



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear NHS Dental Contractors

Firstly, we would like to thank you and your teams for your continued resilience and dedication over what has been a very challenging 15 months.

It goes without saying that NHS dentistry has been significantly affected through the pandemic and the steps we have had to take to keep dental staff and patients safe, has substantially reduced the amount of NHS dental care that is available for patients. We are making progress in restoring NHS dental care and activity is continuing to increase. The progress the NHS has made is a reflection of your hard work, dedication and clinical skill in prioritising patients and adapting to new ways of working.

But despite this progress, access is still challenged. Healthwatch published their report on 24 May 2021 showing that patients are continuing to struggle to access care. One of the recommendations of the Healthwatch report was that we take steps to improve patient information, to help signpost patients to available care. A link to the full report is available here: [Dentistry during COVID-19 insight briefing | Healthwatch](#)

Patients' main source of information when looking for an NHS dentist is from the nhs.uk website. The website lists dental practices and provides information on practices taking on new NHS patients. Although there are many practices that are updating their information regularly on the nhs.uk page there are also many profiles that are not up to date.

We are therefore writing to ask you collectively to please review your information on the nhs.uk website in order to help patients find information about available care more easily.

Guidance on updating your profile on the nhs.uk website can be found [here](#). Further advice is also available from Dental Services, to support you with limiting cancellations and managing your appointment times for patients here: [the link](#)

A range of materials have been produced for dental practices to support them to communicate with their patients and the public about changes to dental practice services and how to access treatment if they have a dental concern. These also include posters telling people not to enter the practice if they have coronavirus symptoms, and posters to remind patients to keep a safe distance. Further details can be found here: [NHS Resources for Dental Practices - updated 19.03.21 - Coronavirus Resource centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](https://www.phe.gov.uk/resources-facilities/nhs-resources-for-dental-practices)

Social media cards with accompanying messages targeted at patients and explaining current arrangements, can also be downloaded for social media use here: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/nhs-dental-assets/>

NHS England is currently developing a communications toolkit for dental practices, which will help practice staff explain the current situation to patients. Information on publication will follow shortly.

We would like to thank you once again for working with us to help patients.



Jo Churchill  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care



Ed Waller  
Director of Primary Care,  
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Sara Hurley  
Chief Dental Officer England



Chris McCann  
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