

Article 14

In the spotlight: Guidance on the new patient metric for 2023/24

A [contract variation letter](#) was issued to NHS dental providers on 21 December 2022 by Wales Government. This letter was a confirmation of the 2023/24 contract reform volume metrics for treating new patients.

In this guide, we will provide guidance on the 2023/24 contract variation metric change.

Contract variation metric change for new patients

To be entitled to the full payment for this metric (25% of the contract's maximum value), the contractor must meet the expectation around treating new patients under the contract.

A new patient is:

“any patient for whom a band 1, 2 or 3 claim has not been scheduled, under the same contract, in the four financial years preceding the financial year in which the current claim is submitted.”

Where this initial treatment is provided as urgent care, the contractor may submit [an urgent claim](#) and the patient will be listed as an urgent new patient (UNP). This helps mitigate the risk that new patients choose not to complete a banded course of treatment or fail to return for planned care.

Contract variation metric change for non-urgent new patients

In line with the new 2023/24 patient metric, a patient will be counted as a non-urgent new patient (NUNP) under the contract if:

- a band 1, 2 or 3 claim has not been scheduled under the same contract, in the four financial years preceding the financial year in which the current claim is submitted.

- a band 1, 2 or 3 claim is submitted indicating that an [ACORN assessment](#) was completed.

A patient may attend a contract for urgent care and be counted as an UNP and later, return for a banded claim submission with an ACORN assessment completed and count as a NUNP.

As a patient may be counted as both a UNP and a NUNP, the totals relating to each category are not mutually exclusive. Contractors should not consider that the totals of both categories represent the total number of unique new patients seen under the contract.

As detailed in the contract variation letter, dental practices will be able to agree with health boards that the health boards will refer new patients (and/or urgent patients) to the practice. In these circumstances, if the health board cannot provide the number of new (or urgent) patients required, this will be considered at year-end reconciliation.

Dental practices can choose to accept more new patients instead of urgent appointments, but they cannot see more new urgent patients in lieu of accepting new patients.