

**To:** Directors of Dentistry of NHS Boards  
Via email

26 March 2021

Dear colleague,

### **Discontinuation of the COVID-19 Surveillance Programme in Dental Settings**

The COVID-19 surveillance programme in dental settings will be discontinued from the end of March 2021.

Since commencing in August 2020, the dental surveillance programme has been a valuable element in assessing prevalence of asymptomatic infection as part of Scotland's approach to enhanced surveillance of the pandemic. The ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey is now well established in Scotland and is recruiting large numbers of participants across all mainland and island health boards irrespective of symptoms. The ONS sample recruited is closely representative of the population in terms of age, sex and ethnicity. The survey is reporting on the number of symptomatic and asymptomatic positive cases of COVID-19 infections in community populations and estimating changes to case rates over time.

In the most recent expansion of the dental surveillance programme, from the end of January 2021, PCR testing of dental clinical teams was introduced. In addition, dental clinical teams are now undergoing twice-weekly LFT testing of patient facing healthcare workers from February 2021. We recognise that the additional workload the testing programme is placing on dental clinical teams may be contributing to fatigue amongst some teams. We hope that, by discontinuing the dental asymptomatic infection screening programme, this burden will be reduced.

We appreciate the significant pressures many dental teams have faced while working throughout the pandemic. We want to extend our sincere gratitude to each team for continuing to offer a vital service during these challenging times and for your commitment to ensuring this

surveillance programme was a successful part of Scotland's pandemic response. The development and sharing of a number of processes undertaken through the development of this programme are welcome insights of good practice. Your efforts in particularly trying circumstances not only supported Scotland's wider surveillance programme, but provided a salient reminder to all Health and Social Care workers of the value of PPE and IPC measures in protecting staff from asymptomatic carriage.

Public Health Scotland has published findings of the programme from August to December 2020 and a final report will be published in May 2021 following further research-related analysis of the dental surveillance data. If you require further information, please contact Public Health Scotland via the dental surveillance mailbox (phs.dentalenhancedsurveillance@phs.scot).

Yours sincerely,

*Gregor Smith*

*Tom Ferris*



**Chief Medical Officer**

**Chief Dental Officer**