



Eich cyf/Your ref CO/JFS/TM
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Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 10 February about the restoration of routine NHS dental care in Aberconwy during the Covid-19 pandemic; and the recruitment and retention of dentists to North Wales.

It is inaccurate of the BDA to suggest there has been a 15% cut to the budget for NHS dental services. The total spend on NHS dentistry (net of patient charge revenue) taken from Health Boards audited accounts is as follows:

2018-19 - £148.816m
2019-20 - £154.700m
2020-21 - £164.737m

I expect any confusion has arisen by the BDA picking up the programme budgeting detail rather than looking at total spend on NHS dentistry.

During the pandemic it has been a priority for the Welsh Government that dental practices did not financially fail through no fault of practice owners and contract holders. During the pandemic we have guaranteed 90% of dental practices gross NHS Annual Contract Value (ACV) and many practices are now receiving 100% ACV although this is dependent on the level of NHS dental services being provided and in line with dental contract reform principles.

Although past difficulties in the delivery of NHS dental services have been further compounded by the pandemic we want to reach a position where everyone in Wales who wants access to NHS dental care can get it. We are working with Health Boards, which have the budgets and responsibility for the provision of NHS dental services to address gaps in service provision through their operational plans.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is establishing a new North Wales Dental Academy – this will be a flagship NHS practice in Bangor and will embrace all the requirements of contract reform, significantly increase access and provide training opportunities. It will also increase the area's attractiveness to recruit and retain dental clinicians looking to develop their careers. It is expected that the academy practice will treat some 10,000 to 12,000 patients a year, ranging across regular, urgent and emergency patients. Welsh Government will be contributing £250,000 recurrently to support the academy – this is in addition to the £2m recurrent funding announced for 2022-23 onward.

It is expected that the academy practice will begin providing NHS dental services in September this year. However, the Health Board will look to commence services sooner, if possible. Further information is available or by email: . Peter has said he would be pleased to meet with Senedd Members to discuss the proposals in greater detail.

We are making steady progress with the recovery of dental services but dentistry is one of the most complex areas of primary care in terms of the reinstatement of services. As Covid-19 is still in circulation public health measures - physical distancing, enhanced PPE, and infection control requirements - mean fewer patients can be 'seen' in a clinical session. There is a clear requirement to see patients according to need.

Many dental practices across Wales have been reporting significant staff absences due to Covid-19 which largely explains why so many routine patient appointments have had to be cancelled.

We have asked Health Boards to encourage dental practices to start recalling patients who are overdue their routine NHS dental examination, in addition to providing appropriate NHS treatment for all patients. However, the return of services will continue to be gradual and will depend on capacity within individual practices.

We have also worked with Health Boards to ensure that as part of the recovery of services, measures are included to ensure dental practices see new patients. If dental treatment is urgent or the patient is in pain it is expected that Health Boards will have provision in place to provide care quickly. However, there will be a delay for new patients looking for routine care. Longer waits many patients are experiencing is unfortunately an inevitable consequence of the pandemic.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has commissioned a number of additional Urgent and non-Urgent access sessions across North Wales. They are also currently running a commissioning exercise for Urgent Dental Service sessions across North Wales on Weekdays, Weekends and Bank Holidays to commence from 1 April 2022.

Finally anyone seeking access to NHS dental services should contact the Health Board for the latest information. The Health Board will be able to provide details of the current level and location of available NHS dental services in the locality. They will also be able to provide details of the access sessions and availability of urgent treatment the Health Board provides for those residents not yet placed with a practice.

Yours sincerely,



Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services