

**GENERAL HEALTHCARE POLICY
DIRECTORATE**



To: All NI General Dental Practitioners

BY EMAIL

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GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES UPDATE

Further to my letter dated of 8 November 2022, I am writing to provide you with an update across the range of issues being progressed in the Department to support the provision of General Dental Services (GDS) to patients.

2022/23 Pay remit

An updated version of the Statement of Dental Remuneration (SDR) was completed and issued to BSO on 10 February 2023 reflecting a 4.5% increase to fees and allowances payable to General Dental Practitioners (GDPs).

I can advise that BSO will include all treatment and registration arrears in the March payment, with advice to follow on re FSS/RSS arrears and other SDR Payments & Scale Addition arrears. This would see the arrears paid two months earlier than last year, helping to address the Department's commitment to make pay uplifts earlier, given the clear inconvenience and disruption it causes practices and your teams.

Prior Approval Limit (PAL)

As noted in my November 2022 letter, it had been the Department's intention that the increase to the PAL would be implemented in February 2023. This timescale has slipped, but I can advise that the current schedule for the implementation of the higher £380 PAL is 1 April 2023. This will see a longstanding concern for practices addressed and will lead to less administration, freeing up valuable clinical time for GDPs and your teams.

Patient Registrations

As outlined in my previous letter the pandemic related extensions to patient registrations will start lapsing at the end of March 2023. GDS regulations have been amended to add a specific number of months on to three patient registration cohorts, so that registrations are scheduled to lapse at a similar rate as they would normally. Full detail can be found in the letter of 8 November 2022.

For any further clarification on the implementation of this process, please contact GDS.Correspondence@hscni.net.

Provision of Dentures

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the business case for the 25% enhancement to the fees for dentures was approved and that the enhancement has been applied to payments since the start of Q4 2022/23.

Work on updating the associated fees in the SDR has commenced and are expected to be included in an updated version, scheduled for 1 April 2023 in line with the increase to the PAL.

Pilot for Unregistered Patients and Asylum Seekers (PUPAS)

The PUPAS scheme, introduced in October 2022 to increase access for patients in these groups, with urgent dental needs, has been expanded from an initial 11 practices to 18 for Q4 2022/23. Early indications from the evaluation look positive and, if possible, would support extending and expanding the scheme further in 2023/24.

Enhanced Child Examinations

A scheme to enhance dental access and prevention of dental decay in children aged 0-10 years in Northern Ireland commenced on 1 Jan 2023 and will run until 31 Mar 2023. The aim is to address the decrease in registration levels for young children over the last three years.

Should outcomes from the evaluation of the scheme prove to be positive, consideration will be given to extending the scheme through 2023/24 to continue the prioritisation of a patient cohort who have been underserved through the pandemic and promote early intervention and delivery of preventative evidence-based care in General Dental Practice.

Rebuilding Support Scheme (RSS)

As practices are aware, without further intervention, the RSS is due to end in April 2023 and I am aware of the concern that the uncertainty on the position for 2023/24 is causing given the range of pressures on practices.

As touched on in my previous letter, the Department is facing a number of challenges which impact on decision making and our ability to respond. In addition to the increased focus on the justification for and affordability of any new policy, consideration has to be given to the Department's authority and ability to implement any new policy.

However, I want to assure you that every effort is being made to support the sustainability of General Dental Services. We continue to engage with the BDA and I hope to be able to clarify arrangements for 2023/24 in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael O'Neill'.

Michael O'Neill
General Dental & Ophthalmic Services

Cc: Caroline Lappin, Chief Dental Officer
Robbie Davis, Director of General Healthcare Policy Directorate
Michael Donaldson, Head of Dental Services (SPPG)
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