



All dental practices and Health Boards;
Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

19 June 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Further to my letters of 22 May outlining plans for the restoration of dental services, and of 10 June issuing the all Wales standard operating procedure (SOP) as part of the recovery plan for dentistry in Wales, I am writing to update you on the latest plans.

The First Minister confirmed today that there is to be further easing of lockdown measures from 22 June. In addition, the four Chief Medical Officers have advised the UK alert level be reduced from 4 to 3 in response to reduced community transmission of Covid-19 virus.

As promised, we have reviewed alert levels in dentistry in response to these changes. Therefore, from Monday 22 June, as outlined in the [Written Statement](#) made today by the Minister for Health and Social Services, we are lifting the Red alert in dentistry in Wales. Dental services can now move to the Amber phase of de-escalation.

In this phase, dental practices will be able to provide more care and treatment for patients. As Covid-19 is still in circulation, practices will need to ensure that measures are in place to ensure a safe environment for staff and patients. Because of physical distancing and infection control requirements, fewer patients can be seen in a clinical session, and dental teams are therefore asked to prioritise so that those patients who need care more urgently are seen first.

Dental practices, who are ready to do so, can open more fully and relax the criteria for urgent care assessment, to see and treat more of their patients ahead of the earlier planned date of 1 July.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank dental teams in Wales for their resilience, professionalism and effort. Contrary to some reports on social media, in dental and national press, and unlike in some other countries of the UK, dental practices in Wales have remained 'open' to see urgent cases throughout the pandemic.

Since March, more than 14,600 patients have received face to face assessment and urgent care in dental practices across Wales and a further 6,500 have received a range of treatments in the Urgent Dental Centres (UDC). The UDCs will remain in place for a

few months to come to support practices in transition to a 'new normal'. Health boards will be expanding the network to include some designated dental practices, who will be provided with enhanced PPE and be willing to accept referrals from other practices unable to provide aerosol generating procedures, to support the work of the UDCs.

As made clear in the SOP issued on 10 June the Amber alert is a dynamic phase. It is a matter for clinical judgement, practice facilities and preparedness, if a practice operates in heightened Amber, or can progress to low Amber. Many practices have been proactive in addressing urgent needs for their patients, others have already secured enhanced PPE and fit testing. Some will therefore be ready sooner to address definitive care and offer routine procedures to patients who need essential dental care, and also the completion of delayed treatment for patients who may not currently have symptoms.

Practices commissioned by their health board to provide NHS dental services will be provided with appropriate personal and protective equipment (PPE) during this phase of the pandemic. The Welsh Government will continue to work with health boards and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to monitor NHS primary care activity to ensure the right amount of PPE is available and provided.

Mixed practices offering private care and holding a NHS contract, who are able to provide a full range of treatment including AGPs, are asked to use clinical and ethical judgement to offer the same procedures necessary to secure oral health to all patients attending the premises appropriate to their need. Practices may be required to assure Health Boards and/or HIW that measures are in place to meet the physical distancing and infection control procedure standards as required by public health.

Not all dental practices in Wales have been able to open during the last few months due to shielding, staff illness or caring duties. These and many other practices will need the next few weeks to continue to work towards opening more fully on 1 July. However, all practices who hold NHS contracts and continue to receive financial support, will be expected to open in normal hours to see patients from 1 July.

The current financial arrangement for NHS contract holders remains in place until the end of June. From the 1 July there will be an uplift to 90% of annual contract value for practices providing NHS services. Adjustments may need to be made by health boards to take account of a practice becoming a designated UDC (and/or accepting referrals from other practices and/or NHS111/dental helplines) or to reflect performance issues. Further communication from Welsh Government will follow over the coming weeks with details regarding contract management during the Amber phase.

I am confident that dental providers in Wales will have staff health, patient need and the health of the wider community at the forefront of their approach in restoring dental services and I appreciate what a challenging situation this is for all of you.

Yours sincerely,



Colette Bridgman
Chief Dental Officer / Prif Swyddog Deintyddol