

**TO: GDS Dentists**

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

**Strategic Planning and Performance Group**

County Hall  
182 Galgorm Road  
Ballymena  
BT42 1QE

Date: 23rd August 2022

Dear Colleague

**Expressions of Interest for participation in a pilot scheme to improve access to health service dental care for unregistered dental patients, asylum seekers, and refugees who are experiencing an emergency or urgent dental condition.**

The Department of Health (DoH) invites expressions of interest from General Dental Services Practices for participation in a dedicated pilot scheme to improve access to dental care for unregistered patients (including asylum seekers and refugees) who are experiencing an urgent or emergency dental issue.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had as a significant impact on the General Dental Services. Whilst the terms of the Rebuilding Support Scheme requires practitioners to prioritise patients based on their clinical need irrespective of registration status, the impact of reduced capacity and the reduction on the proportion of patients being seen who are unregistered or newly registered has resulted in access to care being vastly reduced for unregistered patients.

The capacity of the recently established Out of Hours (OOH) Emergency Dental Clinics (EDCs) with direct patient access and central triage, is not sufficient to meet the needs of the urgent needs of the unregistered population. Moreover, as the EDCs only operate at weekends and public holidays there is a need for a service for unregistered patients requiring urgent “in-hours” care during the week.

As such the DoH is looking to trial a service as per the attached specification (Appendix 1) to address the above issues and to meet the scheme’s aims and objectives. This pilot service will run for an initial six to ten week period from mid-September 2022 and includes additional remuneration to practices over and above Item of Service payments for each unregistered patient they examine and treat. The pilot will require unregistered patients to be examined and treated in addition to the participating dentist’s normal GDS work.

Practices who are interested in participating in the scheme should complete and return the attached Expression of Interest template (Appendix 4) to [GDS.correspondence@hscni.net](mailto:GDS.correspondence@hscni.net) by no later than 1pm on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022. It is hoped that successful applicants will be selected and notified by the end of that week with a view to a pilot commencement date of Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

If you have any queries in respect of the pilot scheme not covered in the specification please email [GDS.correspondence@hscni.net](mailto:GDS.correspondence@hscni.net)

Yours sincerely



**Michael Donaldson**  
**Head of Dental Services**

cc

**Caroline Lappin**  
**Michael O'Neill**  
**Donncha O'Carolan**

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Pilot Specification

Appendix 2 Sample Claim Form

Appendix 3 HSC R2 Application Form

Appendix 4 Expression of Interest Application Form - for completion and  
return by 1pm on 5th September 2022