General Dental Council: Information released under the Freedom of Information Act

Date released: 7 July 2020

Request:

In relation to a meeting held by the GDC on 13th May 2020 at 9.30am in closed session via MT Team, please provide the following information:

1. What was the rationale for not reducing the annual retention fee during the Covid-19 outbreak when the majority of dentists and dental care professionals were not working?
2. How many registrants have raised their concerns with the GDC regarding the annual retention fee during the Covid-19 outbreak?
3. Given the current pandemic and its financial impact on dentists and DCPs, why was an emergency, temporary PBI scheme not implemented but instead it was decided to conduct a review of the possibility of implementing a permanent PBI scheme of annual retention fees?
4. Why could the review for a permanent PBI scheme not be conducted at a later date?
5. Please provide a copy of the economic impact piece on the strategy workplan referred to at para 8.3 of the minutes of the 13th May meeting.
6. How many GDC staff members have been furloughed under the Government’s Job Retention Scheme?
7. What was the average period that staff members were furloughed for?
8. What are the costs of topping up the salaries of furloughed staff to 80% of their salary where it is higher than the government cap?

Response:

Thank you for your request of 9 June 2020, requesting information relating to decisions about the annual retention fee and furlough made by the GDC in closed session on 13 May 2020.

Your request for information has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FoI Act). I can confirm that we hold the information requested.

I will answer your questions in turn below:

1. **What was the rationale for not reducing the annual retention fee during the Covid-19 pandemic when the majority of dentists and dental care professionals were not working?**

   The tasks of the GDC in carrying out its regulatory role, which are set out in the Dentists Act 1984 have not changed. We are required to remain financially stable and to meet our statutory obligations to ensure the public are protected and confidence in the professions is maintained. For the moment, significant uncertainty remains about the work of the dental profession and the GDC in the coming months. Therefore, we have decided not to make changes which might not be sustainable, or which have the potential to add further risks or cost to what we do. I provide a link to an update from Dr William Moyes the Chair of the GDC which gives more detail about the ARF decision.

2. **How many registrants have raised concerns with the GDC regarding the annual retention fee during the Covid-19 outbreak?**

   Up to 24 June 2020, there were, 146 emails referencing the decision to retain the annual retention fee at our current levels or to not progress with an emergency payment by instalments scheme.
These figures however need to be viewed in the context of their being 114,756 (as of 24 March 2020) individual registrants, 72,938 dental care professionals and 41,904 dentists.

3. Given the current pandemic and its financial impact on dentists and dental care professionals why was an emergency temporary payment by instalments scheme not introduced but instead it was decided to conduct a review of the possibility of a permanent payment by instalments scheme of annual retention fees?

A link to the minutes of the meeting on 13 May 2020 which provides an explanation regarding the decision on payment by instalments can be found here: https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/who-we-are/the-council/council-meetings-2020).

We had a pre-COVID commitment to explore the feasibility of a permanent PBI scheme, here is a link to Bill Moyes’ blog which includes a reference to this This commitment to exploring the feasibility of a permanent PBI scheme was not going to result in an emergency scheme in time for the ARF collection, and as such work was undertaken to assess whether an emergency temporary PBI scheme could be introduced to help now.

On the basis of that work Council decided that they were unable to introduce an emergency scheme. The Chair wrote to registrants in May to explain the decisions that had been taken. Council committed in the 13/05 meeting ‘consider including the exploration of a permanent PBI scheme in the review of the corporate strategy and CCP.

4. Why could the review for a permanent payment by instalments scheme not be concluded at a later date?

As you will see from the link provided above, on 13 May 2020, Council were asked to consider an emergency payment by instalment scheme in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Recorded in the minutes of the meeting is the decision to consider the exploration of a permanent payment by instalments scheme in the review of the corporate strategy and work plan.

5. Please provide a copy of the economic impact piece on the strategy referred to at paragraph 8.3 of the minutes of the 13th May meeting.

The reference in the minutes in paragraph 8.3 relates to the Council being informed that this was a piece of work that the GDC’s Strategy directorate were going to carry out (so it was on their forward workplan) rather than a piece of work that had been completed and submitted for review by Council.

6. How many GDC staff have been furloughed under the government’s job retention scheme?

As of 9 June 2020, 27 GDC staff were furloughed under the government’s job retention scheme. There was a further individual furloughed on 27 May 2020 and a claim has not yet been made in respect to that individual.

7. What was the average period staff were furloughed for?

As the furlough scheme is still running it is too early to be able to provide you with the average period staff have been furloughed for. Please note that in line with the furlough scheme, not all staff furloughed will immediately return on a full-time basis.

8. What are the costs of topping up the salaries of furloughed staff to 80% of their salary where it is higher than the government cap?
The total cost for the period 18 May to 7 June inclusive was £6,143.71. A further individual started furlough on 27 May 2020 and those costs have not been finalised with HMRC, therefore these figures are not included in the total figure.

Please see the calculation below:

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary top up</td>
<td>£4,838.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer National insurance top up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer Pension Contribution top up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total costs</td>
<td>£6,143.71</td>
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