

To: All NI GDPs

BY EMAIL

18 March 2020

Dear Colleague

COVID-19: Implications for GDS

I am writing to make you are aware that in the coming days and weeks there will be significant changes to how you, as a general dental practitioner, work. Later today, I will issue you with updated guidance designed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread through dental practices. Please read this guidance and implement it immediately.

I am aware that, as concerns relating to the pandemic have grown, the numbers of patients seen in general dental practice have dropped substantially. Today's guidance will further reduce the amount of dental activity undertaken within your practice. I fully recognise that reducing patient numbers puts practices under severe financial stress and causes intense personal anxiety.

I would like to reassure you that financial support is at an advanced stage of development in the Department of Health (DoH) with the aim of bridging the short term cash flow issues faced by dental practices. Both DoH and HSCB want to ensure that when the outbreak passes, dental practices and the GDS as a whole are able to return to normal levels of access and activity.

Key to any sustainability package will be an undertaking from practices and practitioners that they will work flexibly with each other to maintain local services and, as the intensity of the COVID-19 challenge increases, provide dental care in different environments and potentially undertake new duties within the wider HSC.

In order, that you and the other staff who work in your practice are able to receive details of plans and possible new working arrangements and fulfill the terms of the remuneration package, it is essential that every day you monitor your HSC email account and the Coronavirus webpage of the dental section of the BSO website (<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3111.htm>). This is the only way that we will be able to keep you informed of new advice, general plans and what is specifically required of you.

If you are aware of a colleague who, for whatever reason, is not receiving emails from the HSCB please consider whether you are able to assist them. If their issues are not readily resolved then they should contact the BSO's eBusiness Team on Tel: 028 9536 3751 or 028 9536 3681 or at ebusiness@hscni.net. Advice is also available on the BSO website at the following link:
<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2772.htm>

I know these are extremely challenging times for all of us in the profession - the months ahead are going to test us in new and unexpected ways. However, I am confident that if we work together in a coordinated and flexible way, essential dental services can be maintained and practices and practitioners supported so that when normality returns the GDS can resume business as usual.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Donaldson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Michael Donaldson
Head of Dental Services