**Chairs report North Wales LDC**

As we have not had an AGM in my time as Chair of the LDC this report should really relate to my whole time as Chair which started in January 2019.

I will however restrict it to the last year, in an effort to keep it relevant.

COVID

Much of my time as chair has been affected by Covid. Thankfully the last twelve months have seen a de-escalation of the SOP to allow practices to return to something like normal. Ventilation requirements remain along with the respiratory and non-respiratory pathways, but practices have been able to increase the numbers of patients they are seeing which has been welcome as we begin to tackle the backlog of care this covid period has created.

Covid does however remain a challenge with practice staff and patients still being infected with the virus with the obvious implications this has for cancelled appointments, achievement of new NHS metrics and income for both NHS and private practices. It has also left a legacy of lost DCP’s and dentists from the profession so staffing, and recruitment are a real challenge for practices. This is the case across the GDS and the CDS.

CDO

May 2021 also saw the retirement of our CDO Colette Bridgeman with Paul Brocklehurst and Warren Tolley stepping up to fill the role whilst a replacement was sought. We do now have Andrew Dickinson in place since April 2022, but it would be fair to say that the contract we currently have is Warrens and it will likely be much later this year that we begin to see Andrew’s vision for the future of NHS dentistry in Wales. From the meetings that I have attended with Andrew it is clear that he is committed to contract reform but also that he has concerns with the current incarnation. We must as an LDC engage positively in this period to help drive the changes we feel are needed to make the contract work in Wales. There does seem to be a genuine attempt by the CDO to engage with each LDC in Wales before he puts together a plan for April 2023. We will have our opportunity to meet him in September we hope.

Contract reform

Contract reform restarted in April 2022 with the short notice that we now expect. Most practices have agreed to CR rather than return to UDA’s ( 96% of the budget is in CR) but worryingly a number have also handed back contracts due to the pressure they felt they would be under trying to achieve untried and untested metrics. There continues to be a great deal of concern amongst providers and performers as to how this will work and how metrics will be achieved. We have heard some reassuring words from the LHB as to how they will manage contracts which are unable to achieve the metrics but there is no firm detail and no written confirmation. We will continue to press for this as an LDC on your behalf.

LHB

Both Dan and I feel that the relationship with the LHB dental team has been positive through our period of office. This really has been one of the positives to come from the appointment of an Assistant Director for Dental in the LHB and it must be said from Covid. It really has felt as if we have worked together to try and deliver safe and effective care to the population of North Wales, and many would agree that this was not the case pre pandemic. Mike Buckle moved on in October 2021 and Pete Greensmith continues his secondment in the role. Tony Benton continues to lead the contracts management team and Dan and I will continue to push our concerns and endeavour to make sure that practitioners are heard as the impacts of the current contract metrics are felt. It has to be said that there is a lack of engagement by the higher echelons of the LHB and this remains a source of frustration to all at our LHB/LDC meetings. Operational model changes are afoot in the LHB which are also of concern. We have written from the LHB to the Chief exec and we will continue to push for dental representation with the LHB management structures.

For the future…..

Clusters are now a hot topic for all LHB’s in Wales and it is important that we engage with them when we have the opportunity. Adrian’s excellent workforce survey was put on a shelf by the LHB but there are signs they want to progress with in regard to tier 2 contracts, restorative DwSi’s etc

SEREN

There has been a successful SEREN programme running this last 12 months and for that I am grateful to Mike Strother for the work he has put in. He has worked tirelessly to develop a comprehensive package for year 12 and 13 students identified by their schools as keen to pursue dentistry and having met the minimum requirements. Thank you to those who have supported him and to others who have not, please do step up and help if you can in this coming year.

Dental Academy

We are assured that the Dental Academy in Bangor remains on track to open this September. The LDC has been offered a position on the Dental Academy Education Oversight group and we are grateful to Ravi Boojawan for attending on our behalf. He will report on his first meeting at the next LDC meeting.

Other (in no particular order)

There is now an NEBDN dental course running in Wrexham in the Autumn as well as the Level 3 & 4 Bangor course run through the WAG apprenticeship framework. It is excellent that the LHB agreed to fund this additional NEBDN course and thank you to those who lobbied hard for this.

The first students will start on the Dental Hygiene course in Bangor in September 2022 which will be a 90 week (2 year) full time course. Places were highly competitive and an initial 12 (I think) will start. Long-term it is envisaged the course will train 12-15 students annually.

A new complaints process is in place in primary care and details have been circulated by Jemima Morgan.

The Restorative MCN in is in its early stages of development having held its inaugural meeting earlier this year.

HIW have restarted inspections of practices and the LHB have received their first reports from the BCU area.

Watch out in BDA publications for the excellent piece of work from Ben Lewis and others around communication and the LDC.

DDRB evidence by the BDA has been submitted and we await the outcome.

LDC conference was held in Wales this year and Dan and I attended on behalf of the LDC. We will report at the next LDC meeting but please do consider attending in the future.

As we move into the summer it remains for me to say that whilst it has been challenging, I have enjoyed the role of Chair and I look forward continuing the hard work. Thank you to the support of the committee and especially to Dan who I rely on heavily.

Committees I attend as Chair LDC

LDC/PC Forum and OHSG with the LHB

Ortho MCN,

SCD MCN,

Restorative MCN,

Welsh Dental Committee.

LDC Conference

Jeremy Williams

Chair NWLDC