

# Coronavirus advice for associates: what we know so far

## BDA Advisory Services

### Arrangements

The NHS has said that it will continue to pay NHS contract payments to NHS practices in England and Wales, and to NHS dentists in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There are a number of conditions that apply to the continued contract payments. Those conditions include:

- That practices do not seek other assistance which would be considered duplicate
- All available staff may be required to be redeployed.

### England and Wales

Neither England nor Wales will be paying 100% of the contract payments. In England, there will be an agreed and fair reduction for any variable costs associated with service delivery (e.g. in recognition of reduced consumable costs and lab bills). In Wales, the government will pay 80% of the NHS contract value.

The rules of the scheme are that practice should continue to pay associates at previous levels.

### Northern Ireland

The Department of Health is making payments totalling 80% of a dentist's average monthly Item of Service income (including the contributions patients would have made) will be paid each month with no change to any health Service allowance or Continuing Care or Capitation Payments. Patient registration has been extended by three months. In return, dentists and other staff are asked to assist the wider Health Service.

Dentists are able to access wider government support in direct proportion to their percentage Health Service/Private split. Duplication of support is not permitted.

### Scotland

The Scottish Government has advised dentists/Dental Body Corporates (DBC's) that they will receive 80% of their average monthly item of service income (including the contributions patients would have made). There will be no changes to Continuing Care or Capitation Payments and they will protect NHS commitment status. In return, dentists and other staff are asked to assist the wider NHS.

Like in Northern Ireland, dentists/DBC's are able to access wider government support in direct proportion to their percentage NHS/Private split, and duplication of support is not permitted.

### Redeployment

Some associates will not volunteer for wider NHS duties or be available to help at the practice. Some of those will have good reason to self-isolate. For others, it will be a question of personal choice. It is quite possible that, if people choose not to help out, the NHS will look to recover sums paid to practices during this time. If practices are struggling to meet their commitment to demonstrate support for NHS care, one option for practices is therefore to withhold some money due to associates under the terms of the NHS help until it is clear whether there will be any such clawback.

If the practice owner is making any such withholding, be aware of expectations they have regarding the decision and communicating it to you. They should:

- Be clear about what their overall obligation is as a practice to support the NHS (for example if the practice derives only 50% of its income from the NHS, it is not obliged to make all staff available)
- Discuss with you why they are considering withholding money
- Listen carefully to your personal circumstances and arguments against withholding, and
- Give you a written statement showing what money is being withheld, why it's being withheld, and stating that the money will be paid to you promptly once it became clear the NHS will not be clawing back any contract payments to the practice because you did not redeploy.

### Pay dispute resolution service

Corporate bodies and practice owners with NHS contracts will continue to be paid assuming certain conditions are met. One of those is that they are obliged to pass on income due to associates.

Practices are also required to support the wider NHS pandemic effort, and this is likely to involve associates if NHS money is to be passed on. Of course, the expectation is that the overwhelming majority of corporates and practice owners will pay associates appropriately, but if this is not the situation, the pay dispute resolution service can help.

The service's primary aim is to ensure that any issues are resolved in a fair and satisfactory way for everyone involved and so that effective working relationships are maintained.

For further information and to access to the BDA's continued live updates, visit <https://bda.org/advice/Coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>. ♦

<https://doi.org/>

