

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
sent by email

8 June 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Today high street dentistry is meant to start resuming across England.

But only a small proportion of practices – a third by our estimates – will be opening their doors. And those that do will be operating at a fraction of their pre-pandemic capacity.

Since lockdown support from across Government for our members has been far too limited. That cannot continue.

So we are writing to you to use the powers at your disposal and your influence across Government, including at both the Treasury and the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government to address what has become an existential crisis for dentistry:

- **Key Worker status** - the failure explicitly to include dentists and dental team members on the Government's list of Key Workers has seen colleagues turned away by both schools and nurseries. Our members require access to childcare, and this will continue to hit parents in those years where schools have not yet reopened. This simple change to the wording on [this webpage](#) could be made today, carries no costs, and would reflect assurances we have been given from NHS England from the outset.
- **Business Rates** - Dental practices which will see no or low levels of activity are still paying rates. These are essential businesses safeguarding the nation's oral health. We are struggling to understand why the Treasury, while offering needed relief to other high street businesses – and subsequently extending it to cover the gambling industry – remains blind to the risks facing this sector.
- **PPE** - Costs for PPE to complete a single course of treatment based on industry sources have increased by up to 6000%. Kit is now needed that was never previously required, and all items are subject to shortage. Dentists are reliant on volatile commercial supply chains for PPE. We need access to the Government supply chain for PPE, and for the temporary VAT cut on PPE - that closes on 31 July - to be extended, and potentially to be made permanent.
- **The 'New Normal'** - Barely 8% of practices now estimate they can maintain their financial sustainability longer term, in the face of sky high overheads and lower patient numbers. We need the conversation to be realistic about how an NHS service, forced to operate to a contract based on activity, can operate in a context where previous levels of activity are impossible.

There has been no clear message to patients and the profession about what reopening actually means in the light of what will inevitably be a vastly reduced service with minimal options to even maintain oral health, let alone improve it.

England had access issues before this pandemic, and for some years patients from Cornwall to Cumbria have not received the policy response they required.

Without action from this Government access problems – on an unprecedented scale - are going to be visited on millions of patients, in every community in England.

Yours sincerely,



Mick Armstrong
Chair, BDA

cc: Jo Churchill MP, DH, Sara Hurley, NHSE