

[By email to Minister of State for Care]

Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU
United Kingdom

Dear Mr Kinnock MP.

I am writing to you to express our disappointment with the uplift announced on 08 January.

The uplift of 4.64 per cent will not deliver a six per cent pay rise as the Secretary of State announced in July to either dentists or members of the dental team. Dental practices already operate on extremely slim margins and many rely on their private dental business to operate a financially rewarding model. With the additional burden of increased National Insurance costs and an increase in the national minimum wage, continued increasing costs of materials and utilities, the uplift announced will force many colleagues to prioritise private dental care over the delivery of NHS care simply to keep staff employed and their business solvent.

The LDC Confederation and its member Local Dental Committees are committed to advocating for NHS dental services, working with local and national stakeholders to improve services for patients and drive integration.

Announcements like the one made on 08 January do nothing to help our engagement. As you know NHS dentistry is finding it increasingly hard to recruit and retain dentists because of a lack of resources. Significant underinvestment in contract values like the one recently announced, on the back of years of pitiful uplifts has made NHS dentistry uncompetitive with a growing private market. A market that grows simply because successive governments have undervalued the contribution of dental services.

My colleagues and I know the transformative impact we can have on people's lives, how we can play a pivotal part in the goal of Integrated Care Boards to reduce health inequalities and improve health outcomes. We are not able to do this, however, if successive governments continue to take the goodwill of the profession for granted and fail to invest.

At a time when the public find it increasingly difficult to access NHS dental care and struggle to meet the cost of private dental care the Government must take its responsibility to safeguard NHS dentistry seriously. We understand the financial constraints the Government is under but this must be balanced against the need for investment in a workforce which will play a pivotal part in helping reduce health inequalities, improve health outcomes and enable people to contribute economically as the Secretary of State has stated the NHS must.

As ever I am available to meet at your convenience to discuss the above issues, realities of running a dental practice and how the Government can support the dental profession to play its part in reducing health inequalities and improving health outcomes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Mike Clarke
Chair, LDC Confederation