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23 September 2022

Dear NHS Dental Teams,

My purpose in writing today is to provide NHS dental teams with the Scottish Government's position on the 'multiplier' arrangement and other financial support to the sector from 1 October 2022.

When we introduced the 'multiplier' arrangement we said this was a temporary arrangement, set on the basis of levels of activity in NHS dentistry, public health restrictions, and the overall situation with regard to affordability. All of these point to turning the multiplier off, i.e. setting it to 1.0 from 1 October. However, within the past six months, an unprecedented cost of living crisis has hit our economy. I appreciate that the challenging economic outlook – with prevailing high inflation and rising energy costs – has increased the cost of business. Therefore, while the additional support provided by the Scottish Government has helped to preserve the sector through the pandemic, further action is needed.

In recognition of this, and of the hard work you have undertaken and continue to undertake for NHS dentistry, I am pleased to offer the sector a temporary recovery period 'bridging' payment to run from the October/paid November 2022 to March/paid April 2023 schedules inclusive. This payment will continue to be made on the same basis as the multiplier, and will be set at a rate of 1.2 for the first three months, and 1.1 for the remaining three months of this six-month period (i.e. 20% supplementary payment on fees for the first three months, and a 10% supplementary payment on fees for the remaining three months of this six-month period).

The 'bridging' payment will replace both the 'multiplier' payment and the GDPA legacy enhancement payment, the latter introduced as part of the emergency support measures during the pandemic.

In addition, we intend to make a 4.5% pay award from 1 November 2022, with backdating arrangements to follow in a separate communication. Practices will also continue to benefit from additional GDPA income through the uplifted fees in the 'bridging' payment.

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Looking forward, I am also keen to understand in more detail the pressures practices are under. I am therefore asking for NHS practices to participate in an 'open books' exercise in Spring 2023. Officials will write to those of you who are mainly NHS practices and ask you to share your accounts. This will allow Scottish Government to understand the impact of business costs on NHS practice, help inform future pay awards, and allow us to provide comprehensive evidence to the Doctors and Dentists Review Body (DDRB) next year. In this way, Government will better take account of any financial difficulties practices face.

We are also working at pace on appropriate payment reform; following the survey to which well over 500 of you responded, we plan to have a new set of Determination I payments finalised for 1 April 2023. The intention is to implement the new Determination I during 2023/24 across the whole sector. The actual implementation arrangements will be developed with the sector, including appropriate testing, to ensure smooth delivery. I trust this goes some way to giving you the assurances you require for your business planning needs.

Finally, it's worth reiterating that dentistry has already benefited from significant additional support provided by the Scottish Government – over £150m to date. This support has included maintaining the capacity and capability of the sector both through the pandemic, with over £50m of emergency support funding and £35m of free PPE, and to support recovery through introduction of the 'multiplier' arrangement which, from its introduction, has provided over £50m of additional funding to the sector. Alongside these arrangements, fee changes from February 2022 have increased examination fees for adults and provided equivalent fees for children, delivering both an increased value for each exam and an opportunity for contractors to reduce the treadmill of high patient volumes, where that is desirable. The value of these fee changes, estimated at an additional £20m per annum, will remain within the system to support NHS dentistry. I trust this demonstrates the importance of NHS dentistry to the Scottish Government, and that you will stay with us as we move to reform.

With many thanks for all your hard work to date.

Yours sincerely,



HUMZA YOUSAF

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