# Secretary Report on 2022

This year, as with the last 4 years, have been ever busy and the role of secretary has included dealing with concerns from colleagues, discussions and meetings with the health board along with developing the role of the LDC in the region and beyond. I have looked to summarise the events of the last 6 months, rather than dwell on the previous period. In addition I have tried not to repeat the Chair’s summary and give a brief view of the future.

# Covid

With the de-escalation in full swing after Christmas, we entered 2022 with high number of Covid-19 cases and continued uncertainty as to the targets set from Welsh Government and the methods that the Health Board would interpret them by. The evolution of eDEN and its reporting platform has been very slow and unhelpful with neither dentists nor health boards truly understanding the information.

The continued reliance of the HB to provide EDS sessions as the previous EDS system was slowly and painfully stopped, meant that practices were over-run with unseen new patients and were unable to really make any headway with the back log of historic patients. A change in direction to a respiratory/non respiratory pathway confused many and was supported by little public information. We saw Wales slowly follow England in the removal of FFP3 level PPE just as the numbers began to rise again and many practices continued to wear the protection well after the change. Thankfully, the numbers of hospital admittances were low but the main effect on the dental team was lack of staff due to isolation and illness. This left practices really struggling to deliver their contracts.

We now see, as we enter July, a re-surgency in cases and the worry is that, above all, how safe is it to deliver dentistry with the current PHW guidance?

The LDC has represented the profession at all levels from HB to WGDPC and GDPC. We have maintained the view that practices are doing their best under incredibly difficult circumstances and any metric imposed should be a metric not a target. This has been acknowledged recently by the new CDO and so hopefully the HB will also acknowledge this.

# Teams

The dental workforce has never seen a period like the last 12 months. According to numbers provided to the LDC conference 2022, 3000 dentists have left the profession and nurse recruitment is at an all time low. This is due, impart, to the lack of new nurses and training positions, as little training took place during the last 2 years of the pandemic. Thankfully we are now seeing more courses available and hopefully a better understanding that we cannot continue to promote and promote through the ranks without a steady supply at the base.

Recruitment for dentists in the NHS is now at a national crisis level. For every 1 practice that ceases NHS work, 10 practices are reducing their contracts. Associates want more from the job, and rightly so. The private sector is enjoying large numbers increasing their commitments and the dental plan companies have seen huge growth over the last 12 months.

# The LDC communication

Eighteen months ago, we took on a piece of work to review the ways with which the LDC communicates with its community and then look to improve means of communication to suit a 21st century workforce. Ben Lewis led the review and work to include a national survey and engagement process. To date, the paper has been submitted for publication and we have been advised that it is due to proceed. I would like to formally thank Ben Lewis for his time and expertise with this essential piece of work and look forward to building on it moving forward with more of the LDC members.

# Seren

This has been mentioned by Jeremy, but I would like to add my thanks to Mike for his excellent organisation and support. Also, to Mostafa, Dougie, Adrian and Jeremy for pitching in with the tutor groups. We will now be looking to take the Program forward again in September and I would ask now for a much broader support from the dental community and the involvement of DCPS to add their voice.

# The future

Trying to develop a plan for the LDC and a time frame is something that I have wanted to produce since becoming secretary. My role continues to be in supporting the committee to represent the dentists of North Wales and their teams. To develop and strengthen relationships with dental colleagues in secondary care and the community dental services. To provide a mouthpiece for the profession in North Wales and get the best for dentists and their teams to provide the best care for patients. We must be united in our mission and not feel pressured or threatened by the lack of preparedness by Welsh Government and their reforms. Without a committed and engaged workforce, nothing would be delivered, and I hope they are truly beginning to recognise that.

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