

**To: All NI GDPs**

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

25 March 2020

Dear Colleague

### **Temporary Arrangements for Urgent Dental Cases during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

I would like to thank those practitioners who, following my email to the LDCs and the BDA on Friday evening past, have been in touch to offer their services to help out with patients of practices that have been temporarily closed or with unregistered patients who have been unable to be seen at the out of hours dental services. Your offer of help is greatly appreciated and I now want to share your offer with those dentists and patients who may genuinely need your help during this difficult period.

If you find that your practice is unable to offer urgent dental care, I would advise that you try to make arrangements with a neighbouring practice in the first instance. Failing that, I would recommend the following approach:

- Patients should be able to contact their own practice by phone.
- If the practice is unable to provide urgent care, they should contact one of the local practices detailed at Appendix 1. They should pass the patient's details to this practice to enquire whether they can see the patient on their behalf. If so, the receiving practice will then contact the patient to make arrangements.
- Practices must not put the names and contact numbers of the practices detailed at Appendix 1 on their answer phones nor should they circulate it to their patients.
- Non-registered patients should be covered for the duration of these temporary arrangements.
- These temporary arrangements apply to normal office hours only.

I would hope that any practices that need to use these temporary arrangements will operate them as recommended above and will respect the goodwill offered by their fellow professionals during this difficult period. As this is a very quickly changing situation, some of the practices detailed in Appendix 1 may have altered their working arrangements in the past 24 hours.

The Board would ask that practices do not direct patients to the out-of-hours sites as they are working under the same restrictions as the GDS and are not able to provide treatment beyond that which you provide in practice. With the anticipated drop in patient volumes in general dental practice it is intended that the out-of-hours centres are strictly limited to emergencies occurring outside normal working hours.

It is our intention that, in the very near future, we will establish five trust-based but GDP staffed facilities to provide urgent dental care to patients who may be either infected and need operative dentistry or not infected but require an aerosol generating procedure. Further information on the trust-based model will be provided to you as soon as it becomes available.

In the meantime, thank you all for your help so far, please continue to manage urgent dental care patients within these temporary arrangements until we can get the trust centres up and running which is currently our highest priority .

Please ensure you remain informed and up to date by actively referring to your HSCNI email account and frequently check the COVID-19 webpage on the dental section of the BSO website: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3111.htm>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Donaldson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' at the end.

Michael Donaldson  
Assistant Director, Integrated Care  
Head of Dental Services, Health & Social Care Board