

Dear colleagues

11 November 2020

## Supporting the dental profession throughout the second COVID-19 wave

COVID-19 has been a challenge for the entire UK population. For dental teams, we understand the impact of asking you to scale back care in March and we appreciate your sterling efforts to resume service provision to support patients. We know that you continue to work tirelessly to address the backlog of care, all driven by our profession's enduring common motivation - to deliver the very best care for our patients through this pandemic.

Unfortunately, as we all know, COVID-19 cases are rising again and there is already sustained additional pressure on parts of the NHS. Pressure will inevitably be exacerbated by staff shortages due to sickness or caring responsibilities. Due to the actions of the whole population of all four nations the initial peak of pressure will be significantly lower than it would have been, but it may well be prolonged throughout the winter period, with wide local variation and fluctuation in cases, requiring a sustained and prolonged response from all the healthcare professions.

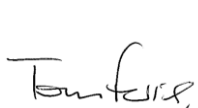
In partnership with patients, we want dental professionals always to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to make sure people receive safe care, informed by the values and principles set out in our professional standards. The national SOPs remain your guides throughout this next phase of the pandemic and we expect all registrants to follow GDC guidance using their judgement in applying the principles of best practice to the situations they face.

This second wave will require healthcare professionals to be flexible in what they do. We recognise that some dental professionals may find themselves working outside their usual scope of practice and this can be stressful, and you may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances. The healthcare professional regulators, including the GDC, have already committed to take into account factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working, including relevant information about resources, guidelines or protocols in place at the time. The joint statement issued by the healthcare regulators in March 2020 remains extant. <https://www.gmc-uk.org/news/news-archive/how-we-will-continue-to-regulate-in-light-of-novel-coronavirus>

We are also determined to ensure the long-term prospects of dental professionals in training are not compromised by this prolonged health crisis. The GDC, together with the education bodies in the four nations, and Dental Schools Council are working on this.

It's also important to look after each other during this time. We want dental professionals to feel supported and cared for at work, the pandemic is a difficult time for everyone and we're all human.

Finally, we would like to thank every single one of you for your tireless efforts to support patients. We are very proud of the response of the dental profession to this challenge.



Tom Ferris  
Chief Dental Officer  
for Scotland



Colette Bridgman  
Chief Dental Officer  
for Wales



Michael Donaldson  
Chief Dental Officer  
for Northern Ireland



Sara Hurley  
Chief Dental Officer  
for England