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By email
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9 August 2021

Dear Kirsten,

Thank-you for providing a number of real-world examples around the difficulties of attracting new associates and locum pay following the meeting of SG officials with the SDPC Executive Committee.

As I was reflecting in our recent discussion, the emergency support payments have been instrumental in maintaining the integrity of the NHS dental sector. While they are not perfect, our view is that they achieved their principle purpose of ensuring the sector is a position to emerge from the pandemic period from a position of strength rather than weakness.

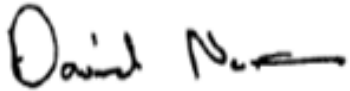
The emergency support payments were intended as an immediate response to the initial shock of the pandemic on the basis of maintaining historical earnings. Unfortunately the period of reduced dental activity has been much longer than anticipated, so we need to continue to protect the overall financial position of the sector which necessitates the continuation of emergency support for the immediate future.

We are generally not persuaded to make ad hoc piecemeal changes to the support payments, particularly as we are beginning to navigate the sector's route back to normal activity. The present payment arrangements, while retaining the payment protection, also allow dentists to earn through the item of service fees. In mitigation of some of the examples you have highlighted, activity levels in the sector are running at around 40-45 per cent, with approximately 400 practices above 50% and of these, 200 practices are above 70% activity. Our assessment then is that even within the present infection, protection and control constraints, dental capacity is between 60% and 65% of pre-Covid levels. For younger associates and locums there is opportunity and scope to earn through item of service, a situation that we hope will continue to improve, with the increase in free PPE and new ventilation funding, notwithstanding possible IPC changes in the near future.



We will certainly keep the situation under review.

Yours sincerely,



David Notman,
Dentistry and Optometry

