



Tom Ferris  
Chief Dental Officer for Scotland  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
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**By email**

15 June 2022

Dear Tom

With just over two weeks until the initial 3-month review of the Item of Service multiplier, SDPC and our dental colleagues are concerned that the Scottish Government will take the earliest opportunity to considerably reduce the value of the multiplier. We are also anxious that the Government will then look to remove the multiplier altogether, despite stating in the [FAQ on Revised Payment Arrangements](#) that *"It is not our intention within the reform space to return the sector to the pre-pandemic SDR."* We have repeatedly signalled our strong opposition to a return to the pre-Covid "treadmill" and any move in this direction will doubtless see an accelerated exodus from the NHS as practices reconsider their business models.

SDPC reiterates our position that the multiplier needs to be retained at its present level. To lower it at this stage would reduce NHS patient access and increase inequalities, neither of which (we assume) would be welcomed by Scottish Ministers. Three months' data is not enough to analyse dental access and activity following a challenging 2-year period when activity levels were significantly reduced. The Scottish Government are prioritising examinations and the data will not include patients who are most in need of dental care where complex treatment plans are taking an extended time to complete. These are the very patients the Government presumably wish to prioritise under their inequalities agenda.

As we have raised on a number of occasions, practice lab costs have significantly increased in recent months and without the multiplier some treatments will not be financially viable under the SDR as practices would deliver them at a loss. Colleagues are reporting that dental labs are asking practices to postpone NHS dentures as labs do not have the capacity to deal with the volume of work that is currently being carried out while the multiplier is in place. Due to the lack of communication, practices are planning for the 'worst case scenario' of the multiplier being withdrawn from 1 July therefore need all these jobs finished by 28 June in order to process the claims within the multiplier window. This situation is both unacceptable and unsustainable.

Finally, we again call on the Government to improve its engagement with SDPC and to consult with the committee on any changes to the multiplier. SDPC would regard a refusal to discuss such a major change to the funding system as completely unacceptable and not in

the spirit of collaborative working. We also urge the Government to communicate clearly and promptly with the wider profession to update them on developments. Dentists are independent contractors and need sufficient time to plan their businesses (for example, recruiting and retaining staff remains a significant problem for practices). The current multiplier has allowed a degree of stability and any indication that it will be reduced will be unfavourably received by the profession, and exacerbate the considerable challenges already facing dentists and our patients.

I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a final downward stroke, positioned above the printed name.

David McColl  
Chair, Scottish Dental Practice Committee

CC. Mr Humza Yousaf, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

CC. Ms Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport

CC. Mr Tim McDonnell, Director of Primary Care, Scottish Government