

TO: GDS Dentists

BY EMAIL ONLY

Strategic Planning and Performance Group

County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena
BT42 1QE

Date: 23 June 2022

Dear Colleague

Expression of Interest for working in the Out of Hours Emergency Dental Clinics (EDCs) in Belfast, South Eastern, Southern and Northern LCG areas.

You will be aware that the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) recently issued a survey to GDPs seeking expressions of interest to participate in the re-established EDCs. The intention was to determine the number of dentists and practices wishing to avail of this service and to assist with the process of re-establishing EDCs.

Whilst we are very grateful to those dentists who have responded positively to the survey, there are a significant number of dentists who have not yet responded which is disappointing. We are therefore issuing this survey a second time to elicit further responses.

If a dentist working in the LCG areas covered by the EDCs fails to reply positively to this survey, or declines the option to join the rota, then the dentist will need to make their own arrangements to provide emergency cover for their registered patients at weekends and recognised public holidays. They will not be able to use the services of the EDCs for their emergency cover. The SPPG will be contacting these dentists seeking clarity on how they plan to provide their emergency cover and will be monitoring the service to ensure compliance with this requirement. GDS dentists' obligations to provide emergency care are set out in Schedule 2, paragraph 6 of the GDS regulations which can be accessed at the link below:

[https://hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/2016%20GDS%20Regulations%20\(NI\)%201993.pdf](https://hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/2016%20GDS%20Regulations%20(NI)%201993.pdf)

Private dentists who operate outside of the GDS will be expected to provide their own emergency arrangements.

Once reinstated, direct patient access to the EDCs will be managed through Central Telephone Triage at DUC. Details of patient calls will be monitored, including the GDP with which they are registered (if any), to assist in tracking of dentists/practices who are using this out of hours service. The clinical leads/LDCs will share this information with the SPPG who will use this information to monitor compliance.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, three EDCs operated at Belfast City Hospital, Craigavon Area Hospital and Dalriada Urgent Care (DUC), with dentists in the West of the province operating local rota arrangements. The EDCs were established and run by the Local Dental Committees (LDCs) in the pertinent regions. The arrangements were that dentists could avail of the EDCs to fulfil their OOH obligations but this was on the condition that those dentists availing of the services of the rota participated on the rota. The SPPG, formerly known as the Health and Social Care Board, acts in a funding and oversight role with the EDCs.

Essentially nothing has changed in this regard as we work to re-establish the EDCs and the purpose of the EDC rota survey is purely to ascertain the number of dentists (and practices) who wish to use the EDC services at weekends and recognised public holidays in the future. A more comprehensive application form and information communication is planned for those who express an interest in joining the rota.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage those who have not already responded to the survey, or who have declined the option to join the EDC rota, to consider the information above and respond positively to the second survey.

I would appreciate if you could reply using the survey monkey link below by 30 June 2022. Please note we require a response from each individual practitioner.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YSHNHG7>

If you are having difficulty opening this survey, please try another browser or mobile phone.

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter.

Yours sincerely



Michael Donaldson
Head of Dental Services