

Sara Hurley
Chief Dental Officer England

By email

17 March 2020

Dear Sara

Coronavirus advice and support

We are writing to you to raise the Association's high level of anger and frustration that dentists and their teams are being left to cope in the current frightening situation without the benefit of clear official advice. The standard operating procedure for primary care dentistry was last updated on 5th March and Eric Rooney's preparedness letter is date 6th March. In such a fast-moving environment, the delay in updating this advice is simply unacceptable and leaves our dental teams and their patients in an incredibly vulnerable situation.

We are understandably being inundated with contacts from members asking what they should do in the absence of official advice. Dentists are concerned about the safety of patients and dental professionals when so little is known about COVID19 contamination. Given developing evidence, many are frightened about the virus being transmitted from asymptomatic patients. In these circumstances, continuing to advise that standard personal protective equipment is sufficient, simply does not feel tenable.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister's advice to the population yesterday that we should limit our use of public transport, limit social contact and consider postponing scheduled healthcare, does not feel consistent with an on-going message of routine care provision in primary care dentistry.

We ask for urgent clarification of official advice to take into account these factors.

Dentists are also understandably deeply worried about the impact of the pandemic on their businesses, whether providing NHS or private care or both. Irrespective of advice to patients, we are inevitably seeing a decline in numbers attending appointments and that is only going to get worse. We desperately need clarity around the support that is to be made available to practice owners, their associates and dental teams to see them through this crisis. Without that support, we may well not have a fully functioning dental service when we seek to return to something like business as usual. We have seen the Chief Dental Officer for Wales today show leadership in this respect and ask you to develop a similar sympathetic approach and package of support for primary care dentistry, including towards UDA and UOA targets.

There needs to be urgent leadership and clarification for a profession that is simply frightened and angry.

Yours sincerely



Mick Armstrong
Chair
Principal Executive Committee



Charlotte Waite
Chair
English Community Dental
Services Committee



David Cottam
Chair
General Dental Practice
Committee

cc Eric Rooney, Deputy Chief Dental Officer