

To: All NHS primary care dental contract holders

NHS England and NHS Improvement  
Skipton House  
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**5 April 2022**

Dear colleagues,

## **Dental services year end arrangements and 2022/23**

Thank you for the effort you and your teams have put in over the past few months to support NHS patients. This letter outlines arrangements for 2022/23 and sets out a further step we are taking to support practices following the review of performance data which we committed to undertake during Q4.

### **Q4 2021/22 arrangements**

We have reviewed the available data relating to January and February 2022 and there remains a wide variation in the performance of dental practices. Activity levels continue to increase across England; however we are aware that given the impact of Omicron, some practices have found themselves temporarily unable to achieve the 85% threshold needed for income protection.

We are committed to treating contractors fairly. In order to support those who have been impacted most by Omicron we are putting in place a lower threshold for Q4 for dental contractors. This will be set at 75% and will operate in the same way as for H1 and Q3 2021/22, providing support for those delivering between 75% and 85%.

The conditions for income protection continue to apply - all practices delivering NHS services must continue to use 100% of their contracted capacity for NHS work.

For orthodontic services we are not proposing further changes to the previously announced arrangements for Q4.

The revised Q4 arrangements are incorporated within full year end reconciliation guidance, published [here](#).

## **2022/23 arrangements**

Our [letter](#) dated 22 December 2021 advised that, in line with other parts of the NHS, dental services prepare to return to usual contracting arrangements from 1 April 2022. This is in line with expectations set across the NHS where waiting lists are growing and demand has returned to and increased beyond levels seen pre-COVID-19.

We all recognise the backlog of care which has accumulated during the period where dental services have not operated at full capacity. Many contractors are already delivering over 100%, and it is critical for the delivery of patient care that those contractors who have not managed to reach this so far, make progress as quickly as possible to pre-pandemic activity levels.

Recognising there will be additional steps some contractors may need to take to return to full contractual delivery we have agreed an exceptional further period of support for the first quarter of 2022/23. A performance threshold of 95% will apply during April to June (Q1) 2022/23. This will apply to dental contractors only, and where contractors achieve 95% or more the variable cost adjustment will continue to apply to non-delivered activity. We will confirm arrangements from Q2 onwards separately, however we expect to return to usual contractual arrangements in line with the rest of the NHS.

For orthodontic services, which have been able to return to normal levels of activity more rapidly, normal contract volumes will be in place for 2022/23.

The full year income protection set at 90% of contracted activity for practices exiting the prototype programme will continue, as previously communicated.

As always, arrangements will be kept under review subject to further significant COVID-19 developments or elevated IPC requirements.

### **Dental standard operating procedure**

During the pandemic we set out further guidance for practices on how to operate, via the dental standard operating procedure. As the NHS moves in line with the Government's Living with COVID-19 strategy, we will now remove the dental SOP, subject to no further significant changes to IPC guidance.

Practices are reminded that urgent dental care should be provided as part of their core service offer to patients, and that adherence to risk based recall intervals and other NICE guidance is a contractual requirement.

## **Moving forward**

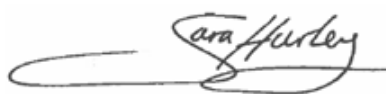
Over the coming period, as signalled in our December communication, we will announce a set of further changes to the current contract resulting from discussions with the profession during 2021 and more recently in consultation with the BDA. Our vision and aim remain the same to improve the care of patients and the provision of dental services to as many people as possible as normal contracting arrangements resume.

We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours faithfully



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Pharmacy, Optometry and the NHS  
Standard Contract  
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**Sara Hurley**  
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