

To: All NI GDPs

Strategic Planning and Performance Group

Directorate of Integrated Care

Northern Office

County Hall

182 Galgorm Road

Ballymena

BT42 1QB

Tel: 028 9536 2812

8 February 2024

Dear Colleague

Out of Hours Arrangements for Emergency Dental Care Spring Holidays 2024

I am writing to advise you of the Out of Hours (OOH) arrangements for emergency dental care over the Spring Holidays 2024.

As you know, the Emergency Dental Clinics (EDCs) were reinstated on 30 July 2022. Since then, practitioners who work in an LCG area serviced by an EDC have been invited to join one of the three rotas. Only those dentists who have done so are entitled to avail of the EDC service for their registered patients at weekends and recognised public holidays.

Over the Spring Holidays 2024, as well as the normal weekend cover, the EDCs will also operate on the dates detailed below and the usual central telephone triage in Dalriada Urgent Care (DUC) will operate as normal from 8am to 12 noon:

- Monday 18th March 2024 (in lieu of St Patrick's Day)
- Monday 1st April 2024 (Easter Monday)
- Tuesday 2nd April 2024 (Easter Tuesday)
- Monday 6th May 2024 (Early May Bank Holiday)
- Monday 27th May 2024 (Late May Bank Holiday)

Dentists who have applied to join any of the rotas are welcome to amend their answerphone message in order to signpost registered patients to the EDCs via the DUC central telephone triage as has been the case since 30 July 2022. However, dentists who have yet to join, or have declined joining one of the rotas, are

not permitted to use the EDC services at any time and this includes these upcoming holiday periods. The SPPG will be monitoring this aspect of the service to detect any misuse and follow-up as necessary.

Other than the weekends and additional days listed above, on all other days over the holiday periods practitioners/ practices are required to continue to provide reasonable arrangements for emergency care for their patients. It is not acceptable that practices simply close up and advise patients to contact the EDC services on the days on which they operate.

Practitioners in the West are asked to continue their local arrangements for OOH provision over the holiday periods.

We have been advised that Urgent Student Clinic will be **closed** during the QUB academic holidays, **Friday 29th March to Friday 5th April 2024** (inclusive). Patients will not be able to avail of the BHSCT website self-referral process during this closure period.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all practitioners for their continued hard work in providing urgent dental care services and a special thank you to those who have agreed to work in the EDCs and to the local rotas in the West over the holiday periods.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Donaldson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' at the end.

Michael Donaldson
Head of Dental Services