

DENTISTS/DENTAL BODIES CORPORATE  
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE  
GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES

**FREE NHS DENTAL TREATMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

1. As part of the First Minister's 100 Days Commitment, the Scottish Government made a commitment for young people with care experience to be exempted from NHS dental charges. This commitment has now been widened to include all young people between 18 and 25 years of age (inclusive). The intention is for these arrangements to be in place from 24 August 2021.
2. This is a first step towards the wider commitment from Ministers to make NHS dental services free at the point of use for all patients by the end of the current parliament.

**Background**

3. The transition from childhood to young adulthood is often a time when young people lose touch with their dentist, particularly as they may be leaving home for the first time and living independently. The impact of moving away can have a profound effect on diet, with young people more likely to eat unhealthy foods, with a detrimental impact on oral health.
4. Similarly there may be an increase or significant change in oral health damaging behaviours such as smoking and increased alcohol consumption. This group is also more likely to be influenced by the promise of cosmetic improvements to smile and appearance through access to tooth whitening products on-line etc.
5. There has been a disproportionate economic impact on our young people as a result of the pandemic. We have in place a world-leading Childsmile programme, and a general move to providing free NHS dental care for 18 to 25 year old (inclusive) builds on the continuity of dental care throughout a person's life.

**Next Steps/Timing**

6. From 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021, a patient under age 26 will be entitled to free care for any course of NHS treatment commenced on or after the 24<sup>th</sup> August. Should the patient turn 26 during their course of treatment, no charge will be made.
7. **Immediate required practitioner action:** For patients who are 18 to 25 years of age (inclusive) with open courses of treatment on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and who are liable for a patient charge, these treatments should be closed off and submitted by the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021. The completion date should be recorded as the 23 August 2021. Dental practices may wish to do this proactively for those patients that are not due to attend the practice before the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021. A new course of treatment should then be opened with a date from 24 August 2021. This is to ensure that the relevant charges are correctly made.
8. **Where prior approval has been granted:** In circumstances where a case has been closed as above, and the remaining treatment total exceeds the prior approval limit or contains an item that individually requires prior approval (items that are marked in the SDR with an asterisk), practitioners should create a new prior approval with an acceptance date on or after

24<sup>th</sup> August and enter in the observations section a standard message “**Previously approved [on xx/yy/zz]- closed as per PCA(D)(2021)4**” and submit for approval.

9. Where the remaining treatment total is less than the prior approval limit, and does not contain an item that individually requires prior approval, practitioners may complete the outstanding treatment and submit a claim for payment in the normal way.

10. Practitioners should be reminded that in line with routine payment monitoring and verification process, Practitioner Services may undertake a sampling exercise to verify and validate these treatment claims for this cohort of patients; either pre or post-payment to provide all necessary payment assurance.

11. Practitioner Services will update MIDAS and liaise with PMS suppliers to ensure that practice software is updated to reflect this change. The requirements for verification will be based upon a patient’s date of birth and will require no further action by practitioners.

12. At present practices are not required to capture patient signatures because of infection, prevention and control restrictions when seeing patients. This continues to remain the case until further notice, and new guidance is issued.

13. However as a suitable contingency against future changes in the requirement for patient signatures, new GP17PR and GP17PR(O) forms are presently being prepared and will be circulated to practices for both orthodontic and non-orthodontic claims, although this will not occur until after the new exemption has come into force. The new forms replace the existing ‘I am under 18 years of age and in full time education’ declaration with a new ‘I am under 26 years of age’ declaration. Practices should store the new forms in the meantime and recycle existing stock on receipt of the new forms.

14. Patient information will be updated on NHS Inform and Scottish Dental websites, which also contain information about the current pandemic situation and the continuing impact this is having on the sector.

## **Enquiries**

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

## **Scottish Government Primary Care Directorate**

20 August 2021