

Dear Colleague

COVID-19 GUIDANCE – NHS GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES

Summary

1. This letter provides information on the steps which should be taken during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Contingency Planning for NHS General Dental Services (GDS)

2. Contingency measures have been put in place to preserve the integrity of GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland.

3. Guidance on business continuity and financial support measures to independent contractors providing GDS is detailed in the Memorandum to this letter.

Monitoring During COVID-19

4. All independent dental practices providing GDS have been asked to complete and submit to their NHS Board a Business Continuity Plan (attached at Appendix 1) to provide baseline data now that COVID-19 has entered the delay phase. Boards should ensure that these are received by 31 March 2020. Thereafter practices have been instructed to submit a weekly NHS activity record sheet (attached at Appendix 2)

17 March 2020

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards

Director, Practitioner Services

For information

Chief Executive,
NHS National Services Scotland

Chief Executive,
NHS Education for Scotland

Directors of Dentistry

Enquiries to:

Chief Dental Officer and Dentistry
Division
1st Floor East Rear
St Andrew's House
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Tel: 0131-244 2842
NHSgeneraldentalservicesmailbox
@gov.scot

Financial Support

5. We have agreed that financial support measures will be put in place with immediate effect for independent contractors providing GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland. This recognises that delivery of GDS within a practice will be compromised due to staff shortages, or patients not attending for routine treatment, or a combination of both, and as a result the practice may no longer be financially sustainable.

Putting Financial Support in Place

6. Practitioner Services shall, with immediate effect, for each dentist:

6.1 determine their average monthly item of service income (net of patient charges for fee paying patients) for the period 2019/20;

6.2 calculate 90% of this income; and

6.3 where the amount at 6.2 is greater than the dentist's net item of service earnings for a month they shall pay the difference between these earnings and the 90% as a top-up in the next available schedule.

7. The dentists included in the calculation at 6 above shall exclude any dentist who is on maternity or sick leave at the time the financial support measures are being put in place.

8. The payments at paragraph 6 above will continue each month until the situation within the practice begins to return to normal – see paragraph 11 below.

9. For practices that have financial support measures in place, the General Dental Practice Allowance, rent reimbursement and individual commitment payments will be protected and Practitioner Services shall pay these at the same level as the March 2020 schedule paid in April 2020.

Exiting from Financial Support

10. Practices will require to continue to submit the weekly NHS activity record sheet throughout the financial support period - this will allow the NHS Board to determine when this support should stop. The expectation would be that the financial support will stop once the situation within the practice begins to return to normal. NHS Boards must advise Practitioner Services by email to nss.psd-dental-payments@nhs.net of the date when the financial support should stop.

Service Provision during Practice Closures

11. Where a practice requires to close as a direct result of COVID-19 patients may be directed to attend a neighbouring practice for urgent or emergency treatment. Where this is not possible patients will be directed to their nearest Public Dental Service (PDS). NHS Boards should advise practices of the arrangements for referring patients to the PDS.

12. NHS Boards should consider, in the event of a practice closure due to staff absences, whether dentists and their staff can augment the PDS and the wider NHS. In these circumstances dentists and their staff would be regarded as being engaged by the NHS

Board to provide services on its behalf, and would be covered by the Clinical Negligence and Other Risks Indemnity Scheme.

GP17PR and GP17(O)PR – Patient Signature

13. NHS Boards should note that independent contractors have been advised that the requirement for a patient or guardian to sign a GP17PR or GP17(O)PR has been suspended during the current COVID-19 outbreak. This is to avoid multiple patients using the same pen or tablet within the practice. An update will be provided to advise when this temporary suspension comes to an end.

Updates

14. This information and guidance will be updated as and when required.

Action

15. NHS Boards are asked to issue the Memorandum and associated Appendices to this letter to all dentists and DBsC on their dental lists.

Yours sincerely,

TOM FERRIS
Chief Dental Officer

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN FOR DENTAL PRACTICES (COVID-19)

Section 1: Declaration

The following declaration should be signed by the lead dentist responsible for implementation of this Plan.

To my knowledge the information provided in this Plan is an accurate assessment of this practice, and I am authorised to act in this capacity.

I can also confirm that all staff have read and understand this Plan and can access it appropriately.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Further Information to be provided by the Lead Dentist:

NHS Board List Number:

Address of Dental Practice:

Contact email address:

Contact mobile number:

Alternative contact mobile numbers (Deputy):

All plans should be returned by 31 March 2020

To: [insert NHS Board Primary Care Contact Details]

Section 2: Information

Provide the following practice information in relation to NHS activity only (TO REFLECT A TYPICAL WORKING WEEK):

- Number of dentists working in the practice (headcount and full-time equivalent)

- Total number of hours worked by dentists

- Number of other staff working in the practice

Dental Nurses Hygienists/Therapists Other

- Number of NHS patients seen in the practice

Patient management

In the event of the practice having to close, arrangements will need to be put in place for registered patients of that practice who are experiencing an urgent dental problem or a dental emergency. This may involve arrangements with other dental practices.

Please specify your arrangements

The practice must have in place a plan on how patients might be informed of special arrangements e.g. closure, arrangements for patients with symptoms of COVID-19.

Please specify your arrangements

Education and training

The practice must have in place procedures to ensure that all staff have sight of relevant information concerning the management of patients and the practice environment during COVID-19.

Please specify your procedures

Infection Control

The practice is required to ensure that standard infection prevention and control procedures and guidelines and environmental cleaning arrangements as per NHS Scotland's National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM) are followed by all staff.

Please specify your arrangements

The practice is required to ensure that there is a process in place to ensure the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as per NIPCM guidance (for routine patients), and all staff have been trained in its use.

Please specify your arrangements

Stock Control

The practice needs to ensure adequate stocks are available without stockpiling.

Please specify your approach

Existing financial mitigation

The practice may have business continuity/interruption insurance and individual staff may have income protection plans in place which would have a bearing on any proposed financial support measures.

Please specify any plans already in place

WEEKLY NHS ACTIVITY RECORD SHEET

Report for week ending: _____

Name of Lead Dentist: _____

NHS Board List Number: _____

Address of dental practice: _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Number of NHS patients attending the practice					
Number of hours of dentist absence directly or indirectly associated with COVID-19					
Number and designation of other staff directly or indirectly associated with COVID-19					
Days when the practice had to close due to staff shortages directly or indirectly associated with COVID-19					
Other practice-based work carried out as a result of patients not being seen					
Other work undertaken at the request of the NHS Board (specify)					

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DENTAL PRACTICE AND RETURNED WEEKLY TO:
Insert local NHS Board Primary Care Contact Detail**

**DENTISTS/DENTAL BODIES CORPORATE
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES**

COVID-19 – BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

1. This Memorandum provides information and guidance to independent contractors, (dentists and dental bodies corporate) providing NHS General Dental Services (GDS) on the steps to take during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Contingency Planning for NHS General Dental Services

2. Contingency measures have been put in place to preserve the integrity of GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland.

Monitoring During COVID-19

3. All independent dental practices providing GDS are required to complete a Business Continuity Plan (your NHS Board will have provided a template for this) to provide baseline data now that we have entered the delay phase of COVID-19. This should be completed by a lead dentist who has the authority to submit this on behalf of the practice. Plans should be submitted to your NHS Boards by 31 March 2020. Thereafter practices are required to submit a weekly NHS activity record sheet (your NHS Board will have provided a template for this) to their NHS Board.

Financial Support

4. Financial support measures will be put in place with immediate effect for independent contractors providing GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland. This recognises that delivery of GDS within a practice will be compromised due to staff shortages, or patients not attending for routine treatment, or a combination of both, and that as a result the practice may no longer be financially sustainable.

5. Practitioner Services have been instructed to put in place the following financial support measures with immediate effect for all independent practices providing GDS.

Item of Service

- a top-up payment that will ensure that a dentist receives item of service payments equal to 90 per cent of their average monthly item of service income (net of patient charges for fee paying patients) for the period 2019/20. Any dentist on maternity or sick leave at the time the financial support measures are put in place with not be entitled to a top up payment.

NHS Commitment Status

- protection of NHS commitment status. This means that a practice with reduced income will not lose 'full' or 'partial' NHS commitment status.

Allowance Payments

- protection of General Dental Practice Allowance, rent reimbursement and commitment payments at the March 2020 schedule.

Continuing Care and Capitation Payments

- these payments are not affected and will continue as normal.

Condition of Entitlement

6. It is a condition of financial support, that where a practice closes, dentists and other staff should assist the wider NHS, including the PDS, when asked by the NHS Board – see paragraphs 10 and 11 below.

Exiting from Financial Support

7. Practices are required to continue to submit the weekly NHS activity record sheet throughout the financial support period – this will allow the NHS Board to determine when financial support should stop.

Staff Shortages

8. Staff absences due to COVID-19 may have a considerable impact on the delivery of GDS. Practices because of staff shortages or a practice closure may be unable to see some or all patients that require treatment. Practices should consider working with other practices in the area to maintain service delivery. Practices may already have arrangements where neighbouring practices agree to cover holidays or have emergency rotas in place.

- practices should confirm any existing arrangements to cover this contingency with each other; or
- where no arrangements exist discuss with neighbouring practices the setting up of contingency arrangements.

9. Where this is not possible patients should be directed to a PDS clinic in the event they require urgent or emergency treatment. NHS Boards will advise practices of the arrangements being put in place.

10. In the event of a practice closure due to staff absences dentists and staff may be asked by their NHS Board to assist the PDS or undertake other 'non-dental' tasks to assist the wider NHS.

11. In these circumstances dentists and their staff would be regarded as being engaged by the NHS Board to provide services on its behalf, and would be covered by the Clinical Negligence and Other Risks Indemnity Scheme.

GP17PR and GP17(O)PR – Patient Signature

12. The requirement for a patient to sign a GP17PR or GP17(O)PR is suspended during the current COVID-19 outbreak. This is to avoid multiple patients using the same pen or tablet within the practice. An update will be provided to advise when this temporary suspension comes to an end.

Updates

13. This information and guidance will be updated as and when required.

Clinical Advice

14. Clinical advice can be found on Health Protection Scotland's COVID-19 webpage at:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-advice-for-dental-teams/>.

Enquiries

15. Any enquiries arising from this Memorandum should be taken up with your NHS Board.

Scottish Government Population Health Directorate
17 March 2020