



Thursday, 26 March 2020

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Chancellor

Support for self-employed workers in the dental industry during the Covid-19 crisis

These are unprecedented and challenging times for us all. I have no doubt that you and your staff at the Treasury are working around the clock to provide economic certainty for a worried UK workforce, as we all pull together as a nation to protect healthcare and save lives.

Your announcement today on measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the self-employed was no doubt welcomed by many across the economy. However, when you told the self-employed that, as a group, they “have not been forgotten”, I am afraid that you were overlooking the majority of associate dentists who, while being self-employed and earning over £50,000 per year, are by no means in the realm of the super-rich. The average earnings of an associate dentist today are £69,000, significantly less than an MP for example, and far below the £200,000 average income of the top 5% quoted in your press conference today.

We know from earlier announcements that those working in NHS dentistry across the UK can expect some income protection – which we welcome – however the reality of dentistry in the UK today is that there is a mix of NHS and private provision. Indeed, the private sector is bigger than the NHS in terms of expenditure, and the money earned from private care subsidises NHS provision in many practices. The impact on the oral health of the nation would be catastrophic if private practice were to disappear. That has to be a real possibility if no support is offered through this health and financial crisis.

Routine dental care has appropriately been closed down on Government advice, with only urgent care being provided. Therefore as things stand, many dentists working exclusively or largely in the private sector have no means of earning, and can expect no protection from the state. They have mostly been trained at great public expense but are now in danger of losing their livelihoods through Government action.

Given that the upper threshold on monthly support for the self-employed is set at £2,500, we see no reason why there should be an upper limit on earnings to qualify for this protection. After all, no similar threshold was set for those in employed roles. You have already indicated today that 95% of self-employed workers will be covered by your announcement. Surely extending the cover

to those above the threshold would not have a dramatic impact and would mean treating employment sectors equitably.

We ask that you reconsider your decision to set a threshold which has no reasonable justification.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Woodrow', written in a cursive style.

Martin Woodrow
Chief Executive
British Dental Association

cc: Jo Churchill MP, Department for Health and Social Care