

Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Protocols

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1. Introduction.

1.1 The Shropshire Dental Service has a duty and responsibility to collect all NHS Dental Patient Charges.

1.2 This procedure should be read in conjunction with Finance Procedures R1: Invoicing & Receipts and R4: Credit Control.

2. Patient attends appointment.

2.1 When a patient arrives for their appointment at the dental clinic, they will be asked to complete the following forms:-

1 - Patient Declaration form completed when a patient starts a new course of treatment (PR –Practice Record Form – Patient Declaration). The PR form is signed so the patient can 1. receive NHS treatment and 2. confirms whether the patient pays for their NHS dental treatment or is exempt from charges.

2 - Medical History form, completed for a new course of treatment or every 6 months from the patient's last visit.

2.2 Dental staff will ask if the patient pays for their dental treatment, if the patient does not pay and is entitled to free NHS treatment then proof of Benefit(s) and/or Exemptions will be requested.

2.3 List of benefits/exemptions which entitle Patients to free NHS Dental Treatment.

A patient is entitled to free NHS Dental treatment if, or when the treatment starts, he/she is:

- Aged under 18
- Aged under 19 and receiving full-time education
- Pregnant, or have had a baby in the 12 months before treatment starts and holds a maternity exemption certificate
- An NHS in-patient and the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist
- An NHS Hospital Dental Service outpatient (however, you may have to pay for your dentures or bridges).

A patient is also entitled to free NHS Dental treatment when the charge is due if the patient (or their partner) is getting the following:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit.
- If you are named on a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate, or you are entitled to an NHS tax credit exemption certificate.
- You are name on a valid HC2 certificate.

The following benefits do not entitle patients to free dental treatment:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit Savings Credit

However, the patient can request a HC1 form at the dental clinic and then complete and send off the form for assessment and whether they are entitled to receive help with their dental/health costs.

3. Collection of Charges.

Dental staff have a responsibility to collect all dental charges at the time of the appointment and duty where possible to notify the patient prior to the appointment of any charge due, (unless the patient is entitled to free NHS dental treatment).

Dental staff will advise the patient of the payment methods accepted at the clinic.

The following dental charge banding(s) will be collected as follows;

- **Band 1 Charge or Urgent Treatment (Band 1 charge)**

The dental charge will be collected at the time of the appointment and where possible before the patient is seen by the Dentist.

- **Band 2 Charge**

The dental charge will be collected on the patient's 1st Appointment and where possible before the patient is seen by the dentist.

If an alternative payment plan to the above is required the patient will need to speak to the Dental receptionist and make payment arrangements.

- **Band 3 Charge**

The dental charge will be collected at the time of the appointment and where possible before the patient is seen by the dentist. The service encourages the collection of Band 3 charges at the first appointment.

However, if an alternative payment plan to the above is required the patient will need to speak to the Dental receptionist and make payment arrangements and note on the patient account.

The following also applies:

3.1 If a patient has passed away details of their account will be sent to the Clinical Director of the Dental Service to review/authorise as a "waiver of charges".

4. Standard account letter.

4.1 If a patient has not paid for the dental treatment (are not exempt) at the time of their appointment then a standard account letter is issued and if no payment has been made then the account will be referred to the Finance department to start recovery action for all accounts £20.00 and over.
(**Appendix 1** – Standard Account Letter – SL/1).

5. Collection process.

5.1 Dental Reception will produce a list of outstanding accounts for the previous month from the dental patient system, usually carried out on 10th of each month or nearest working day.

5.2 Details of the outstanding accounts will be copied to the outstanding account ledger and checked.

6. Outstanding Account Passed to Finance.

6.1 On 25th of each month or nearest working day, Dental Reception will forward the completed outstanding account ledger to the Dental Finance Administrator (DFA) who will check the spreadsheet and then raise invoice requests to Finance to start recovery action.

When the account is transferred to the Finance Department, the DFA will enter the “date of transfer” and “Passed to Finance” code on to the patient’s account.

- a) Monthly report for all paid accounts will be produced by the Finance Department and sent to the DFA to update.
- b) If a payment is made at one of the Dental clinics, staff will notify the DFA who will up date the system and notify Finance.

6.2 Important Notice; if a patient has not paid for their dental treatment then NO further treatment will be offered until the account is paid or suitable arrangements have been made to pay the account. Dental Reception will note on the patient’s account “not to be seen until payment is made”.

**For further information on Shropshire Community NHS Trust services
Please go to the following web site**

<http://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk>

APPENDIX 1

[Date]

[Address]

NHS No:

Re: NHS Patient Charges

Dear []

You recently attended an appointment and received dental treatment at the above dental clinic. The Dental Charge was due at the time of the appointment.

The Amount Due is £ []

Please make your payment immediately, failure to do so will result in the dental service not being able to offer you any further dental treatment and your account may be transferred to the Finance Department to start recovery action.

If you are exempt from paying NHS dental charges then please contact and advise the Dental receptionist at the above clinic.

To make your payment you can visit the clinic and pay at reception or you can send a cheque with the attached payment slip to the above address. If you have already made this payment then please accept our apologies and disregard/recycle this letter.

Yours sincerely

Dental Reception.

Please make all cheques payable to **'Shropshire Community NHS Trust'** and send to the above address

Please find enclosed payment of: £

Patient Name:

Patient Ref:

Signed:

Thank you