



Health and Social Care Committee

cc: Dr Jason Wong
Dr Amanda Doyle
Dr Edward Scully

15 July 2025

Subject: NHS dentistry – follow-up

Dear Stephen,

I'm writing to you following the evidence session the Committee held on NHS dentistry on Wednesday 9 July, and the session with the Secretary of State on the 10 Year Health Plan on Monday 14 July.

As you are aware, two years ago our predecessor Committee called for a fundamentally reformed contract to be implemented as a matter of urgency. While the Committee was pleased to hear you firmly commit to fundamental reform of the dental contract in this Parliament, it is disappointing to continually return to recommendations our predecessors have made.

We agree with you about how urgent the need is for action, with you describing the situation as a "burning platform",¹ however, we do not feel that this is reflected in the urgency of action being taken. So, whilst we appreciated you setting out the sequencing for the commencement of contract negotiations, it is frustrating not to be given a firm timeline, or deadline, for when contract negotiations will start.

At the session, we asked you to write to the Committee at the earliest possibility with the steps and timescales around the sequencing towards fundamental reform, which you agreed to. We expect to receive this in correspondence in anticipation of a written statement being tabled, rather than after the event.²

It was also helpful to have the context on the progress of internal discussions within the Department regarding the financial settlement for NHS dentistry, following the Comprehensive Spending Review in June.³

The British Dental Association and the Nuffield Trust both told us that current funding for primary care NHS dentistry is £3billion, which is approximately £1billion less than

¹ 9 July 2025, [Q50](#) (Minister Kinnock)

² 9 July 2025, [Q55](#) (Minister Kinnock)

³ 9 July 2025, [Q32](#) (Minister Kinnock)

before the pandemic⁴. We take your point that the overall budget for NHS dentistry, including community and secondary care, is significantly more than this.⁵ It was reassuring to hear you recognise that NHS dentistry has experienced a “real-terms cut in the NHS dentistry budget over recent years”.⁶ However, the Committee was concerned to hear you state that we are likely to “have a financial envelope that is in the region of the current financial envelope.”⁷

The Committee feels that, as things stand, dentistry is the “poor relation” compared to other primary care services, and has not been prioritised by previous governments in the way it should have been. This is reflected in the allocation of funding.

We raised this point with the Secretary of State when appeared before us on 14 July 2025, to discuss the 10 Year Health Plan. We raised our concerns regarding the lack of an increase to funding for dentistry. The Secretary of State told us “there is a constant tension” between the level of ambition of the Government and level of demand placed by Parliament and the public. Whilst the Committee accepts and recognises this statement, we do not believe that without significant increases to funding, as stakeholders have suggested, the ambitions for dentistry in the Plan will be achievable.⁸

We call on you to make a step change in the level of funding for dentistry and not keep its funding broadly in the region of the current financial envelope.

The Committee would like you to write to us when the settlement for NHS dentistry has been agreed. When you do so we would be grateful if you could set out how the settlement for dentistry compares to other primary care services, to understand relative prioritisation of dentistry.

We were concerned to hear about a lack of analysis by both the Department and NHS England of the potential costs of not reforming the contract. This includes the potential impacts delay could have on the numbers of dentists undertaking NHS work, the availability of NHS appointments and the impact this may have on oral health outcomes for patients.⁹

Whilst we understand data collection and analysis is complex for NHS dental services, we urge the Government as part of its plans to reform the dental contract to identify opportunities to improve data collection, with a particular focus on outcomes. We would also like sight of the dataset held by the joint work and health unit between DHSC and DWP, as referred to by Dr Scully.¹⁰

We were pleased to hear about the substantial process you have made tackling underspend in NHS dentistry, which was estimated to be in the region of 10% of the

⁴ 9 July 2025, [Q20](#) (Dr Pabary; Thea Stein)

⁵ 9 July 2025, [Q56](#) (Minister Kinnock)

⁶ As above

⁷ 9 July 2025, [Q61](#) (Minister Kinnock)

⁸ 14 July 2025, [Q60](#) (Secretary of State)

⁹ 9 July 2025, [Q57-59](#)

¹⁰ 9 July 2025, [Q59](#) (Dr Scully)

previous underspend. **We understand that these figures had not been confirmed and would be grateful if you could send us the final figure when this has been signed off.**

The 10 Year Health Plan aims to achieve the shift from treatment to prevention. The Committee believes some of the commitments in the Plan, and the consultation on changes to the dental contract, if implemented effectively, could be positive for patients, especially those with the greatest dental need. However, we feel that the Government's current focus for reform is on "crisis management" and urgent care rather than incentivising long-term prevention.

Whilst we support the commitment to ensure that "everyone who needs access to urgent and unscheduled [dental] care must be able to access it",¹¹ we are concerned that this does not go far enough. We are also unsure how far the Government's vision for reform of the dental contract will enable this shift to be realised for dentistry. We hope you will continue to refer to our 2023 report, and are genuinely open to suggestions from stakeholders, including from the BDA, Nuffield Trust and Healthwatch England, about how the contract should be designed to achieve these ambitions.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important subject over the course of this parliament.

Yours sincerely



Paulette Hamilton MP
Acting Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

¹¹ 9 July 2025, [Q46](#)