



General Dental Practice Committee

Report of the meeting held on 28 January 2022

The General Dental Practice Committee met on 28 January 2022.

Elections

1. The elections to the various positions within the General Dental Practice Committee (GDPC) were held. I was elected as Chair of the GDPC, and Shiv Pabary and Vijay Sudra were elected as Vice Chairs. The Vice Chairs and I, along with Mark Green, Joe Hendron, Judith Husband and Agi Tarnowski were elected to the GDPC Executive Sub-Committee. Elections were also held for the Remuneration, Legislation, Associates and Private Practice Sub-Committees, in addition to the cross-representative positions for the Central Committee for University Dental Educators and Researchers, the Central Committee for Hospital Dental Services, the England Community Dental Services Committee, the Armed Forces Committee, the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the BDA Pensions Committee.
2. As the newly elected Chair of the GDPC, I reaffirmed my intention to continue to pursue meaningful Dental System Reform, the abolition of the Unit of Dental Activity (UDA), fair funding for dentistry, and for dentists to be properly valued and rewarded. I promised to be energetic, enthusiastic, and firm in this process.

Breakout room discussions

3. For a portion of the meeting, we were divided into six breakout rooms and asked to consider the most prominent issues facing dentistry, the actions the BDA and GDPC should take to address these issues, and our stance on collective action as a profession. The key issues identified were dentists feeling undervalued and disrespected by the NHS and the Government, the unattractive and unworkable NHS General Dental Services contract in England and concerning rates of recruitment and retention of dentists and dental nurses. The notions of offering a 'defined service' or lower rates of activity were suggested if funding for NHS dentistry was not increased. We also argued that increased financial investment into dentistry would not be sufficient to address the issues outlined above unless it was paired with significant contract reform. We felt there was an opportunity to harness the increasing levels of unhappiness felt by the public about access issues and that we should use this as a negotiating tool.

NHS contractual arrangements and devolved updates

4. Despite my persistent calls to avoid increasing the activity threshold for quarter four, NHS England had implemented an upper threshold of 85 percent for the fourth quarter of the financial year. I expressed my view that, particularly given the emergence of the Omicron variant, this had

been the wrong decision at the wrong time. NHS England had warned practitioners to expect a return to the requirement to deliver 100 percent of their contracted UDAs in quarter one of the 2022/23 financial year. We believed this had further eroded the morale of general dental practitioners and their teams. We predicted that the end of year reconciliation process in England would be complicated and potentially unfair, and awaited final guidance regarding the process from NHS England.

5. In Wales, Russell Gidney informed us that three working groups had been established in the process of contract reform, however there were concerns that the Welsh General Dental Practice Committee was only directly involved with one of the working groups.
6. We welcomed Ciara Gallagher to the Committee as the newly elected Chair of the Northern Ireland Dental Practice Committee (NIDPC). In Northern Ireland, an additional covid-response budget had been made available to improve safety protocols in dental practices. The focus of the NIDPC was to provide input into the proposed remuneration model that would replace the Financial Support Scheme and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in general dental practice. It was expected that, from April, there would be a move away from funding based on historic Health Service earnings in favour of an activity-based system that offered a flat rate enhancement of item of service fees. As a parallel process, discussions on contract reform were taking place. Assembly elections would be held in Northern Ireland in Spring 2022, so the process of contractual change would not be linear or predictable.
7. In Scotland, the NHS Covid-19 support package for dentistry was set to end in April 2022, but discussions about the need to extend support beyond this date were ongoing. There had been a rise in reports of dental teams being subjected to abuse from their patients, and BDA Scotland had been developing a 'public respect' campaign to address this. Rates of dental patient participation had fallen, and oral health inequalities had widened between the most and least deprived areas of the country.

Dental System Reform

8. I reported on recent developments in the Dental System Reform process, where I, along with Shiv Pabary, Tom King, Vijay Sudra and Martin Woodrow, had engaged in a series of negotiation meetings with NHS England over the course of eight weeks. The contents of the meetings were confidential and could only be shared with the GDPC Executive Sub-Committee, but I reassured Committee members that the Executive Sub-Committee and BDA staff would work incredibly hard to defend the interests of the wider GDPC and would not accept any proposals that would work to the detriment of the dental profession.

£50 million funding package for out of hours urgent care provision

9. We found that Local Area Teams had varying stances on the eligibility requirements for this funding and were imposing different rules about what practices were required to do to receive it. There was general agreement that dental staff were too busy attempting to meet the 85 percent target imposed for quarter four to provide out of hours care, and that the full £50 million budget made available would not be utilised within the stipulated eight-week time frame.

Integrated Care Systems

10. The deadline for Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to take over non-primary care dental commissioning from Clinical Commissioning Groups had moved from April 2022 to July 2022, as

the Health and Care Bill continued to be passed between the House of Commons and House of Lords. Dentists continued their efforts to forge links with other primary care colleagues to strengthen their voices within the ICSs, and Manchester was said to be further along in the process of setting up its Integrated Care Board. Unfortunately, there was no expectation for a dentist to sit on this board. We were encouraged to contribute to the dialogue emphasising the detrimental impact that a lack of dental access had on General Medical Practices and A&E.

Shawn Charlwood
Chair, General Dental Practice Committee
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