



To: Primary Care Dental teams
British Dental Association Wales

Cc: Health Board Directors of Primary Care; and Directors of Finance

26 March 2020

Dear Colleague

COVID-19 BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR DENTAL PRACTICES PROVIDING NHS SERVICES

In my letters of 17th and 23rd March I set out our initial response and guidance following the move to Amber and then Red alert level during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

I am now providing further detail of the financial support for independent primary care dental practices providing NHS services.

1. Our priorities

Our priorities remain the protection of the public and the workforce, while ensuring current support and the future sustainability of dental practices.

2. Financial support 2019-20

As outlined in my earlier correspondence, to support practices during the initial stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, the flexibility for the 2019-20 financial year is for up to 4% of activity being available if needed. Up to 4% (of UDA activity) can be credited where this flexibility is needed toward meeting 100% of the contract target.

The same flexibility is applied whether the practice has performed at 85% or 95% of contracted activity in 2019-20 - they get 4% added. If the 4% does not bring the practice to 95% then recovery of the under achieved amount is an option for the Health Board to consider. If a practice achieves say 98% of contracted activity then they would receive 2% to take them to 100%.

This flexibility is to recognise some practices will struggle to meet 100% activity targets due to the current COVID-19 situation through staff absences, cancelled appointments etc., to help provide assurance and support to practices, and ensure contractual payments take this into account.

We are working with NHS Business Services Authority on the detail of the year end reconciliation which will take into account the 4% flexibility. For contracts delivering between 95% and 100% in 2019-20, after the 4% 'credit' is taken into account, there remains the ability to carry forward activity to 2020-21.

3. Financial support 2020-21

To fund dental practices at an appropriate level during the disruption caused by the spread of COVID-19, a number of options and proposals were considered and evaluated to reach a fair and equitable agreement. This included the formula which forms part of the consideration of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration recommendations used in agreeing the uplift in contract values for General Dental Practitioners. This is reproduced below.

Income	53.3%
Staff Costs	18.3%
Laboratory Costs	6.5%
Materials	7.0%
Other Costs	14.9%
	100.0%

The final decision is to fund all practices at a level of 80% during the period of disruption to ensure all staff can be paid at previous levels while allowing an additional element for on-going practice expenses. We will continue to make monthly payments to all practices equal to 80% of their current NHS annual contract value. Initially this is for 3 months (April to June 2020) but will be kept under review as the situation regarding the pandemic develops. We are aware of the range of contractual models and differing methods of payment to associates and other staff. However, there is a need to adopt a pragmatic 'once for Wales approach'.

Units of Dental Activity/Units of Orthodontic Activity monitoring will be suspended at this time. During this period Health Boards, NHS Business Services Authority and Welsh Government will also consider the position regarding reconciliation of payments to help inform the approach for the period from July 2020. This will include any adjustment to take account of 2019-20 year end performance but this would not be impact on any payments before July.

In terms of the Innovation Fund if the original bid was for taking on an additional member of staff, increasing/changing their roles, or increasing their time, then payment will continue.

It is acknowledged the funding support offered is not at full contract value but does reflect wider UK and Welsh Government support available. Although other expenses in the practices such as materials, heating and electricity bills will be reduced at this time we acknowledge that there will be a financial impact on practices. This is lower in comparison to some of the impacts experienced in other industries.

The collection of patient charges will be impacted by the disruption and the measures we have had to put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19. As the revenue from patient charges part funds NHS dentistry the reduction in charges needs to be considered as part of the total funding package.

4. Conditions and expectations of funding

In receiving this level of support during the initial three month period, Welsh Government have agreed a set of principles that practices and services are required to adhere to. Provider compliance to these expectations will be monitored by Health Boards and the funding could be adjusted if the intended purpose is not followed.

Welsh Government recognises these circumstances are exceptional, and as such certain conditions are necessary for providing this funding:

- Payment representing 80% of the total NHS contract value will be made for the first 3 months of the 2020-21 financial year (April-June).
- This will be done on the understanding all staff in post in March 2020, including associates, non-clinical and others, will be retained and their pay will be protected at previous levels to reflect their NHS work, with no redundancies being made.
- Practices will remain 'open for contact' and will commit to providing Health Boards with details of activity every fortnight. Please provide a log on: the number of phone calls received; the number of occasions a dentist gave remote advice; the number of prescriptions made; the number of referrals to the urgent/emergency centres; and the number of instances where a patient was assessed or treated.
- Practices need to ensure a dentist is available, during normal practice opening hours, to give telephone advice and direction to patients including remote prescriptions. Receptionists and/or DCPs can be utilised to triage general information calls and to arrange a call back from the dentist but they should not be used to give clinical advice to patients reporting dental problems. This telephone contact and advice can be organised with neighbouring practices to allow for staff absence and sickness in their households, including self-isolation.
- Practices may need to undertake certain urgent treatments for patients that do not have any symptoms of COVID-19 and that cannot be delayed but these should be kept to those which are absolutely essential and as few as possible. (The majority of urgent/emergency treatments will be in the special centres being set up).
- Practice staff may also be asked by their Health Board to assist in the provision of services at the Urgent/Emergency dental care centres or to undertake other tasks to assist the wider NHS.
- During April-June 2020 all contract holders will receive the same level of support - monthly payments based on 80% of the annual NHS contract value plus Innovation Fund payments where appropriate. However, there will be a need to consider adjustment to contract payments, to reflect end of year reconciliation and performance in 2019-20, in agreeing payments from July 2020 onward.

- Practices will cooperate to ensure sufficient cover for emergency work is provided to Health Boards. This will include staff and resources being shared between practices.
- Practices are advised to consider paying a stipend or retainer is paid to labs based in Wales that is proportionate to their level of supply of NHS lab work to the practice.

Practices benefiting from continued NHS funding will not be eligible to seek any wider UK or Welsh Government support which could duplicate the assistance outlined in this letter. However, it is acknowledged that practices may seek other sources of support to cover their non-NHS business.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Colette Bridgman', written in a light grey or blue ink.

Colette Bridgman
Prif Swyddog Deintyddol
Chief Dental Officer