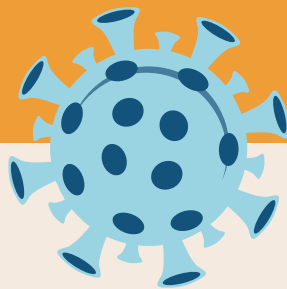


How are you coping?



A few weeks into the COVID-19 Coronavirus lockdown, **Kate Quinlan** asked *BDJ Team's* reader panel how they have been affected by the situation. Are they still working? Have they been self-isolating? Have they been redeployed?



Shaun Howe

I work for an NHS Public Dental Service here in Shetland Islands. We stopped providing all routine treatments on 17 March and as a dental therapist

I had no role. The wider Health Board was/is under incredible pressure so I was asked if I was happy to be redeployed. Of course I was. I am in the short term, a delivery driver. I have a set route of health centres that I deliver medical stores, medicines and internal mail to. I collect blood and pathology samples, clinical waste and anything else these remote and rural health centres need. It's not glamorous, not clinical, but certainly essential and vital.

I have attached a photo of me on the ferry to the island of Whalsay this morning (27 March).



Noor Al-Helou

March has been a very different month at work! As the pandemic developed further these last couple of weeks the nature of my work changed

drastically. We went from seeing patients routinely to only seeing patients with urgent dental needs and as of the last few days only seeing patients remotely. Going to remote care only has been particularly hard as you always want to do more to ease any patient's pain or discomfort. Fortunately, our patients have been very understanding. All education elements including mandatory study days and tutorial as part of my foundation training have also changed and these are being carried out online. That was probably the biggest learning curve for me as a technophobe but is a skill I'm glad I picked up as it will probably be one I'll use a lot in the future.

Fortunately I have not had to self-isolate

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or had any symptoms myself but some of our other staff members have which has meant stepping into different roles within the practice to help the practice to run. This has definitely made me appreciate more the work other members of the team do on a day to day basis.

Going forward the possibility that we may be redeployed within the NHS is being discussed and if it came to it I would be more than happy to help where I can. We have to work as a team in order to get through this tough period. However, I do hope normality resumes soon and we can go back to treating patients both routinely and on an emergency basis and do the job we were trained to do.

Stay safe and help one another.

way this bonds my dental team and makes it even stronger. I am also well aware that when normality returns we will be busier than ever!



Cat Edney

I had a very frank conversation with the owner of my practice - Dartford Road Dental practice. They were extremely cautious and were very concerned about protecting patients and staff. The initial response was to follow guidance on signage, the pre-treatment triage questions and having every member of staff also answer these questions prior to starting work.

the work set by her teacher. She has thrived on her own timetable and love of her family home.

The school had prepared their pupils well in accepting an invasion of teaching and school work in their home.

My husband is working from home; he has an underlying health condition affecting his lungs keeping him isolated from his world, his commute and his colleagues in London.

None of us were expecting this or could have predicted or even imagined it.

In dentistry I knew we needed to stop working, not continuing to aid in the spread of the pandemic. In my world of dentistry - my world for the last 33 years - the safety of every patient, colleague, myself and my family

'If I reflect on the pandemic,

I wonder if the virus is a platform to

a transformed society... We will

have a new normal.'



Jodie Carr

The coronavirus pandemic for me has felt like a rollercoaster with my eyes closed! I feel a heavy weight on my shoulders to do what is right for everyone but with very limited drip fed information it is a difficult task. I feel it is good to show honesty and allow others to hear your concerns and feelings. I have encouraged the team to speak freely to me [the practice manager], the practice principals and the team. I am hoping that being available and open to texts and calls at any time helps the mental wellness of my team members.

As a mum of a one-year-old and four-year-old hearing the news of being classed as a key worker was promising and my nursery this week remained open (28 March). However, living in a village and being the only classed key worker my nursery unfortunately took the decision to close! So I am now only available to work in the practice on a Monday and Tuesday to help triage emergencies and cancel patients. I am currently working from home other days which is mostly as soon as the children have gone to bed and late into the evening. I am still of course answering lots of emails and worrying texts from my team as best I can throughout the day.

I would be lying if I said I wasn't concerned; the future just doesn't look so bright anymore. My concerns over the next few months to name just a few range from health concerns for my family and friends, health concerns for my team and families, financial concerns for the business... will we be okay? Also financial concerns for my own household.

I am trying to see the positive of the situation and enjoy the time I am getting with my family. I feel we will all come out of this as different people and I hope in a positive

When the Scottish chief dental officer (CDO) introduced concerns around aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) my practice immediately reduced their appointment book to unavoidable treatment only (allowing me the option of hand scaling only for patients who still wanted that), however we very quickly moved to only emergencies. The practice finally closed completely following the English CDO advice. I believe that Dartford Road Dental were one of the most responsive and responsible practices out of many that I have heard of through my network of dental hygienists and therapists and I feel very much supported and included by the owners and team there.



Justine Nicholls

Life in lockdown has generated a rollercoaster of emotions and the virus has brought about a very strong feeling of a lack of control.

Acknowledging what I can organise and what I can plan in this new temporary 'normal' has become very important.

My daughter has found it all exciting in the way children do - always fascinated by home school, she now has her chance. She set her timetable and established the structure of

depended on me downing tools: the scalers and ultrasonics idle and quiet.

We had to stop doing routine dental care, hygiene and anything that could wait.

The hospital staff risking their own health every day implored us: stay home to save lives. Our team rallied to close down our normal dental daily activities; hundreds of appointments cancelled. Now that same team is rapidly organising for our practice and staff to become an area hub for dental emergency care.

If I reflect on the pandemic, I wonder if the virus is a platform to a transformed society. I have a sense of every community being stronger than ever and a selfless and resilient society. Certainly in dentistry there is going to be a change in our experience: we will have a new normal.

In the 1980s the HIV virus brought about new PPE and infection control protocols. Dentistry before the coronavirus will be very different to afterwards. We will look back to when we didn't have the best airborne virus protection masks, gowns and air purifiers just like we didn't wear gloves, eye protection and masks pre-HIV.

We will make it through and come back stronger, sooner rather than later and safely, we hope.

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