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12 October 2020

Dear Colleague

I wanted to contact you about some changes that will be happening at the beginning of November and also to set-out some of my longer term thinking around the future of NHS dental services.

The government is committed to ensuring that the needs of patients to be seen for NHS dental treatment can be met, in a way that supports your efforts in practice to maintain the high standards of health and safety needed to mitigate the COVID-19 situation. The recent publication by the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme '*Review of Aerosol Generating Procedures in Dentistry*' improves our understanding and risk management of COVID-19 transmission in dental settings and this evidence allows for further progress with the NHS dental remobilisation.

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing has confirmed on 12 October in Parliament that NHS dental contractors will, from Sunday 1 November, be able to provide a full range of treatments to all NHS patients within dental practices.

You should be assured that I fully recognise the position that a return to pre-COVID levels of patient volume will not be achievable under the current health protection measures. I am aware that it will still be necessary for you to prioritise appointments for patients requiring urgent dental care, those at greatest risk of oral disease and the backlog of patients from during the 'lockdown'. This is not business as usual but by making available a full range of treatments for NHS patients, we are enabling dentists and dental teams to provide a wider range of NHS care for their patients, prioritised by your clinical judgement.

I also understand that you will have a range of questions about the funding of NHS dentistry and our longer term plans. In the immediate term it is necessary to return NHS dental services back in a way that is familiar to you and patients are used to as well. This means we will be reintroducing item of service fees and NHS patient charges because the activity that is undertaken allows us to understand the patterns of care provided during this interim period. Reintroducing the NHS patient charge will allow us to increase the top-up emergency

payments to NHS dental contractors. I will provide the full details of these new arrangements to you very soon.

As you will appreciate, the measures outlined above are intended to be of temporary duration and the longer term future for NHS dental services is my clear focus for the coming months, alongside supporting you to deliver care to your patients. It is clear from the development of the Oral Health Improvement Plan, reinforced by the experience of recent months and through representations to me that there is an appetite for change within the dental community. I am clear that you will have the opportunity to feed your views into the change process and I shall write to you in due course with further details, including anticipated timelines.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your efforts in providing safe care to your patients as we have remobilised and I am sure that you stand ready with your colleagues to provide the best of care to patients as we navigate together through the coming months.

Yours sincerely



Tom Ferris (CDO)