

## ! Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to know



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# NHS Dentistry in Scotland: statement by Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport

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From: [Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport](#)

Part of: [Equality and rights](#), [Equality and rights](#), [Health and social care](#), [+1 more ...](#)

Delivered by: **Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport Maree Todd**

Location: **Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh**

Statement by Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport Maree Todd opening the Preventing the Collapse of NHS Dentistry in Scotland debate in the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, on Wednesday 23 February 2022.

Presiding Officer,

The dental sector has been disproportionately impacted by the nature of the pandemic. In order to protect patients and staff, dental practices are required to operate with specific infection, prevention and control measures including a fallow time between patients and full PPE protection.

During the initial lockdown in March 2020 dental practices were closed to face to face patient care and NHS Board centres largely focused on emergency and urgent dental care. Since that initial phase of lockdown, dental practices have slowly remobilised offering increasing levels of care to their patients.

While registration levels remain comparable with before the pandemic those patients attending a dentist in the last two years has fallen from around 70 to 53%. This is entirely due to the impact of the pandemic.

Which is why the Scottish Government has supported the NHS dental sector throughout the pandemic, with an additional £50m of financial support payments.

We have also provided specific funding to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on dental activity. This includes £7.5 million funding for new dental drills, £5 million for ventilation improvements and £35m of NHS PPE to date.

The Scottish Government is determined to ensure NHS dental services emerge well-placed to care for the oral health of the whole population.

We have also committed to tackling the pandemic-related backlog in routine dental care.

We have announced an additional £20 million of increased fees this month to help them see more patients face-to-face, including those from our most deprived communities.

This funding announcement is part of a nine percent increase in the overall budget for NHS dental services in 2022/23 to support a return to more normal levels of activity.

The additional money will deliver enhanced examinations for all patients, both children and adults. Children are a key focus as we recover NHS dental care.

We have also taken steps to expand the funding for the Childsmile Programme in dental practices, increasing it up to 17 years of age.

The Scottish Government absolutely recognises the need to address oral health inequalities arising from the pandemic.

So we are making additional Childsmile interventions of £2m over two years from April 2022 to support the distribution of additional toothbrushing packs and recruitment of Dental Health Support Workers. These initiatives will focus on families and children living in areas of disadvantage, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines state that:

“Recall intervals for patients who have repeatedly demonstrated that they can maintain oral health and who are not considered to be at risk of or from oral disease may be extended over time up to an interval of 24 months.”

Looking forward our vision for NHS dental services is to ensure that all persons with the same clinical needs should be treated in the same way, and that special attention is paid to actions that might further disadvantage the already disadvantaged or vulnerable.

As part of this we will engage the sector in suitable reforms that will allow dentists to practice modern dentistry, including the introduction of an Oral Health Risk Assessment and patient-focused care.

There are a number of vitally important processes that we are putting in place. What we must do,

is to link financial support to dentistry, to seeing patients. We must reward NHS dental teams for improving patient access. The focus must be on recovery of the sector.

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