



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| TITLE | NHS Dentistry – additional funding for access to NHS dental services |
| DATE | 17 November 2021 |
| BY | Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services |

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 – infection control requirements, enhanced PPE and physical distancing – mean fewer patients can be ‘seen’ in a clinical session.

There is a clear requirement to see patients according to need and practices have been asked to treat people requiring urgent care and those who have experienced problems during lockdown first. We also need to prioritise care for those who had treatment delayed as a result of the pandemic. We are working with Health Boards to ensure that as part of the recovery of services, measures are included to ensure dental practices also see new patients.

There is no doubt the pandemic has impacted on the improvements we were making increasing access to NHS dental services. However, even before the pandemic some dental practices were experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention of dentists, impacting on the provision of NHS dental services.

We want health boards to address gaps in provision to address short term difficulties and deliver medium and longer term improvement. After exploring the capability to provide additional dental sessions and a broadly positive response from Health Boards and NHS dental providers across Wales, I am pleased to be able to confirm that I have allocated up to £3m to Health Boards in 2021-2022 to expedite the recovery of services and bolster urgent and emergency care.

As well as this immediate funding injection, there is also a clear need for recurrent funding so that Health Boards can plan to provide sustainable increased provision and practices are willing to invest in expansion and recruitment to address issues in access to NHS dentistry. I am therefore also allocating £2m in recurrent funding from 2022-

23 to allow Health Boards to increase access and capacity needs over the medium term. Health Boards will be able to invest this funding in NHS dental services to address local needs and issues.