

8 July 2024

To NHS Dental Teams

Oral Health Metrics – Adult Oral Health

My purpose in writing is to confirm to NHS dental teams that we have asked National Services Scotland, working with system suppliers, to make the necessary changes to the system architecture for the new Determination I for the collection of oral health metrics for the adult population in Scotland.

My rationale is three-fold:

First and crucially, is to allow NHS dental teams to reflect on the oral health status of their registered patients and to understand the effectiveness of their interventions on the oral health of their NHS patients. Whilst it is important to know how much and what range of dental treatments is provided, it is arguably more important to understand the impact the care provided has on the patient's oral health. Now, is an ideal opportunity given the introduction of the new Determination I in Scotland with much more emphasis on periodontal and preventative dentistry.

Secondly, we do not have sufficient oral health information on the adult population. By collecting this information, we will be able to begin building a longitudinal database of the population that will allow cross-sectional and time-series comparison over time. This deficit with respect to adult oral health reporting compares unfavorably with the National Dental Inspection Programme that has been reporting on the state of child oral health in Scotland for a considerable number of years.

Thirdly, by gathering this population-level information over time will allow both Health Boards and Scottish Government to be able to report on critical oral health metrics and look to understand how targeting additional care to sections of our communities could help reduce inequalities.

The recent communications from Practitioner Services (26 June) will have confirmed to you that the three metrics in view will be:

- Number of teeth present
- Number of teeth requiring restoration or extraction

- Highest sextant scores with BPE

The provisional timeline for the system changes is 1 August 2024; further details can be found at the following link from Practitioner Services: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/dental-reform/dental-reform-implementation-continued/>

It will be some months before you have sufficient meaningful information on your registered patients. However, I hope to have another webinar later in the year to explain to dental teams what the benefits of having access to such clinical outcome data could be for dentists and their teams.

I trust this letter is helpful.



Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer