that the NPP has not met its objective of increasing number of new patients seen. The scheme is expected to end as planned on 31 March 2025.

NHSE is reviewing the analytical processes used and dentistry has been designated “business critical” to ensure more robust oversight and independent review.

I have copied this letter to the C&AG and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Whitty', written in a cursive style.

Professor Chris Whitty KCB FRS FMedSci
Interim Permanent Secretary
Department of Health and Social Care

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Pritchard', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Pritchard
Chief Executive Officer
NHS England