

**From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride**



Department of  
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Dear Colleague

## **COVID-19 –SUSPENSION OF ANNUAL APPRAISAL AND RELATED MATTERS FOR COMMUNITY DENTISTS WORKING IN THE HSC**

The British Dental Association has written to the Department of Health seeking approval to suspend dental appraisal and mandatory training during Covid -19 for the community dental service. It is the Department of Health's view that this position should be temporarily put in place until the end of September 2020, after which it will be reviewed according to the circumstances that the HSC finds itself in then.

### **Appraisal**

Annual appraisal for community dental staff is a contractual requirement, the Department is content that this contractual obligation is waived in the current circumstances. Consequently, appraisals are suspended from the date of this letter until the end of September 2020, unless there are special circumstances. Where capacity allows, remote appraisals can and should still be offered. *'Special circumstances' is defined to be where regulatory body conditions require appraisals (as a condition of registration) must be held.* Otherwise, a temporary suspension should allow managers and dentists to focus their attention on patient support through emergency hubs, redeployment and other immediate priorities. Affected appraisals will be regarded as cancelled, not postponed. This stance is also being taken with those staff on medical terms and conditions.

As a principle, I strongly advise that delaying appraisal should not stop employers from acting on concerns when they arise; particularly when patient or staff safety is at stake, even during the pandemic.

## **Mandatory training, CPD and Quality Improvement Activities**

Other measures to release clinical capacity and allow focus on the current priority include amending local requirements for mandatory training and other CPD and quality improvement activities not directly relevant to the current outbreak. I encourage Clinical Directors to work within their organisations to make sensible changes in these areas. This relates directly to safety and quality of care, and decisions on what is necessary under the exceptional circumstances should be taken locally. National guidance has been issued on the minimum requirements for staff *returning to the HSC*, who must complete:

- Health, safety and welfare
- Fire safety
- Infection prevention and control – level 2
- Resuscitation – level 2

Use of remote and on-line learning opportunities are worthy of consideration. It has also been recommended that, *for current HSC employees who have not changed roles and who have previously undertaken training in the core subjects of statutory/mandatory training, refresher* training requirements should be suspended for the duration of the current crisis.

## **Responding to concerns about a dentist's practice**

Oversight of professional concerns must continue, but as the situation evolves, our priority will be those concerns that, on initial investigation, have some merit and require prompt action to ensure patient safety.

I trust this will further assist you and your teams in dealing with the challenge of the coming weeks and months.

Yours sincerely



**DR MICHAEL McBRIDE**  
**Chief Medical Officer**

cc Michael Donaldson, Acting Chief Dental Officer  
HR Directors HSC Trusts  
Tristen Kelso, British Dental Association