



To the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Minister For Health

30th May 2020

Dear Sir,

Re: - Chief Dental Officer (CDO) Communication “Resumption of Dental Services in England” of 28th May 2020.

We write on behalf of The British Association of Private Dentistry (BAPD), to yet again express our extreme dissatisfaction with the continued mismanagement of UK dentistry throughout the pandemic, with particular reference to England. We find the manner in which the above document has been released, to be wholly unacceptable.

There has been no engagement of the primary dental care sector in the planning, timing and distribution of this letter; the dental profession sees this as an attempt by OCDO to devolve their own incompetence at the door of the wet-fingered dentist. Dentists were simply given no time to prepare.

The Problems:

- 1) It has been suggested that the “Resumption of Dental Services in England” was released to the dental media in “Dentistry.co.uk”, at 09.33 on Thursday 28th May 2020. To be clear this is a private profit-led organisation which does not, in any way, shape or form represent the wider dental profession. We would like to know why this organisation had access to this important document before dentists and other stakeholders upon whom it impacts directly?
- 2) Over the course of the 28th May, information of such magnitude was slowly being leaked piecemeal to the profession in quite an incomprehensible and unprofessional manner. Indeed, it was alarming to see what turned out to be this document being disseminated publicly via an unsecured Facebook page: the postings were made by “*Nishma Stigmo*” (a pseudonym of Nishma Patel) who has held a national policy advisory role previously with the CDO, Sara Hurley. Postings by ‘*Nishma Stigmo*’ have intimated a close working relationship with the CDO.

- 3) In addition, it is clear that the national press had been informed of the decision to return to work on the 8th June, well in advance of the dental profession. This resulted in widespread misinformation within the wider population.
- 4) Many in the profession first heard of the 8th June as the return date during the Prime Minister's Covid-19 briefing yesterday evening; this created a chaotic situation with patients calling their practices before dentists themselves were aware of the announcement.
- 5) The pathway back to work varies widely amongst the devolved Nations with both Wales and Scotland having dates later than 8th June for return to work; we have significant concerns that this will result in cross-border dental tourism and consequent damage to their economies and the reputations of dentists in addition to widening health inequalities in deprived areas. There is a risk of further overwhelming dental services in England due to the potential influx of patients from these regions.
- 6) The announcement was released alongside current vague and non-evidence based Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): this means that the requirements for provision of primary dental care are still unclear to many in the profession.
- 7) There are concerns about sourcing adequate PPE in time for the projected reopening on 8th June: a broader and more timely consultation would have avoided this issue.
- 8) Most dental practice staff have been furloughed: 6 working days notice creates logistical challenges to getting staff back to work

The Solutions:

- 1) We stand by our recent vote of no confidence in the OCDO and would urge you to consider an immediate investigation into the functioning of the OCDO and the overall mismanagement of dentistry in the UK.
- 2) A policy of clear, concise and consistent guidance is clearly warranted; a thorough review of OCDO policies and procedures, especially those relating to communication and information dissemination is necessary.
- 3) The relationship between the OCDO, the GDC, the CQC, Dental Indemnity companies and the entire profession, including private dentistry, should be reviewed.
- 4) A public inquiry into the poor management of dental services and the resultant ongoing dental health crisis during COVID19

We would now request an urgent consultation with you, to discuss these serious issues and offer our input into the formulation of a consolidated plan for dentistry.

In a very short time, the British Association of Private Dentistry has established itself as a strong voice with a firm support base from all sectors of the dental profession and allied industries, and we would like the opportunity to represent our members directly with the Government.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

The British Association of Private Dentistry