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This is the first of a series of regular updates to general dental practices and community dental services regarding the emerging COVID-19 situation.

Dear colleagues

I recognise that COVID-19 is placing a new and increasing challenge on already busy practices, and that this will be an area of concern for you, your teams and your patients.

I would like to reassure you that we are continually refining our plans for this outbreak, working with our key partners, and drawing on lessons learned from previous incidents and listening to feedback received on emerging COVID-19 issues.

In this letter, I would like to update you on **what is happening** and share some **key resources** and **how we plan to communicate with you**.

As part of our preparedness plans, we will continue to develop advice and plans to support dental practices, for example **guidance on face mask supply set out below**.

What is happening?

It is important that you are kept safe and informed during this period. You can find the latest **guidance for keeping yourself safe and well** here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus

We have recently published **standard operating procedures** for primary care www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/ Please can you read through these and take the actions requested within. **Public Health England has also issued interim advice for primary care which you can also find on our website:** www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/

Major regulators have issued guidance to support health professionals in these challenging circumstances, encouraging partnership working, flexibility and operating in line with the best available guidance. You can read the statement here www.gdc-uk.org/information-standards-guidance/standards-and-guidance/standards-for-the-dental-team The CQC is also working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and wrote to providers on 4 March outlining their plans.



Business continuity: We would like to encourage all practices to **check their business continuity plans** (BCPs) and identify opportunities for working with neighbouring dental practices, existing local dental systems and wider primary care to deliver appropriate care to patients in the current circumstances.

Supply of facemasks for dental practices

The interruption to the supply chain of personal protective equipment (PPE), in particular face masks for the safe delivery of dental care, is a proving an issue for dental practices.

The Commercial Directorate at the Department of Health and Social Care is handling this and following the initial action taken to relieve some of the current pressure, the following **dental wholesalers** have been allocated additional stock. If practices are not already a customer of these individual wholesalers, all have confirmed they will be able to establish a supply route relatively quickly.

Contact details for each are set out below; however there may be order quantity restrictions to avoid any local stockpiling.

To access this supply telephone or e-mail any of the following suppliers, quoting or titling your email '**DHSC – face mask request**'.

Henry Schein

sales@henryschein.co.uk

Wrights

01382 834557

nhsorders@wright-cottrell.co.uk

Dental Directory

0800 585 586

salesupport@ddgroup.com.

You will be aware that the government has announced its planning approach in the event of increasing numbers and wider spread of COVID-19 cases. Planning is currently underway regarding the impact of this on dental services and its supply chain including a review of the most appropriate PPE for dental procedures.

Online booking: To mitigate any risk that potentially infected patients book appointments online and attend the practice, please contact the patient to ensure they do not meet the self-isolating criteria and ensure you display the public-facing poster at the entrance to the practice.

Useful resources

You can download the latest materials to display to the public here

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/ This will soon include posters for practices that need to close for cleaning. There will also be new wording for practice websites and other communications channels.

Our current standard patient guidance is as follows:

The latest information on symptoms of coronavirus infection and areas where recent travel may have resulted in a high risk of exposure can be found on

nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

NHS 111 has an [online coronavirus service](#) that can tell you if you need medical help and advise you what to do.

Use this service if:

- you think you might have coronavirus
- in the last 14 days you've been to a country or area with a high risk of coronavirus
- you've been in close contact with someone with coronavirus.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Call 111 if you need to speak to someone.

Everyone is being reminded to follow the public health advice on the [NHS website](#) to avoid catching or spreading coronavirus.

Please **bookmark the dedicated NHS England and NHS Improvement COVID-19 web page** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/epr/coronavirus/> that includes important updates for the NHS including primary care providers (inclusive of general practice, community pharmacy, dental and optical providers).

If you need any **COVID-19 specific public health advice** which is not already covered in published guidance, please contact your Local Health Protection Unit or your local commissioner: www.gov.uk/guidance/contacts-phe-health-protection-teams

How we plan to communicate with you

1. At urgent times of need: Central Alerting System:

- For urgent patient safety communications, we will contact you through the **Central Alerting System (CAS)**.

- Please ensure you have registered to receive CAS alerts directly from the MHRA: www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/Register.aspx

Practice action: Please use a generic practice email account, not a personal one. For continuity of access, ideally use an nhs.net email account – it's more secure. Please register a mobile phone number for emergency communications.

2. At less urgent times: Commissioner's cascade and BSA:

- For less urgent COVID-19 communications we will email you through your local commissioner and the NHS BSA provider and performer contact list

Practice action: Please ensure that you have an nhs.net email account and your local commissioning team has the details. If you don't yet have a practice nhs.net account, please go to the NHS Registration website where you will be guided through the short process.

<https://support.nhs.net/knowledge-base/registering-dentists/>

In the event of user absence, practices should ensure auto forward for emails to an alternative nhs.net account and designated deputy.

Supportive additional information

We plan to host a targeted webinar to discuss the support in place for colleagues and patients in managing COVID-19. Details will be announced shortly via this update and through your regional teams.

We will use a variety of additional methods to keep you informed of the emerging situation, alongside colleges, regulators and professional bodies, and through formal and informal networks including social and wider media. You can follow these Twitter accounts to keep up to date:

- NHS England and NHS Improvement @NHSEngland
- Department of Health and Social Care @DHSCgovuk
- Public Health England @PHE_uk

Thank you for your understanding and continuing support, it is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Eric Rooney

Deputy Chief Dental Officer

NHS England and NHS Improvement