

**GENERAL HEALTHCARE POLICY
DIRECTORATE**



To: All NI GDPs
BY EMAIL

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COVID-19: FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES

On 31 July 2020 I wrote to inform you that the Minister of Health had approved £3.8 million in additional funding to the General Dental Service (GDS). This was in recognition of the additional Level 2 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) costs faced by General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) to allow for the resumption of non-urgent dental care involving Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs).

The additional allocation has been used in the first instance to fund the removal of the 20% abatement factor in the Financial Support Scheme (FSS) payments for August and September, to reflect the increase in PPE costs offsetting the reduced level of other variable costs. This is in line with the approach in England where practices are required to achieve a 20% minimum level of activity in order for the abatement to be fully removed.

You will be aware that no condition was put in place for the removal of the abatement factor in respect of the August FSS payments in Northern Ireland (NI). While there has been an increase in the level of dental activity as treatments involving AGPs have resumed, it is also the case that a significant number of GDPs have yet to recommence AGP treatments for GDS patients. Although this is a decision for individual GDPs, it is not fair that those who do not undertake AGP treatments and do not incur the associated Level 2 PPE costs should receive the same level of government support as those who do.

It is for this reason that a condition will be put in place in respect of the September FSS payments in order for a GDP to avail of the removal of the abatement. In particular, as part of the FSS application process, GDPs will be asked whether they have provided treatments involving AGPs to all categories of GDS patients over the past month. Those who indicate that they have will receive FSS payments with the

abatement removed while those who do not will have the abatement applied. For governance purposes, this will be reviewed for accuracy in a post-payment review. I would wish to reassure you that the intention of this condition is to ensure that there is a fair allocation of support between GDPs with any savings recycled back into the GDS budget.

In respect of the financial support for GDPs for the remainder of 2020-21, the Department of Health continues to engage with the British Dental Association on the best approach to allocate the available funding.

Yours Sincerely

Paul Montgomery

PAUL MONTGOMERY
DIRECTOR OF GENERAL HEALTHCARE POLICY