

Make sure you apply for EU Settled Status

Members who are EU/EEA citizens and do not hold British nationality are reminded that they need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to confirm their status in the UK in the future. If you have members of staff who are nationals of an EU/EEA country, you should encourage them to apply.

The Brexit Transition Period ends on 31 December 2020. Any EU/EEA citizens resident in the UK at this time need to apply to the scheme to retain their existing rights. Individuals who have been here for five years or more are eligible for 'settled status', those who have been here less than five years for 'pre-settled status', with a view to getting 'settled status' after five years.

Individuals can apply until 30 June 2021 but we advise that, where possible, applications should be made sooner rather than later. EU nationals who arrive in the UK after 31 December 2020 to work are not eligible for the scheme and will be subject to visa requirements.

Information on the settlement scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>.



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Dentists slam wrongheaded NHS charge hike in middle of pandemic

The British Dental Association has slammed the latest inflation-busting 5% increase in NHS dental charges in England, accusing government of erecting further barriers to care when services remain so limited and focused on dealing with an unprecedented backlog.

The hike means:

- A routine check-up will increase by £1.10 from £22.70 to £23.80
- Treatments such as root canals or extractions will rise by £3.10 from £62.10 to £65.20
- More complex procedures like crowns, dentures and bridges rise by £13.50 from £269.30 to £282.80.

The fee increase, originally slated for 1 April, postponed by the first wave of the pandemic, will now take effect from 14 December 2020.

The BDA estimates over 19 million appointments have been delayed since lockdown. It has long warned that costs are a major barrier to patients, even among those who are entitled to free care. Analysis of data from the government's GP Survey indicates over 700,000 people had avoided seeking NHS treatment for reason of cost. The Adult Oral Health Survey found that for 26% of the public cost had influenced the type of dental treatment they had opted to have and 19% had delayed dental treatment due to cost.

Dentist leaders have accused Ministers of using inflation-busting increases to try and plug the hole in the service's shrinking budget. Since lockdown the Treasury has lost nearly £400 million from the charges that are increasingly relied upon to fund

services in England, with around £50m in revenues now being lost per month. The BDA has already called on government to provide capital funding for ventilation equipment that could enable practices to massively expand access, by reducing the fallow time dentists are mandated to keep between treatments, which remains the main barrier to capacity. The BDA estimate any investment would pay for itself by helping restore patient numbers closer to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Dentistry is the only part of the NHS operating on a lower budget than it received in 2010, with no effort made to keep pace with the cost of living or population growth. Prior to the pandemic real terms net government contributions have fallen by over £650 million since 2010, while charge levels have increased by over 40% to plug the gap. In Wales fees have increased by around just 13% in the same period.

Dave Cottam, Chair of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee said: 'Slapping higher charges on patients struggling to secure care in the middle of a pandemic is utterly wrongheaded. This inflation-busting hike won't put an extra penny into a service in crisis or help millions currently unable to get an appointment.'

'We've appealed to government for support to bring down the backlogs. Sadly, this short-sighted approach will only give lower income, higher risk patients more reasons not to attend.'

'Dentists are health professionals not tax collectors. These charges have ceased to be a 'contribution' and are now simply a substitute for decent state investment.'

Updated infection prevention and control guidance published

Public Health England has published COVID-19: infection prevention and control dental appendix, which provides updated guidance for dental settings throughout the UK on how to deliver treatment safely during the pandemic.¹

The guidance is published jointly by Public Health England and the national public health

agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and sets out how dental services should provide treatment for patients on low, medium and high risk COVID-19 pathways. It includes recommendations around aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs), personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilation requirements and post-AGP downtime.

Reference

1. Public Health England. COVID-19: infection prevention and control dental appendix. 20 October 2020. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928034/COVID-19_infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_Dental_appendix.pdf (Accessed November 2020).