



Mr Joe FitzPatrick MSP  
Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Mr Tom Ferris  
Chief Dental Officer for Scotland  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

**By email**

14 September 2020

Dear Minister and Chief Dental Officer

As you are aware, BDA Scotland has serious concerns about the “enhanced” Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that has been provided to dentists to allow them to carry out aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs), both in Urgent Dental Care Centres (UDCCs) and in dental practices. We are mindful of the consternation that our recent press release regarding out-of-date respirator masks caused among the profession and within Scottish Government, and would like to take this opportunity to explain our stance on the issue.

We are aware that the Public Dental Service, along with redeployed GDPs, have been using enhanced PPE since the UDCCs opened in March. This was done in good faith, and the letter of comfort from the CNO and previous CMO was accepted in the same manner at the onset of the pandemic.

The issue of expired PPE without seemingly robust verification only recently came to light, when GDPs started receiving boxes of 3M 1863 masks to allow them to carry out AGPs in practices. Some of these masks dated back to 2001 and had expiry dates going back to 2012. Over the past three weeks, we have repeatedly sought firm evidence from National Services Scotland (NSS) that expired masks have been robustly assessed and are safe to use.

The information we received from NSS included a copy of the **test certificate for 3M 1863 masks**. However, the certificate does not provide categorical proof that these masks are fit for purpose as none of the measures in the certificate achieved a “pass”. For those measures which received limited approval, the certificate states that the manufacturer (3M) should verify the material but 3M has confirmed to us that they have not assessed these masks since their manufacture. 3M has also advised that respirator masks should not be used once they have

passed their expiry date, as they may have degraded to the point where they would no longer perform to the standard to which they were originally certified.

The inspection of dental practices involves a check that equipment has not passed its expiry date. Using masks which are nearly 20 years old and almost a decade out of date may present significant risks to patients, dentists and their teams. The letter from NSS issued on 2 September asserts the safety of FFP3 masks in general but provides no new evidence that they are fit for purpose. In addition, NSS recently sought written evidence from 3M that the masks are safe to use, but was unable to secure this documentation.

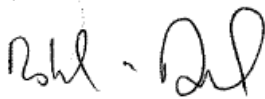
Given the lack of reassurance, as the trade union for dentists we felt compelled to highlight this issue in the interests of the safety of dentists, their teams and patients.

Many dentists willingly donated their PPE to hospices, pharmacies and hospitals at the onset of the pandemic. In return, NSS has supplied out-of-date masks, and no strong evidence they are safe to use. That is unacceptable. We have called on NSS to make alternative arrangements for supplying 'in date' PPE to dentists as soon as possible.

Dentists want what is best for their patients, and to offer the level of care they require. But no health professional or patient should be placed at risk during treatment, and the nature of Covid-19 transmission makes dentistry a potentially high-risk environment. We therefore call on you to work with NSS to urgently provide dentists with PPE that is within its 'by use' date to help ensure the safety of dentists, their staff and patients.

We look forward to your response at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



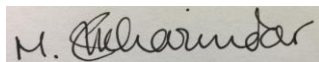
Robert Donald  
Chair, Scottish Council



David McColl  
Chair, Scottish Dental  
Practice Committee



Graham Smith  
Chair, Scottish Public  
Dental Service Committee



Manar Elkhazindar  
Lead, Scottish Hospital Dentists  
Reference Group