

Dear Colleague

COVID-19 – REVISED FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

Summary

1. This letter advises NHS Boards and Practitioner Services of revised financial support measures being put in place for independent contractors (dentists and dental bodies corporate) providing NHS General Dental Services.

Financial Support Measures

2. NHS Boards and Practitioner Services are asked to note the revised financial support measures detailed in the Memorandum to this letter.

3. Practitioner Services shall, with immediate effect, for each contractor:

3.1 determine their average monthly NHS gross item of service income (which includes the patient charges for fee paying patients) for the period 2019/20;

3.2 calculate 80% of this income; and

3.3 where the amount at 3.2 is greater than the contractor's NHS gross item of service earnings for a month they shall pay the difference between these earnings and the 80% as a top-up in the next available schedule.

2 April 2020

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards

Director, Practitioner Services

For information

Chief Executive,
NHS National Services Scotland

Chief Executive,
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Directors of Dentistry

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4. The contractors included in the calculation at 3 above shall exclude any contractor who is on maternity or sick leave at the time the financial support measures are being put in place. These contractors will continue to receive maternity and sickness payments until the end of their entitlement period.

5. The payments at paragraph 3 above will continue each month until 30 June 2020 when the measures will be reviewed.

6. Financial support measures will protect:

- NHS commitment status - this means that a practice with reduced income will not lose 'full' or 'partial' NHS commitment status;
- the General Dental Practice Allowance, rent reimbursement and individual commitment payments;

Practitioner Services shall pay these at the same level as the March 2020 schedule paid in April 2020. Capitation and continuing care payments are not affected and will continue as normal.

Action

7. NHS Boards are asked:

7.1 to ensure that all Business Continuity Plans have been submitted;

7.2. to ensure that practices have details of the referral pathway to urgent care centres;

7.3 to issue **only** the Memorandum to this letter to all dentists and Dental Bodies Corporate on their dental lists.

Yours sincerely,

TOM FERRIS
Chief Dental Officer

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

COVID-19 – REVISED FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

1. This Memorandum provides further information to independent contractors (dentists and dental bodies corporate) on the revised financial support measures being put in place for those practices providing NHS General Dental Services (GDS).

2. The initial NHS financial support measures put in place were designed to ensure that NHS practices have a degree of financial protection during this difficult period using the existing GDS budget and payment system. We have listened to the concerns about how the financial support introduced would adversely affect practices with a higher level of fee paying NHS patients, and have sourced additional NHS funding to address these concerns.

Revised Financial Support Measures

3. The financial support measures which have now be put in place will provide contractors providing GDS with 80 per cent of their NHS gross item of service income. This will equate to their average monthly NHS item of service income in the 2019/20 financial year but will now crucially include the NHS patient charge element normally paid directly to the practice. The 80 per cent NHS gross item of service top-up payment will be determined as follows:

- if the contractor's income has been stable over 2019/20 financial year, subject to seasonal variation, the 12 month period will be used to calculate the average monthly NHS gross item of service payment;
- some contractors may only have been working in Scotland for a short time and will not have a full 12 months earnings in 2019/20 to calculate the top-up payment. In such cases the top-up will be based on an average of their relevant NHS gross item of service payments that are available;
- some contractors will have moved practice within the last year and will not therefore have a full 12 months NHS earning in their current practice. In such cases the top-up will be calculated as an average of the contractor's NHS gross item of service payments in their current practice;
- any contractor who is on maternity or sick leave at the time the financial support measures are put in place will continue to receive maternity and sickness payments until the end of their entitlement period.

4. It is not possible to provide examples for every set of circumstances applicable to contractors, however Practitioner Services have committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the appropriate level of NHS support is calculated.

5. The other elements of the financial support measures will remain as below:

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 individual commitment payments at the March 2020 schedule.

Continuing Care and Capitation Payments

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

Conditions of Payment of Financial Support Measures

6. It is a condition of the financial support measures that practices ensure that people can make contact with a dental professional during normal working hours.

7. Contact with a practice should be by telephone to avoid patients presenting at the practice, to minimise any contact while travelling or in the practice. Practice teams should make every effort to triage, advise and reassure patients who have a dental problem.

8. Practices should operate on an **Advice: Analgesia: Anti-microbial** basis to provide relief until the patient can be seen by an urgent dental care team.

9. NHS Boards will ensure that practices have details of the referral pathway to urgent care centres.

10. It is also a condition of the financial support measures that there must be no consequential loss of workforce in the practice as contractors and their practice staff will be required to assist the wider NHS, including the Public Dental Service, when asked by the NHS Board.

11. Contractors must immediately advise their local NHS Board if their associateship agreement or any other arrangement with a practice has been terminated or put into abeyance whilst the current financial support measures are in place. In these circumstances the financial support for that contractor will cease with immediate effect.

Closing Courses of Treatment

12. We are aware of concerns about open courses of treatment and whether these should be closed now and submitted to Practitioner Services or remain open until after the COVID-19 outbreak is contained and patients attend to complete their courses of treatment. Contractors should not close open courses of treatment. These should remain open and only closed when the patient attends to complete the course of treatment. If post COVID-19 the practice contacts a patient to arrange an appointment to complete a course of treatment but they fail to attend then the course of treatment should be closed at that point and marked that the patient failed to attend.

Weekly NHS Activity Record Sheet/Business Continuity Plan

13. The Memorandum to NHS: PCA(D)(2020)6 advised that practices would be required to submit a weekly NHS activity record sheet to their NHS Board. This was introduced at time when it was expected that dental practices would continue to provide routine treatment and would allow NHS Boards to monitor activity in their area. As this position has now changed and routine treatment will no longer be provided there is no longer a need for these. Your NHS Board will advise you if this position changes and practices require to start submitting these returns.

14. Practices were required to submit a Business Continuity Plan to their NHS Board by 31 March 2020. Any practices that have not submitted their plan to their Board should do so as a matter of urgency.

Other Financial Support

15. Other financial support measures have been announced, including for employees and self-employed people, such as the Job Retention Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Time to Pay Service. Further information about this support can be found at the following links:

UK Government – 26 March

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

Scottish Government – 23 March

<https://www.gov.scot/news/gbp-1-billion-business-support-fund-opens/>

Scottish Government – 18 March

<https://www.gov.scot/news/gbp-2-2-billion-for-business/>

Scottish Government – 14 March

<https://www.gov.scot/news/gbp-320-million-package-of-support-for-businesses/>

Scottish Government – 13 March

<https://www.gov.scot/news/covid-19-helpline-for-scottish-businesses/>

16. We cannot interpret other government funding support and contractors should contact their accountants for advice about any other financial support measures.

Enquiries

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

Scottish Government Population Health Directorate
2 April 2020