

Free flu jabs for dentists jobs axed by NHS England

The British Dental Association has slammed moves by NHS England not to keep dentists and their teams within the NHS flu vaccine programme this year.

Officials have now confirmed the complimentary offer of flu vaccinations for primary care staff will not be extended for 2022/23.

In September 2021 Chief Dental Officer, Sara Hurley, encouraged all dentists to take up the new offer for their own safety and their patients, many of whom are clinically vulnerable. In the previous year, dentists had been invited – in error – to sign up for the programme.

The BDA has consistently pressed for this to be made a permanent arrangement, especially now COVID-19 and flu will be

circulating together. British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch said: ‘For a fleeting moment, it seemed like dentists were finally being treated as part of the NHS family. Sadly the plan to ‘Live with COVID’ amounts to withdrawing needed protection for our teams and our patients in the years ahead.

‘We were told inclusion in this programme was important for both individual and public health. Absolutely nothing has changed in that regard.



‘In a bid to save pennies officials are sending a dreadful message to tens of thousands of frontline healthcare workers, and the millions of patients they treat.’

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NHS dentistry remains at risk as Scottish Government railroad through support plans

The British Dental Association Scotland has warned that dental practices will continue to face grave uncertainty, as the Scottish Government moved to impose an interim funding model for the service without meaningful negotiation.

While the BDA has welcomed the introduction of a ‘multiplier’ to be applied to dental fees, dentists have significant concerns that the planned 3-month review will have serious implications for patient care and will leave practices unable to plan. The union remains steadfastly opposed to the return to the unworkable high volume/ low margin model of care that operated pre-COVID, and has urged the Government to apply the multiplier until new contractual arrangements are in place.

The BDA had argued that the Scottish Government needed to significantly increase the current inadequate fees for extractions and denture repairs. Increased lab fees mean that dentists often provide these treatments at a loss, and the treatments are particularly prevalent in more deprived areas so any reduction in provision may further widen oral health inequalities.

The announcement follows a bruising debate in Holyrood, in which all opposition parties accused the Scottish Government of failing to heed the warnings from the BDA on the potential collapse of NHS

dentistry in Scotland. A BDA survey from late last year reported that 80% of dentists expect their practices will reduce their NHS commitment should the Scottish Government withdraw emergency support and return to pre-COVID models of care.

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Dentist leaders have also warned that comments made yesterday by the Public Health Minister fly in the face of the facts, given the tight restrictions practices continue to work to. Maree Todd MSP incorrectly stated that ‘from April, the new system will support dentists to see more patients’: an impossibility without meaningful change to COVID-19 operating procedures.

Both the Scottish Government and the BDA recognise the urgent need for long-term contractual reform. The Government has committed to start discussions as soon

as the interim funding model is in place. The BDA stress the negotiations must include all practice activity – including work on prevention that is currently unremunerated – and adopt an evidence-based approach to address the current low fees.

David McColl, Chair of the British Dental Association’s Scottish Dental Practice Committee said: ‘Bruised by the political pressure that’s been brought to bear in recent weeks Ministers have railroaded through a package that will leave practices totally unable to plan.

‘The idea this package is the result of meaningful negotiation is laughable, and any idea that practices can see more patients from April flies in the face of the facts. Dentists are still working to tight restrictions, and there is no sense we are returning to anything resembling ‘business as usual’. The Government needs to communicate this clearly to patients.

‘Applying a multiplier is the right call but the Government should have taken this opportunity to address derisory fees. We have faced the absurd situation where dentists are providing NHS care at a loss.

‘What NHS dentists desperately needed was some certainty on what’s expected of them in the year ahead. The choice to put these new arrangements in place for just three months is an exercise in futility.’