

Correspondence relating to Annual Conference of LDCs

On the 22nd August 2017 I received the following email from Joe Hendron, Chair of the LDC Conference for 2018:

Dear Mr Pratley

I have been chosen to chair the Annual Conference of Local Dental Committees in June 2018. This is the opportunity for general dental practitioners to question and influence the policies of the General Dental Practice Committee and in turn the Dental Practice Committees of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; at the same time, sharing personal views and experiences with colleagues from across the United Kingdom has proven to be very valuable and worthwhile. As you know the practice of dentistry is continually coming under more pressure whether it be contractually by NHS England or through the increasing scrutiny and regulation by the CQC and GDC. Contract Reform is one of the biggest concerns in NHS dentistry in England, Wales and to an extent Northern Ireland and its ongoing progress needs the input of primary care dentists. We need to be proactive as a profession where we can so that we can at least try to influence any changes.

I notice that it has been some years since Morgannwg LDC have sent delegates to the Conference and the Agenda Committee are concerned as to what issues there may be discouraging your members from attending. From your website it seems that you have an active committee and the meetings are well-attended and representative of the large area Morgannwg covers. Your minutes also record that your Conference subscription had been paid. Whether it is that you don't feel that Conference is relevant or representative, whether you struggle to get members to give up their time to attend, we would value your feedback.

Alisdair McKendrick chaired the 2017 Conference in Birmingham with a theme looking towards the future of dentistry. Motions on Contract Reform generated lively debate and presentations from Claire Stevens on encouraging early dental attendance for the Under-1s, John Milne on the collaborative work of CQC, GDC and NHS England and Prof Nairn Wilson gave his view of dentistry 30 years from now. A novel approach of recording the Conference by video has had encouraging results and it has been edited to easily watched episodes which can be viewed on the Conference website www.LDCUK.org

The 2018 Conference is to be held in at the Europa Hotel, Belfast on 7/8th June. The agenda is in its infancy but the future of NHS Dental Contract Reform may well take centre stage as the evaluation of the Prototype Contracts is due to be published imminently and the GDC are introducing reforms to our CPD requirements. The Minimat Treaty may well restrict your choice of dental materials. Motions proposed and debated by LDC members like yourself give the opportunity to discuss topics that may well be relevant in your area and could have ramifications throughout the rest of the UK.

I am hoping to attend some of the Welsh DPC meetings in the coming year to get first hand knowledge of the issues in dental provision for the Principality and in turn try to weave this into the Conference Agenda.

Please drop me an email to joehendron@gmail.com sharing any concerns which your LDC may have with regard to attending Annual Conference so that the Agenda Committee could be in a better position to develop a programme which you might find more relevant and attractive.

I look forward to seeing you in Belfast next June.

Yours sincerely

Joe Hendron
Chair LDC Conference 2018

I responded initially on 2nd September as follows:

Dear Joe

Apologies for the delayed response to your email but my wife and I travelled to see our children in Dubai and Bangkok on 21 August and things have been rather hectic since then. I am out of the country until 25 September.

Congratulations on your election to chair of Conference. I appreciate your taking the time to write to me and will over the next week or so find time to give you a comprehensive reply, which your email deserves. I will also ensure that your email is presented to the LDC at its next meeting on 3 October.

Clearly my initial response to you will be my personal views, but I suspect they will not be far off the views of Morgannwg LDC. Basically we have not attended Conference for some time because we feel that following devolution conference is less and less relevant to us in Wales. I will use my next email to explain further.

Congratulations once again, Joe. It is a great honour to be elected Chair of Conference.

Kind Regards

Roger

I responded further on 4th September as follows:

Dear Joe

Further to my email of 2nd September I would like to give you a detailed response to your email as promised. As mentioned in my first response I am out of the country until 25 September.

Once again may I offer my congratulations on behalf of Morgannwg LDC on your election as Chair of LDC Conference 2018.

We are indeed a very active LDC as you note. We subscribe to Conference because we recognise the importance of the Conference in bringing the views of the dentists on the ground to GDPC. We do have a different master in Wales however and we feel that our input to Welsh GDPC is more important in relation to our subscribing practitioners. That is not to say we do not

support GDPC - I was the South West Wales representative on GDPC for more than two terms - and we fully support Tom Bysouth, our GDPC representative.

We believe the change in the conference programme to take place over two days requires more commitment from delegates and takes away the choice of attending on the Friday only. We have not made, and do not wish to make an issue of this because of our belief, stated earlier, that Conference is now less relevant to our situation. We continue to subscribe to the Conference Levy because we see the Officials' Day in December as more relevant to us than the Conference itself, and we usually send delegates to that, although in 2016 we did not do so mainly because of an error on my part, and I was unable to attend myself which I usually do. We find that we can adequately network on that day in December. Communication from BDA is excellent now and we are kept up to date on national issues through communications from Peter Ward, Mick Armstrong, Henrik Overgaard-Neilsen, BDA staff and Tom's regular reports, and on Welsh issues through Anwen Hopkins, our Welsh GDPC representative.

The initiative to video record conference and to make the recordings available is very welcome and we congratulate Conference Committee on this initiative.

I hope this addresses your concerns Joe. I am not saying that Morgannwg LDC will no longer send delegates to Conference where we find relevant items on the agenda, or if we wish to present a motion. We will however probably continue to send delegates to the Officials' Day.

As I mentioned in the previous email I will present your email to the next LDC meeting (3 October) and if there are concerns that I haven't mentioned here will communicate with you further.

Once again congratulations on your election and on behalf of Morgannwg LDC I wish you a successful and fulfilling year.

Best wishes

Roger

Roger Pratley,
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I have presented this correspondence for consideration of LDC members. The views expressed are personal views, although as mentioned they are views which I feel would not be too far from the views of LDC members. I present these views here so that members have the opportunity to comment on the views expressed, particularly if you disagree with them. We can debate these at the LDC meeting.

Roger