

Dear Patient,

We hope that this letter finds you and all your loved ones in good health.

Like all dental practices across the UK we were forced to cease face to face treatments for our patients on March 24th. Over the last eleven + weeks we have been continuing to prioritise your dental health by operating a triaging system. Our Team has provided hours of urgent assistance by phone calls throughout the lockdown period. This has enabled many of you to speak to a member of our team about your dental needs. We have provided advice, analgesics, antibiotics and where necessary enabled you to access face to face dental care at one of the UDCC (Urgent Dental Care Centres) which have been established by the NHS around the country.

Further to the Government's statement last week, you may already have heard that dental practices can begin re-opening from today Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June. The purpose of this letter is to explain that whilst we are excited to be able to begin face to face treatment again, sadly this does not yet mean a return to all routine dental care is now possible.

We are now in the process of implementing all the required changes so as to ensure your safety in attending our practices. Our infection control has always been a top priority and we follow all guidelines made by our governing bodies to ensure we are well placed to deliver the safest possible dental care available. Once in receipt of the required PPE and having carried out thorough risk assessments we expect to restart face-to-face treatment from 22nd June 2020.

We wanted to be clear that this does not mean business as usual from that date. It will take some time for services to return to a "New Normal" and at this early stage we will only be able to offer appointments for urgent treatment. This is the same across all dental practices in England, a policy laid down by the Chief Dental Officer for England in her most recent Standard Operating Procedures which was published last Thursday, 4th June 2020.

Our staff will begin to work through all calls logged over the last 11 weeks to prioritise patients who require urgent treatment. Please bear with us as we work through all the requests. Everyone will be contacted as soon as is practicably possible and we will continue to do our utmost to resolve your oral health needs within the limits of the care we are able to provide during this period.

All of the advice we have received from the British Dental Association, the Chief Dental Officer for England and the NHS emphasises that we should try and deal with as many of your dental concerns

as possible without asking you to attend the surgeries. Because of this we will continue to operate a triaging service and appointments for face to face treatments will only be offered after you have spoken to a dentist. They will discuss your treatment needs and describe the extent of the treatment options we are able to offer during the Pandemic.

**There will be noticeable changes at your next appointment.**

- A member of our team will communicate with you before your appointment to ask some routine screening questions (*you may be asked the same questions at your appointment*)
- A link will be sent to you to ask you to update your medical history and check your personal details prior to your appointment. If you are unable to do this a member of our team will help you with it over the phone.
- The waiting rooms will not be in use, you will be asked to wait in your car or outside the practice prior to your appointment and one of our team will lead you directly to the treatment room when the dentist is ready for you. Please do not arrive early as it will only increase your waiting time.
- You will be asked to come alone as we want to minimise the number of people present within the practice buildings. If a child or adult requires a chaperone we will discuss this with you during our pre-appointment telephone calls.
- Toilet facilities will not be in use during the pandemic period, please ensure you have been to the lavatory prior to attending the practice and also ensure you have cleaned your teeth prior to the appointment.
- You may not be able to see your own dentist as we will be operating a flexible rota system.
- We have installed hand sanitiser (located by all entrance and exits, as well as on the reception desk) that we will ask you to use when you enter the building.
- We will take your temperature prior to allowing you to enter the building.
- You will be asked to wear a face mask which we will provide during the time you are in the buildings and not actually having treatment.
- Appointments will be managed to allow for social distancing between patients. Due to this reason we will not be able to offer our usual choice of appointment times.
- At the time an appointment is made we will be asking you to make a payment for the appointment. If a further payment is required, we will inform you at your visit and contact you after the appointment to arrange payment.
- Our team will be required to wear appropriate person protective equipment (PPE). This by its nature will prevent the social aspect which we have all become used to and enjoy and know it will be missed by both patients and staff alike.
- Please do not arrive without an appointment. The practices will remain locked and we are not able to offer the option for you to come to the practice without an appointment. Please telephone and we will do our best to meet your needs.

We ask that all patients who are termed vulnerable or who are shielding to try and avoid coming to the practices unless absolutely necessary. If you are in one of these groups, please let the team know so that they can arrange an appropriate appointment time to minimise your risk at the surgery.

We will be opening the practices in a phased approach. Dental treatments have been divided into two identifiable groups, one where an aerosol is not produced during the treatment known as **non AGPs** and one where an aerosol is produced during the treatment known as **AGPs**. Treatments that are aerosol producing cause more risk and we will be taking extreme precautions if and when we undertake these procedures for you.

**PHASE 1** - During this phase we will be continuing with our triaging service to try and resolve the vast majority of dental problems as I have all ready mentioned. We will begin offering **Non Aerosol Generating Procedure** treatments at the surgeries during this phase. If it is thought either during triage or at an appointment an **Aerosol Generating Procedure** is required, you will be referred to one of the Urgent Dental Care Centres to receive treatment.

**PHASE 2** – We shall begin to offer **Aerosol Generating Procedures** at the practices. No time has been set for this at present as it will depend on the availability of adequate PPE (which is currently in short supply), the level of the pandemic and the training needs of our staff.

During both of these phases we are **not able** to offer any form of non-urgent dental care or routine appointments. We will be continuing to follow government guidelines on social distancing rules as far as is possible during your visit to the practice.

**PHASE 3** - A gradual return to "a new normal" appointment system enabling us to offer routine dental care when the National Pandemic level has subsided.

We take your health and wellbeing very seriously and will continue to do everything we can to ensure you continue to receive the best possible advice and treatment to maintain your dental health. We regret the disruption to your routine dental care but we are sure you will understand that this is out of our control.

If you have a dental emergency, or require dental related advice, please continue call the practice and a member of our team will do their best to respond to your needs.

We look forward to seeing you all in phase 3 when this pandemic is over.

Best wishes from the team at Langmans Dental Health Centres