MORE ON DENTISTRY

1.   We are all aware that there is a shortage of PPE. There is increasing evidence that supply is not keeping up with demand. Promises from Government are starting to ring hollow with reports that our level 3 PPE, which has only just been provided, are being taken back from UDCs and redistributed within the NHS.

I know we are down the pecking order when it comes to urgency and level of need, and I accept that. However, I cannot help being deeply concerned for the safety of our teams and of our patients.

***Charlotte Waite, Chair*** *England Community Dental Services Committee*

2.   **Urgent dental care centres across Hertfordshire have shut their doors after the NHS refused to promise any extra funding.**

The NHS set up four Urgent Dental Care Centres across Hertfordshire to provide care for 1.2 million people. This was on the promise from Local Dental Committees and Local Dental Networks that further funding for the service will come. With their closure, patients from Hertfordshire will now have to travel in excess of 30 miles to see their nearest urgent dental care centre.

Despite ongoing discussions over the past month, NHS commissioners have refused any further funding. Instead they insist that practices use existing NHS contract payments to fund the service.

All Chief Dental Officers across the UK advised Dental Practices to shut their doors to patients on the 26 March.

Since then the NHS and local dental committees are setting up Urgent Dental Care Centres to help deal with emergency dental treatments.

The Government has promised additional funding for the NHS during the [COVID-19](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dentistry.co.uk%2F2020%2F04%2F20%2Fsara-hurley-speaks-out-about-covid-19%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cafb1c204f1bb4a006a3d08d7f8a6a543%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637251266924488197&sdata=Atfrh6Pn6%2B3jdI%2Ba9bHCGrFNIFAaLYqG9RTEbFQtym0%3D&reserved=0) pandemic. However, Dentistry Online understands only two areas – Wessex and Thames Valley – have received additional funding to provide urgent dental centres.

3.   *CDO Sara Hurley* took to the screen last Friday in her second webinar aimed at informing the profession on the NHS response to COVID-19 and its impact on dentistry.

At the start of the 45-minute live discussion, she acknowledged that the current climate has ‘fundamentally changed’ the working lives of dentists and their patients.

Speaking along with Matt Neligan, Director of Primary Care and System Transformations, some of the key points of the webinar were:

·    The decision to cease all routine dentistry was ‘not taken lightly’ and was in full knowledge that an exit strategy would be needed

·     Goggles, visors, aprons, FFP2 and FFP3 masks are now available but there are still fit-testing issues with the latter. There is also still a shortage of gowns

·     A new partnership between the British Dental Association (BDA) and NHS England is looking to replace current system of a manual UDC regional report. From May 1, there will be a ‘pan-England’ UDC reporting tool

·     Any changes or easing of industry restrictions will be in line with Public Health England. This may involve practices re-opening to carry out non-AGPs based on risk and availability of PPE or low-risk activities like screening

·     A re-emphasis that NHS England are only empowered to make adjustments to NHS financial arrangements, which does present a challenge for mixed/private. Practices with a private element are reminded that they are eligible to seek government support for their private proportion

·     NHS England are committed to giving ‘reasonable notice’ when it comes to reopening practices. There are many variables that will make it likely to go on beyond the end of June. Currently, however, there is no fixed date

·    Dental professionals who have been redeployed on the frontline or are working in urgent dental care centres are eligible for key worker ID and testing under new Government regulations. NHS England are making a ‘great case’ for this to be extended to the wider dental sector as it moves into new phase

·     A ‘new normal’ is the reality as the industry faces a new demography of dental need.