

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Grainne Quinn
BDA NI Salaried Dentists Committee Chair

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: COR/3936/2020
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Dear *Grainne*

Thank you for your letter of the 4th December 2020, in which you expressed your disappointment at the enhanced rate to be paid to community dentists for carrying out work during the out of hours period, throughout the pandemic.

I understand that the community dental contract and terms and conditions of service does not include an enhanced rate for out of hours work in comparison with the terms and conditions of your medical and dental counterparts. The Department recognised this anomaly and set out to rectify the issue, my officials worked with employers and the Department of Finance to bring the community dentists' terms and conditions of service temporarily into line with their counterparts, Consultants, Associated Specialists and Specialty Doctors. The enhanced rate laid out in Direction No. 12-2020 mirrors the out of hours rates contained within their contracts, thus ensuring that community dentists were brought into line with other medical and dental staff groups.

Whilst I appreciate your disappointment in not having your proposed enhanced rate of 1.6 times the basic rate plus time off in lieu accepted, the one applied (time and third) is in line with other medical and dental groups. I should also advise that this whilst a proposal was sought from the BDA, this was not part of a negotiated process.

I appreciate that you and your colleagues may feel aggrieved by the lack of engagement, however my officials have worked tirelessly to ensure that the inequity between the medical and dental and community dental contracts was rectified as soon as possible.

As was as you can imagine my officials are working on a number of covid related work streams, and it is regretted that they did not convey to you that we had reached a decision on time and third and that work was being undertaken to have the T&Cs of community dentists temporarily amended.

Any changes to the terms and conditions of service, whether temporary or permanent must be approved through the Department of Finance in line with their departmental procedures. A robust business case is required which provides reassurances that any changes being made would not have a repercussive effect on other staff groups. Any enhancements to the terms and conditions of service for community dentists beyond that of your medical and dental counterparts may result in claims of inequity and fairness, and as such would not be approved.

I have throughout the pandemic commended the work and commitment of HSC staff and their commitment to the health and wellbeing of our patients. I am truly grateful for the support in delivering care in such extreme circumstances.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robin Swann', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health