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Dear Colleagues

### **Dental Teams Response to Covid 19**

The coronavirus pandemic has been a test for everyone's resolve, expertise and patience. It has brought out the best in people. The dental profession has not escaped this crisis and has stood up alongside fellow primary healthcare workers to deliver services to our patients. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all oral health professionals in the South East region for their hard work, teamwork and continued positive approach in often difficult circumstances.

The themes that come through are collaboration, communication, mutual support and local clinical leadership and knowledge.

Working Together and Local Leadership:

- The excellent collaboration between the NHS England and NHS Improvement commissioning team and their liaisons with the Local Dental Networks (LDNs), Local Dental Committees (LDCs), Public Health England (PHE) and Community Dental Services, along with senior clinicians at acute trusts and Health Education England (HEE) colleagues. Including regular local and national meetings.
- Weekly team meetings with those involved were key as feedback between the Urgent Dental Care (UDC) providers, the LDCs, the commissioners and PHE was essential to keep service delivery on track.
- Weekly links with the central team ensured that information came directly from the centre which could be applied locally.
- LDC support was invaluable and bound the process together to enable successful implementation of dentistry during this period.

UDCs, PPE, Fit Testing

- An Urgent Dental Care System Steering Group was set up within 1 day of the notification of practice closures and established a number of working groups that met within days. This fast paced work enabled the UDC Hubs to be agreed and a local Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to be developed within one week of practice closures.
- The further development of the Dental Electronic Referral System (DERS) for  
**NHS England and NHS Improvement**



- referrals to UDC hubs and the development of an electronic prescribing module within DERS, aimed to further support dental teams deliver care to patients, particularly during the period when most practices were closed.
- NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with PHE and HEE to ensure that practices can access appropriate fit-testing.
  - NHS England and NHS Improvement with the support of the Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) and Local Resilience Forums helped UDC Hubs resource necessary PPE to enable these practices to go onto AGP swiftly.
  - Without this the UDC hubs in primary care could not have provided so many AGPs.

Alongside of the amazing work that is being undertaken in our region, I am mindful that this can take it's toll on all members of the oral health team. I have included at the end of this letter some links to resources that may be of help to you and your team members:

Over the last few months we have seen from the examples above the way in which the response to Covid has, out of necessity created new ways of doing things, accelerated activities we were already thinking about, built new relationships and brought together elements of our local systems to get the job done. May I take this opportunity to thank you again, no matter what your contribution has been, and to express my support for a continuation of that more connected way of working that we have seen. The NHS plan sets out a vision for more joined up care across providers focussing on prevention and improving population and I value and will support, with my commissioning colleagues, your contribution to that.

Yours

Regional Medical Director

### **Health and Well-being support for the dental work force**

- NHS Employers have resources to support staff wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing>

- The World Health Organization has published WHO Mental Health Considerations During COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>

- MIND UK and Every Mind Matters have published specific resources in the context of COVID-19

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your->

NHS England and NHS Improvement



[wellbeing/](#)

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

- NHS Practitioner Health has developed frontline wellbeing support during COVID-19

<https://www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk/covid-19-workforce-wellbeing>

- BDA members can find further information about access to counselling and emotional support

<https://bda.org/advice/Pages/Health-Assured.aspx>

- Domestic abuse helpline

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

- Confidential Dental Help Line enables dentists in distress to speak to a practicing or retired dentist

<https://www.confidential-helpline.org/>

- The Dentists Health Support Programme provides dental professionals with free support and advice on mental health, alcohol and drug issues

<https://dentistshealthsupporttrust.org/>

### Ideas to consider at a practice level

#### 1. One-to-one meetings with all staff

Introducing the meeting with, “As we are all doing our best to cope at the moment we want to make sure as far as possible that work isn't adding to your stress” etc.

Questions to include:

- How are you/ are you coping in general?
- Is there anything about work currently that is adding to your stress/ worries?
- Is there anything we can change or reassure you about?
- We want coming to work to be a good thing/ bit of normality /offer some social support.
- Looking ahead, is there anything that you think is going to happen that is causing you concern? Can we reassure you now and avoid unnecessary concern for weeks?

#### 2. Signposting staff to other help/ resources at a local level

#### 3. Staff training on PFA- psychological first aid course (1 hr /week for 3 weeks) so as to be able to detect early signs and give better support to those who need it.



<https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/2020/06/free-psychological-first-aid-in-emergencies-training-for-frontline-staff-and-volunteers>

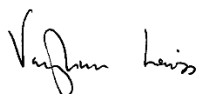
4. Provide safe spaces/people to those in need

Supporting our colleagues from BAME backgrounds:

The link between Covid 19 and BAME groups is well known and evidenced. Providers are reminded of the need to carry out risk assessments of all staff and especially those who feel they fall into a higher category of risk.

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/risk-assessments-for-staff>

All best wishes,



**Vaughan Lewis, FRCPCH**  
**South East Regional Medical Director**  
**Chief Clinical Information Officer (CCIO)**  
**Higher Level Responsible Officer**