

Jim Fairlie MSP
Convener
COVID-19 Recovery CommitteeVia email: covid19.committee@parliament.scot

Date 31 May 2023

Your ref
Our ref JR/JMC/CC
Enquiries to Cathie Cowan
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Dear Mr Fairlie

RE: Recovery of NHS dentistry services

Thank you for your enquiry. Please find below the responses from NHS Forth Valley

1. How much COVID-related funding did you receive from the Scottish Government to fund the following measures:

- Ventilation improvements
- Equipment
- Variable speed drilling equipment?

Reply:

In line with the following Primary Care Administration (PCA) memoranda issued from Scottish Government:

PCA(D)(2021)3 – Ventilation allowance payment

PCA(D)(2022)5 – Dental equipment repairs

PCA(D)(2022)6 – Improvement allowance

NHS Forth Valley distributed funds to local independent General Dental Service (GDS) practices as follows:

Measure Received	Amount Paid
Ventilation	£112,367.75
Variable Speed drilling equipment	£147,125.08
Improvement allowance	£193,774.95

2. What was the uptake (percentage or number of practices; and amount paid out) of the above funding by General Dentist Service (GDS) dentists?**Reply:**

Forth Valley has 46 independent GDS practices, all offering mixed NHS and private care. Of these practices, NHS Forth Valley received applications for funding as detailed above from the number of these locations as detailed below

Chair: Janie McCusker
Chief Executive: Cathie CowanForth Valley NHS Board is the common name for Forth Valley Health Board
Registered Office: Carseview House, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4SWwww.nhsforthvalley.com  [Facebook.com/nhsforthvalley](https://www.facebook.com/nhsforthvalley)
 [@nhsforthvalley](https://twitter.com/nhsforthvalley)

Measure	Number of Practices	Amount Paid
Ventilation	30	£112,367.75
Handpieces	22	£147,125.08
Improvement	23	£193,774.95

3. How many practices in your health board area have withdrawn or reduced NHS provision for patients – for example, registering and treating only children:

- No. and % withdrawn completely
- No. and % reduced provision

Reply:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, no independent GDS practices have completely withdrawn from the delivery of NHS dental care. The most notable practice in the Callander area withdrew all adult registrations in February 2023 (over 4000 adult patients) but retained NHS children registrations. Other practices have withdrawn some provision but retain varying percentages of NHS commitment.

Anecdotally, we know that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all (n = 46) independent GDS practices have altered their delivery of NHS dental care. The reasons for this reduction in capacity are not uniform and do not necessarily reflect a decision to reduce commitment to NHS dentistry.

4. What impact, if any, has a reduction in NHS GDS provision had on the Public Dental Service?

Reply:

The Public Dental Service (PDS) in Forth Valley is, in line with to GDS practices, experiencing significant challenge in recruiting to vacant posts. This, and the increased demand for the delivery of urgent care to those not able to access the independent sector are impacting negatively on the staff in post and the ability of the service to deliver care to other priority groups.

Prior to the pandemic unscheduled in hours care was delivered by 3 local dental practices. Following the pandemic, the additional pressures on the GDS meant that only 1 practice continued to assist in a reduced capacity. This has resulted in the PDS having to launch a staffed helpline with calls taken rather than a message given directions to access care. We are currently providing around 5 sessions per week availability for urgent care provision and ad hoc provision for non-urgent outcomes (can be up to 1 session per week). The requirements are currently under review however the demand does not seem to be dissipating, it is likely we will need to increase our non-urgent provision. Signposting patients to NHS practices accepting new patients is challenging as the landscape can change on a weekly if not daily basis, often with patients being asked to travel further afield as there is no care available local to their home. It is a difficult time trying to balance the various aspects and demands of PDS care.

5. How many patients are registered with the PDS in your Health Board area? Has the number risen since 2020? If so by how much?

Reply:

Data from Public health Scotland (PHS) MIDAS indicates that the numbers registered with the PDS are showing no discernible change.

Year- ending 31 st March	PDS Registrations
2019	2066
2020	2020
2021	2086
2022	2097
2023	2084

6. What other funding do you receive to support dentistry in your Health Board area (for example, funding related to PDS, Childsmile and any initiatives to improve recovery of services and access to dentistry for your population)?

Reply:

Whilst primary care dentistry delivered by practitioners in independent GDS represents the largest volume of dental care provided in Forth Valley, this does not occur in isolation. The oral health improvement programmes, Childsmile, and other services (PDS, secondary and tertiary care) all work in partnership with colleagues in independent GDS. The following are in regard to additional funds only:

NHS Forth Valley received funding of £431k, to support the work of the Childsmile team (this funding is part of the Scottish government's Outcomes Framework funding).

In 2022/2023, the Scottish Government allocated funding to support the expansion of the Childsmile Community and Practice Programme to reach out to vulnerable families and address inequalities on oral health and access to dental support.

£64k was allocated for recruitment of oral health support workers and to support increased distribution of oral health packs, via childminders, and wider routes to vulnerable families - ongoing programme to widen points of access to oral health packs. To date, £21k has been used.

Additional funding (Winter Preparedness Funding) of £255,936 was also allocated to our PDS for the financial year 2021/22. This funding was used to fund a fixed term senior dental officer and two dental nurses. To date, £135,248 has been used.

Yours sincerely



Cathie Cowan
Chief Executive