Dear Grainne

COMMUNITY DENTISTS TEMPORARY REGIONAL RATE

Thank you for your letter of 24 November on the above matter.

I fully appreciate that the enhanced rate established falls some way short of the initial request from BDA. This in no way diminishes the appreciation and value placed on the contribution your members continue to provide in delivering essential care during the pandemic period.

As you note, the existing contract is silent on any payment mechanism for working beyond contracted hours, and our primary focus has been on addressing this gap to ensure that Community Dentists could be paid for the hours delivered. For that reason, it has been considered a temporary amendment to the provisions of the contract.

I am sure you appreciate, we have been dealing with a number of issues of funding, set against a very tight budgetary position. In dealing with any request, we must identify a range of options for consideration for approval. In this case, the option of time plus a third was identified as being broadly equivalent to that available to consultant medical staff for evening and weekend working. The Direction effects what was approved by the Department of Finance, and, in that approval, it was stipulated that the Department of Health could not make changes to the scope or scale of the measure. Unfortunately this means we could not discuss any changes to what has been introduced.

As we progressed this work for Community Dentists, it became apparent that differing approaches were already in place in various Trusts. While some were asking dentists to provide clinical cover at evenings and weekends in addition to their standard hours, others were affording more flexible working arrangements which reflected time off in lieu during
the working week for hours worked over weekends. This necessitates finding a middle ground which does not adversely impact one Trust over another.

To summarise the arrangements as intended:

- Dentists providing additional cover (i.e. outside of contracted hours) should receive payment at the rate of time plus one third, if this is in addition to contracted hours (i.e. the dentist has already completed their working week), then this should be paid as additional salary;

- A dentist may choose, instead of payment, to take time off in lieu, again at the enhanced rate, a six hour shift may therefore either be rewarded by an eight hour time credit to be taken off at a time convenient to the dentist, or a six hour time credit, plus 2 hours pay at single rate. It should be the choice of the individual whether to seek payment or time off;

- Where an individual has already availed of time off in lieu (TOIL) of working hours, no payment should be made for these hours. The exception to this would be if TOIL has only been taken at single rate – in these circumstances, the individual concerned may either take payment of the balance due, or additional time off to reflect the enhanced rate.

We do remain open to working with BDA to effect a sustained approach to out of hours provision which may reflect a more flexible approach to service.

Yours sincerely

PREETA MILLER
Workforce Policy Director

cc: Richard Pengelly
    Brigitte Worth
    Chris Wilkinson
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