

Smile Together Special Care Dentistry Referral Criteria

Smile Together provides a Special Care Dentistry Referral Service in Cornwall to those patients whose oral care cannot be met through other NHS primary care providers owing to additional needs (medical, physical or behavioural).

Many patients referred for Special Care dental services only require the skills of that service for some or all interceptive procedures. Routine examination, oral health assessment and preventive care can be managed quite satisfactorily in general dental practice and it is expected that the referring practitioner will continue to see their patients for such. All patients accepted to the service should remain registered with their General Dental Practitioner. Most patients will be discharged back to their General Dental Practitioner following completion of the course of treatment, unless their needs identify them as appropriate for long term care. Some patients will be discharged to their General Dental Practitioner after assessment with an appropriate treatment plan.

Where a General Medical Practitioner or medical colleague wishes to refer a patient for special care dental opinion or treatment, patients should be directed to their General Dental Practitioner in the first instance.

The referral criteria enclosed should ensure that we are able to provide appropriate care to those patients with complex treatment needs.

Referral Criteria

Children with:

- Learning disabilities
- Severe mental health problems
- Behavioural/ management problems that affects the provision of dental care
- Severe physical disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum disorders- when impacting on their ability to accept dental care
- Child protection issues or Looked After children
- Medical special needs
- Special dental conditions e.g. amelogenesis imperfecta, dentinogenesis imperfecta
- Treatment required as a result of serious dental trauma if not manageable in general dental practice
- Extensive decay in multiple teeth in more than one quadrant where treatment under local anaesthesia has been unsuccessful

Adults with:

- Medical special needs that would not normally be treated in the general dental services
- Learning disabilities/ challenging behaviour that affects the provision of dental care
- Severe physical disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum disorders- when impacting on their ability to accept dental care
- Brain injuries
- Severe mental health problems (under the care of a mental health practitioner)
- Those who have undergone head and neck radiotherapy

- Severe Dental anxiety/phobia:

Many patients struggle to cope with dental treatment, and most can be managed in dental practice if time is taken to address their fears and anxieties. However, some experience anxiety/phobia to such a degree that they cannot be treated in practice. A service is available to those who meet the following criteria:

1. The patient is 16 years or over
2. The patient has expressed severe anxiety/phobia about routine treatment which has prevented them from accepting routine dental care
3. The patient has scored 19 or above on the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale questionnaire **and has been signed by both patient and dentist**
4. The referring dentist **can summarise the treatments they have attempted**
5. The referring dentist can **provide evidence** on what they have tried to help the patient with their anxiety/phobia
6. The referring dentist can **provide evidence of what dental treatment they have already achieved**
7. The patient is ready to have their dental anxiety/phobia addressed
8. The referring dentist is willing to see the patient again following discharge from the Special Care service

Referrals are not accepted for:

- Nervous or apprehensive adults without a special need
- Children requiring orthodontic extractions
- Adults requesting a general anaesthetic who do not meet the criteria for special needs
- Molar endodontics

Sedation will only be offered when alternate treatments have been tried and the referring dentist can evidence this.

One off referrals for an 'unpleasant' dental procedure need to be referred to the Oral Surgery Department at the Royal Cornwall Hospital.

Copies of radiographs of good clinical diagnostic value needs to be sent with the referral.