

To: All NI General Dental Practitioners

BY EMAIL

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## **GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES INVESTMENT 2024/25**

On the 27 March 2024 the Minister of Health announced a £9.2m investment in General Dental Services for 2024/25.<sup>1</sup>

This letter outlines further information regarding the interventions aimed at improving patient access and supporting the sustainability of dental practices.

### Enhanced Child Examination Scheme

The Enhanced Childrens Examination (ECE) Scheme ran from January to June 2023 as a dedicated scheme to improve access to dental care for unregistered patients aged 0-10 years.

The scheme provided a one-off payment of £14.94 for each child aged between 0-10 years who was newly registered with a GDS dentist and had an enhanced examination completed, inclusive of an examination, dental disease risk assessment, individualised oral health advice, and age-specific fluoride application.

The intention is to re-introduce the ECE for 2024/25 to mitigate against financial barriers to registering unregistered child patients aged 0-10 years.

The re-introduction of the ECE will be an investment of approximately £1m in 2024/25, with a further £1m across 2025/26 and 2026/27 for the 24 months of capitation costs for the additional children registered.

A business case is being processed and is expected to be in place towards the end of May 2024, after which implementation should be relatively quick.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/swann-invests-ps9m-dental-access>

It should be noted that the ECE fee is being aligned to the extensive clinical examination fee in the SDR, item 0111, and will be adjusted in line with uplifts applied to the SDR.

### Enhancement of Select Item of Service Fees

To help maintain access for patients and to further support practitioners, it is intended that the Item of Service fees as detailed in the Statement of Dental Remuneration (SDR) for extractions, fillings and root canal treatment are enhanced by 30% for 2024/2025.

These are priority treatments, clinically very beneficial and frequently provided. A list of the specific SDR items is included in Annex A.

Increasing the fees for these treatments by 30% for 2024/25 will see additional investment of £4.3m in GDS.

A business case is being processed and I expect it to be finalised towards the end of May 2024, with an SDR update progressed in parallel. On approval of the business case, the 30% enhancement will be backdated to the start of the financial year.

The 30% enhancement is to be applied to the current SDR fees and is inclusive of the annual pay uplift.

### Dental Access Scheme

The Dental Access Scheme (DAS) is intended to replace PUPAS, which has been in operation since October 2022. The DAS will operate a similar model to the current scheme but provide access to a second, wider, category of unregistered patients with a pressing (but not urgent) need for dental treatment.

A new, enhanced fee structure will also be introduced which is intended to encourage more practices from across the region to participate.

Again, a business case is required with an Expression of Interest process to follow. We are currently estimating August 2024 for the DAS to be operational.

The final details of the scheme are being worked on and additional information will be provided in due course.

Yours sincerely



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**General Dental & Ophthalmic Services**

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## Annex A

<b>SDR Items</b>	<b>Description</b>
All codes under Item 14	PERMANENT FILLINGS
All codes under Item 21	EXTRACTIONS OF TEETH
All codes under Item 22	EXTRACTIONS OF SPECIAL DIFFICULTY AND OTHER ORAL SURGERY
All codes under Item 23	POST OPERATIVE CARE
All codes under Item 44	TREATMENT SPECIAL TO MINORS
All codes under Item 58 excluding 5841, 5851 and 5852	CONSERVATIVE TREATMENT