

**GENERAL HEALTHCARE POLICY  
DIRECTORATE**



To: All NI General Dental Practitioners  
BY EMAIL

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**GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES UPDATE**

I am writing to provide General Dental Practitioners with an update on a number of key issues.

**Financial Support Scheme: Activity Thresholds**

In my letter to you dated 9 August 2021, I notified you of revised FFS3 activity level thresholds that were subsequently implemented in September 2021. Whilst the significant majority of GDPs and practices are working well above the 25% activity threshold, that provides for full financial support, concerns remain about a minority who are continually only achieving 10-20% of their baseline assessment year (BAY).

These activity thresholds are currently under review to ensure that the scheme continues to provide support to practices and patients in as fair a way as possible. However, I wanted to reassure you that in undertaking this review, consideration is being given to the impact the Omicron variant could have on the delivery of services.

As soon as the review is finalised I will write to you with further details. I can advise at this point however that the current thresholds will remain in place for activity up until 7 March 2022. As per usual, if any changes are being introduced, the BDA will be engaged in advance and at least one month's notice will be provided to practices.

## **Financial Support in 2022/23**

The vast majority of the funding for the financial support scheme comes from the existing GDS budget, which would have understandably been underspent due to the significant reduction in IoS activity. Whilst no decisions have yet been made regarding the continuation of financial support into 2022/23, beyond the existing GDS budget, the Department and the HSCB continue to work with the British Dental Association on a new support model. The new model under development would be based entirely on current activity (but accounting for impact of the Covid-19 virus) and, therefore, break with the BAY.

Much work is still required on the details on such a model and seeking agreement for the continuation of financial support into 2022/23, but further updates will be provided when possible.

## **Claiming for Level 2 PPE**

A revised MDS will be issued in respect of how to claim for Level 2 PPE. The point I want to reiterate to GPs, in the light of revised Northern Ireland Dental Operational Guidance, is that payment for claims under item 30 will continue to be made for the use of level 2 PPE for AGPs where the dentist has assessed that it is clinically necessary. The approach will be in place until the end of March 2022 and will remain under review going forward.

## **2021/22 GDS Pay uplift**

As you will be aware, the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration published their 49<sup>th</sup> report in July 2021 and the Minister of Health has committed to implementing the recommended 3% increase as soon as possible. Work continues to put in place this uplift and make revise the Statement of Dental Remuneration accordingly.

I am keenly aware that the delay in implementation of this uplift has caused concern for a number of years, but we are working to implement as soon as possible and I expect it to be in place much earlier than previous years.

Finally, I would like to wish you and your dental teams a very happy New Year and to thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

Yours sincerely



**Michael O'Neill**  
**Head of General Dental & Ophthalmic Services**

**Cc: Caroline Lappin, Chief Dental Officer**  
**Michael Donaldson, Head of Dental Services HSCB**