

**GENERAL HEALTHCARE POLICY
DIRECTORATE**



To: All NI General Dental Practitioners
BY EMAIL

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Date: 2 July 2021

COVID-19: FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO NI GENERAL DENTAL PRACTITIONERS

In follow up to my letter of 18 June 2021, I am writing to inform you that the Minister of Health has approved the continuation of the current Financial Support Scheme for GDP's for a further two months (July & August 2021), with a view to having a revised scheme in place (FSS3) for the rest of the financial year.

In addition, the Minister has approved the allocation of additional funding for PPE in quarter 1 which will be distributed via top-up payments on the same basis as the PPE top-up payments issued in March 2021. This will provide practices a minimum average of £0.50 in PPE funding for each £1 IoS activity completed each month during quarter 1 of 2021/22.

As before, the decision to make these payments at a practice level has been made on the understanding that, in the majority of cases, PPE costs are met by the practice owners rather than by associate dentists. Where different arrangements are in place within practices, for instance where dentists have been asked to pay a proportion of PPE costs, practice owners will wish to consider the implications of this additional payment on existing arrangements.

As per the arrangements in March 2021, this top up will not be paid to Orthodontic Practices whose PPE requirements differ from dental practices. Engagement continues with the Northern Ireland Orthodontic Group to consider issues affecting providers, in particular around concerns of reducing referrals from dental practices.

Discussions on financial support arrangements for the rest of the financial year are ongoing with a desire on all sides to have a clear plan in place for the rest of the financial year as soon as possible. We are engaging with the British Dental Association regarding the revised scheme. You will be notified in advance of any changes to the FSS that are to be introduced.

The Minister has also established a GDS Rebuilding Stakeholder Group that will formalise the engagement arrangements but importantly provide a focus and momentum to addressing the challenges facing the sector in the coming months and years. The first meeting of the Group will take place on 16 July 2021.

Finally, I can advise that the updated Statement of Dental Remuneration to reflect the 2020/21 pay uplift was finalised last week and BSO are making arrangements to pay the April 2020 - July 2021 arrears in the July payment and the August arrears in the August payment. All scale addition and FSS payment arrears will be calculated in August and paid in September 2021.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

Yours sincerely



Michael O'Neill
Acting Director of General Healthcare Policy

Cc: Michael Donaldson, Acting Chief Dental Officer