

To: All NI GDPs

BY EMAIL ONLY

18/09/2019

Dear colleague

Re: Proposed changes to the NIGDS levy fund

As is the case with the other family practitioner groups in Northern Ireland, a levy fund has been in existence for many years to support Local Dental Committees. The levy fund allows General Dental Practitioners to take time out of practice to influence HSCB and BSO processes and to negotiate with DoH on a wide range of issues. In the GDS in Northern Ireland, contributions to the fund are voluntary and are set at the rate of £1 in every £1000 of gross fees.

Currently, the levy operates an opt-in system so the default position when practitioners join the dental list or change numbers is that they are not contributing to the levy fund and have to actively sign up to it. However, due to demographic changes in the profession list numbers are being issued more frequently. As a result of the additional effort of having to opt-in to the levy each time a new list number is issued, the number of contributors to the levy fund has dropped sharply in recent years. The shortfall between revenue collected, and pressures on the fund has led to a significant deficit for several years. Fund reserves are fast becoming depleted and will soon be exhausted.

It is in practitioners' interests that there is an adequate and sustainable levy fund so that the important work of representing practitioners can continue. A proposal has been developed, following extensive consultation with LDCs by the NI LDC Treasurer and the Chair of NIDPC that the levy collection mechanism moves from an opt-in model to an opt-out model. The default position will therefore be that practitioners joining the GDS list or changing numbers would automatically be contributing to the levy fund. If they did not want to do so, they would actively have to withdraw from the scheme. The rate of £1 in every £1000 of gross fees would remain the same.

While the amount of money at an individual level is very small, without the levy general dental practitioners would have no representation in key meetings with officials, and the voice of the profession would be significantly diminished at a time when the GDS faces significant change.

Each of the LDCs have been supportive of the need to modernise how the levy is collected and agree that the automatic contribution/opt-out model is the best way forward. We are now asking you for your view on this proposal. If you have any feedback in relation to moving to automatic levy fund contribution as the default

position for those joining the GDS list or obtaining new DS numbers, please email:
GDS.Correspondence@hscni.net by 04/10/2019.

Yours sincerely



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