

Dear Mr Fairlie

RE: Recovery of NHS dentistry services

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

**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)4 – Dental sustainability

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

PCA(D)(2022)6 – Improvement allowance

(All available here: <https://www.scottishdental.org/>), NHS Orkney distributed funds to local independent General Dental Service (GDS) practices as follows:

Measure	Received
Ventilation	£3,530.00*
Sustainability	£4,791.99*
Dental equipment repairs	£ nil
Improvement allowance	£12,500.00

\* Claims are in progress, see next answer.

**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:

Orkney has four independent GDS practices, all offering mixed NHS and private care. Of these practices, NHS Orkney received applications for funding as detailed above from two of these locations (50%) as below

	Number of practices	Amount paid out
Ventilation	2	£3,530.00*
Sustainability	2	£4,791.99*
Improvement	2	£12,500.00

\* Claims are in progress

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 How many practices in your health board area have withdrawn or reduced NHS provision for patients – for example, registering and treating only children:**

- **No. and % withdrawn completely**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- Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, no (n= zero, 0%) independent GDS practices have withdrawn from the delivery of NHS dental care.
- The measure for reducing NHS provision is taken to be the number of claims submitted to Practitioner Services Division (PSD) of National Services Scotland(NSS).
- When compared to pre-pandemic figures, all (n = 4, 100%) independent GDS practices have reduced 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.
  - One practice has moved to a child -only list.
  - Three practices have a reduced workforce (for a number of separate reasons) and recruitment to vacant posts has had limited success.

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

Reply:

The increased demand for the delivery of care to those not able to access the independent sector is impacting negatively on the Public Dental Service (PDS). Additionally, the service has lost two dentists when compared to pre-pandemic workforce.

The PDS in Orkney is, in line with to GDS practices, experiencing significant challenge in recruiting to vacant posts and consequently, the service is experiencing:

- burn out of staff in post and
- reduction in the ability of the service to deliver care to other priority groups.

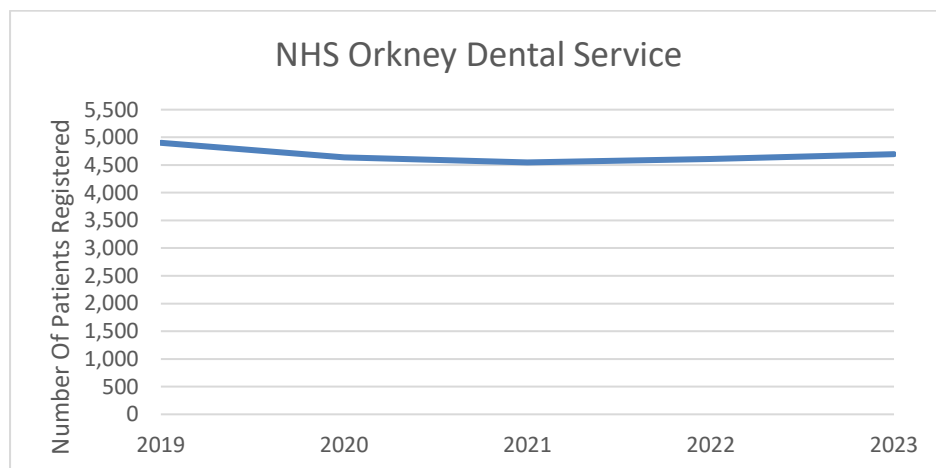
**5. How many patients are registered with the PDS in your Health Board area? Has the number risen since 2020? If so by how much?**

Reply:

Data from Public health Scotland (PHS) from March 2023 indicates that the numbers registered with NHS Orkney PDS are:

<b>NHS Board</b>	<b>31st Mar 2023</b>
NHS Orkney	4,698

Further data from the same source, show no discernible change over the course of the pandemic.



The PDS in Orkney is under direct instruction from the Director of Dentistry to register only those that would fit a non-access PDS remit. Experience shows that, should the PDS register all patients, whilst having neither the funding nor the workforce to deliver appropriate care, this merely disguises that access is an issue and negatively impacts on efforts to successfully develop a successful independent sector.

**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 on Orkney, this does not occur in isolation. The preventative programmes, especially the hugely successful Childsmile project, and other services (PDS, secondary and tertiary care) all work in partnership with colleagues in independent GDS. We rely heavily on consultant led services in partner Boards on the mainland for those who are in need of the most complex care.

The following are in regard to additional funding received by NHS Orkney only:

For 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.

- £16,100 was allocated for recruitment of oral health support worker - recruited by October 2023. Temporary post in line with funding allocation.
- £5,000 allocated 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.

Additional funding (Winter Preparedness Funding) was also allocated to our PDS for the financial year 2021/22. This funding was used to remodel a room at one of our clinics, as the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the inadequacy of the available oral health improvement space.

All of the above were, of course, welcome and gladly received. Our feedback would be in two regards. Firstly, the one-off nature of the allocations, which could be argued as running contrary to national long-term oral health improvement projects. Secondly, in times of such challenge to recruitment, vacancies supported by non-recurring funding have not proved attractive.