

LDC Newsletter – Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Dear Colleagues

It was thought appropriate at this time to inform colleagues with an update of happenings relating to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the actions taken by the Primary and Community Services Delivery Unit of SBUHB to inform and reassure colleagues and their staff in relation to direction from Welsh Government on financial and operational issues. The LDC has been in constant contact with the Dental Director and LHB officials and staff, and with BDA Wales, the official channel of communication with the CDO. It is important to be aware and remember the hierarchy of communication here: the LDC is consulted by and advises the LHB on matters relating to Primary Care Dentistry. It also has representatives on BDA Wales committees and on the Welsh Dental Committee (WDC). Both the WDC and BDA Wales have direct communication with the Chief Dental Officer of the Welsh Government.

The LDC has constantly updated Coronavirus advice on its website, with a [link to the advice](#) on a prominent position at the top of the homepage. [This link will also take you directly to the advice page.](#)

The LHB has set up local groups of practices (LPGs), each group operating under a DPA and with a nominated lead practice. The aim is to maintain communication with practices within groups and to support each other when necessary. Each LPG communicates information within through Whats App and this appears to be working very successfully. It should also be noted and applauded that there was a call out for help from volunteers this Bank Holiday weekend for the OoH rota, should it become overwhelmed with calls. The response was overwhelming with many practices offering help – a situation much appreciated by the LHB.

In relation to national updates then the BDA website is highly recommended. The CEO of the BDA has an information page which is constantly updated and well worth keeping an eye on, and is accessible in the main to non-BDA members as well as members. There is a link to this page on the COVID-19 advice page on the LDC website but it can also [be accessed here](#). The menu on the left of the page also links to further advice on the financial impact of Coronavirus, advice for associates, advice on PPE, and other issues. The financial impact link is particularly useful for all practices, but certain parts are not available to non-BDA members. Also of interest and extremely informative for colleagues will be various blogs from BDA Wales. On 19 March the Director of BDA Wales published a blog [COVID-19: Updates from Wales](#). On 2 April Tom Bysouth, Chair of WGDPC published [Coronavirus: Progress made for dentists in Wales](#) and on 9 April published [Coronavirus: Recent progress on service funding and Urgent Dental Centres in Wales](#). You will find all of these blogs, and the links therein contain important information which is useful to colleagues and their staff.

There has clearly been uncertainty about the financial situation of mixed contract (Private/NHS) practices, and the CDO letter statement that all staff should be paid salaries as before the shutdown. This has been clarified in that it has been acknowledged there are difficult decisions to be made by many dental practices with a mixed private/NHS income. However, where employers receive public funding for NHS contract staff costs (and that funding will continue at 80% of gross annual contract value for three months, April to June 2020, in the first instance) it is expected that employers use that money to continue to pay staff who deliver NHS services in the usual fashion. This also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs. Mixed income practices are not expected to make up the proportion of staff income that is generated by private activity from these NHS funds.

The Welsh Government has acknowledged and accept that practices may seek other sources of support to cover their non-NHS business and will need to consider whether staff not usually employed on NHS work are furloughed. The point the CDO stresses is that any other funding must not duplicate the NHS support being provided, whether that is for the business owner, self-employed dentist or salaried dentist. In addition, the Welsh Government is clear that the NHS funding dental practices receive cannot be allocated to mitigate loss of private income. In mixed private/NHS practices, contract holders are not expected to make up their own loss of usual private income or fixed practice costs by reducing the usual NHS portion of income of staff.

In terms of the payments to laboratories it was a recommendation **to consider** payment. It is accepted it will be for individual practices to decide taking into account whether the lab has decided to furlough staff.

In terms of staff re-deployment and PPE, at this stage WG has said that staff may be asked to assist in the provision of services at the Urgent/Emergency dental care centres or to undertake other tasks to assist the wider NHS. Welsh Government are not making re-deployment mandatory for NHS dental contract holders and their teams as circumstances and requirements will be different in dental teams and health boards across Wales. It is voluntary - a number of dental professionals, from NHS and private sector, have already volunteered and WG expresses sincere thanks to them.

DCPs and our staff in general are important to the smooth running of our practices and there is an excellent website hosted by the [All Wales Faculty for Dental Care Professionals](#) which gives specific advice for DCPs. The [FAQ page](#) is particularly useful and informative and is also accessible through the LDC website COVID-19 advice page. The LDC would recommend that you suggest staff should regularly keep an eye on this informative website.

The LDC hosted a successful Zoom meeting for colleagues 2 weeks ago in which Karl Bishop answered questions put to him by colleagues. The intention is to set up another such meeting during the next week, and colleagues will be informed by email of the proposed agenda, date and time.

This newsletter will be posted on the LDC website.

In the meantime, keep yourselves and your families safe.