

Jim Fairlie MSP  
Convener  
Covid-19 Recovery Committee

Date: 25.05.2023  
Enquiries to: Evelyn Macleod  
Extension:  
Direct Line:  
E-mail:

Sent by email to:  
[Covid19.Committee@parliament.scot](mailto:Covid19.Committee@parliament.scot)

Dear Mr. Fairlie,

**RE: Recovery of NHS Dentistry Services**

In response to letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> April relating to the above, please find the requested information below:

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

Ref: July 120 Ventilation Improvement Allowance £33,425  
Ref: Sep 289 Electric Speed Adjusting Hand Pieces £50,138  
Ref: Oct 389 Remobilisation of NHS Dentistry £31,420

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

The Board only has 1 independent General Dental Practice and they put in a max claim of £5,760 for ventilation improvement allowance.

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 How many practices in your health board area have withdrawn or reduced NHS provision for patients – for example, registering and treating only children:

- No. and % withdrawn completely 0 / 0%

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Oifisean Bòrd na Slàinte  
37 Mol a Deas, Steòrnabhagh, Eileanan Siar, HS1 2BB

Headquarters  
37 South Beach Street, Stornoway, Western Isles, HS1 2BB

Eadar-amail Cathraiche: G. NicCannon  
Ceannard an Gníomh: G. MacSheumais

Chair: Gillian McCannon  
Chief Executive: Gordon Jamieson



*Western Isles NHS Board is the common name of Western Isles Health Board*

**“The best at what we do”**

*NHS Western Isles will work actively with patients, the public and our partners to improve our community's health and wellbeing, to tackle inequalities, and to deliver high quality, reliable clinical services.*

- No. and % reduced provision

There is no formalised reduced provision and no notable deregistrations, however there is a reduced capacity as a result of a decreased workforce. The practice is struggling with commitments such as emergency appointments, and increased number of patients on reduced capitation and continuing care payments due to a delay in routine care. The practice is unable to register new NHS patients at present.

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

Whilst the Director of Dentistry only been in post since November 2022, thus providing some difficulty in providing a full assessment of the service pre and post COVID, the understanding is that there is an increased request from patients trying to register with the PDS due to difficulties accessing the independent general practice. There have been discussions with the independent practice regarding their difficulty to support a large list per head of dentist and the Board is anticipating increased deregistrations in future.

The Board is taking active steps to strengthen the PDS in anticipation of this. Recruitment is the primary focus and we have successfully appointed a new Dental Officer as well as secured increased consultant cover for orthodontic work this year. We have managed to source some locum cover and are actively contacting recruitment agencies.

We are providing further training to our existing staff to ensure resiliency should there be a reduction in workforce in the future not just with our Dental Officers, but we also aim to focus on increasing therapist and training for an orthodontic therapist and extended duty dental nurses. We have also been in contact with other boards to establish and strengthen links to specialist services such as Special Care Dentistry and Paediatrics.

Our medium to long-term plans include looking out with the typical recruitment methods, and we are considering the option of a fly-in fly- out dentist, with the possibility of collaborating with other boards to offer a dual position of rural and remote dentistry combined with urban dentistry to allow individuals the best of both lifestyles. Consideration would be given to include special interest development to increase incentives.

#### 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?

There are 14,204 patients registered with the PDS service in the Western Isles as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

There has been no increase of registration for the PDS as we are not currently registering new patients unless they specifically meet the PDS criteria. Unregistered patients are seen as occasional patients either for emergency care or for a single course of treatment after waiting on our Treatment Access List and subsequently discharged.

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)?

The Board receives separate to the earmarked recurring GDS element of the PDS allowance a Dental Bunding Allocation which includes Child Smile for 22/23 this was £149,462

Kind regards,

Gordon Jamieson  
CEO  
NHS Western Isles