

Date 1 July 2026
Our Ref FOI 3389

Enquiries to PSD Scotland FOI
Email psd.foi@nhs.scot

Dear [REDACTED]

**Enquiry: Freedom of Information
Practitioner Services Enquiry Number: FOI 3389**

Thank you for your freedom of information request which we received on 4 June 2026. You requested the following information:

This request concerns the Scottish Dental Reference Service (SDRS) and related quality monitoring functions operated by Practitioner Services. It is separate from my earlier request regarding complaints, incidents and patient safety data, which can be viewed here:
https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/foi_request_complaints_incidents

**** Please provide the following information: ****

1 - In each financial year from 2020/21 to 2024/25, how many patients were examined by the Scottish Dental Reference Service? Please provide the figures broken down by year.

2 - During the same period, did issues relating to clinical record-keeping, treatment planning, or appropriateness of treatment feature among the reasons for SDRS referrals or examinations? Please answer YES or NO for each of the three categories.

If yes for any category, please provide a brief high-level summary of the nature and frequency of such issues.

3 - Has PSD Scotland identified any recurring themes or areas of concern regarding the quality or governance of dental services in mixed NHS/private practices during the last five years?

Please answer YES or NO.

If yes, please provide a brief high-level summary.

4 - Does PSD Scotland hold any aggregated data or internal analysis concerning risks to quality or patient safety in NHS dental services in remote, rural or island areas, or in areas with limited provider choice?

Chair Mr Keith Redpath
Chief Executive Professor Karen Reid

5 - Has PSD Scotland ever raised concerns with the Chief Dental Officer or Scottish Government regarding gaps in practice-level oversight or governance in mixed NHS/private dental practices? Please answer YES or NO.

If yes, please provide a brief summary of when and in what context such concerns were raised.

**** Date range: 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025. ****

I consider there to be a strong public interest in this information. The Chief Dental Officer confirmed in writing on 22 December 2025 that no body currently holds end-to-end responsibility for practice-level governance in mixed NHS/private dental practices. PSD Scotland, through the Scottish Dental Reference Service and its payment verification functions, holds a central role in monitoring the quality and appropriateness of NHS dental treatment.

Information about what data or intelligence exists in this area would help demonstrate the practical consequences of the acknowledged governance gap, particularly for patients in rural and island communities who have no realistic alternative provider.

I would be grateful if you could confirm the nature and extent of the searches undertaken to locate the requested information, including whether searches were carried out of SDRS records, payment verification systems, and any central intelligence or risk registers.

In the event that any information is withheld, please provide a schedule setting out:

- (a) a clear description of the information withheld,
- (b) the specific exemption(s) being relied upon, and
- (c) the public interest factors considered.

Please provide the information electronically.

PSD Scotland can provide a partial response to your request, as detailed below.

1 - In each financial year from 2020/21 to 2024/25, how many patients were examined by the Scottish Dental Reference Service? Please provide the figures broken down by year.

The below table provides a detailed breakdown of this information.

Year	Total Patients
2020-21	Service stood down due to Covid-19 pandemic
2021-22	Service stood down due to Covid-19 pandemic
2022-23	1,493
2023-24	1,604
2024-25	2,024

2 - During the same period, did issues relate to clinical record-keeping, treatment planning, or appropriateness of treatment feature among the reasons for SDRS referrals or examinations?

There were no issues related to any of the subjects detailed within this question.

3 - Has PSD Scotland identified any recurring themes or areas of concern regarding the quality or governance of dental services in mixed NHS/private practices during the last five years?

Please answer YES or NO. Yes

If yes, please provide a brief high-level summary.

PSD Scotland has identified areas of concern. The most common themes arising from adverse SDRS examinations, in order (most frequent first) are:

1. Failed treatment/further treatment required
2. Inappropriate provision of treatment
3. Circumvention of the Prior Approval process
4. Incorrect claiming (wrong item claimed/incorrect charting, etc.)
5. Poor quality of care
6. Failure to offer all treatment available under an NHS General Dental Services (GDS) arrangement

4 - Does PSD Scotland hold any aggregated data or internal analysis concerning risks to quality or patient safety in NHS dental services in remote, rural or island areas, or in areas with limited provider choice?

No data or analysis is held. Under Section 17 of the FOISA this information is not held by PSD Scotland.

5 - Has PSD Scotland ever raised concerns with the Chief Dental Officer or Scottish Government regarding gaps in practice-level oversight or governance in mixed NHS/private dental practices? Please answer YES or NO.

If yes, please provide a brief summary of when and in what context such concerns were raised.

Since May 2022 concerns have been raised with the Scottish Government/CDO (Chief Dental Officer) team, on a number of occasions, in regular meetings between the former NSS Practitioner Services (now PSD Scotland) and the Scottish Government/CDO team. The following issues were raised:

- Inadequate supervision of inexperienced dentists in practice, who are not trained in the UK, and who may be unfamiliar with established standards of clinical practice in Scotland.

- Dentists choosing to restrict their sessional provision of NHS GDS care, which is creating delays in the availability of NHS GDS care.
- Failure of some dentists to offer all NHS GDS treatment to patients who are registered with them in an NHS GDS capitation arrangement.
- Incorrect understanding, interpretation and claiming related to the revised Statement of Dental Remuneration introduced in November 2023.

I would be grateful if you could confirm the nature and extent of the searches undertaken to locate the requested information, including whether searches were carried out of SDRS records, payment verification systems, and any central intelligence or risk registers.

Adverse findings arising from SDRS examinations is reported quarterly to all NHS Boards through the Payment Verification process. SDRS records and payment verification reports issued to NHS Boards were reviewed in responding to this FOI request.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of how we have dealt with your request, you can make representations to us asking us to review the handling of your request. Please write to the Associate Director Governance & Board Services, NHS National Services Scotland, Headquarters, Gyle Square, 1 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 9EB or email nss.foi@nhs.scot within 40 working days of the date of this correspondence.

If after a review you are still unhappy, you also have the right to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at Kinburn Castle, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS, or via their [online application form](#). If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

