

Patient exemption checking

A guide for dental teams in England

Contents

Purpose.....	2
Background.....	2
How to check a patient's exemption status.....	3
If the patient does not provide evidence.....	3
If the patient is unsure of their entitlement.....	3
Penalty Charge Notices.....	4
Who is entitled?.....	5
NHS Low Income Scheme.....	6
Help and support.....	7

Purpose

This guide for dental team members aims to improve your understanding of the rules as to if a patient is entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment.

Background

Not all benefits entitle people to free prescriptions and free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment. The rules around entitlement to free or reduced cost dental treatment can be difficult for some patients to understand. It is the patient's responsibility to correctly claim for free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment to avoid a potential penalty charge. Dental teams have a responsibility to accurately record and report the patient's declaration of entitlement to help with health costs.

If a patient incorrectly claims free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment in England and they subsequently aren't able to prove their exemption, they could face a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) of up to £100, as well as the cost of the original prescription or treatment. Receiving a PCN incorrectly can cause inconvenience and distress for a patient.

How to check a patient's exemption status

A patient's exemption status applies and must be valid on the date that the course of treatment is started. Any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment you must ask them to provide evidence.

When a patient attends a dental practice for NHS dental treatment:

- ask them to complete and sign a declaration form (FP17PR) before any treatment begins
- if the patient is entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment, ask them to complete the 'Claim for free or reduced cost NHS dental services' section of the form
- ask to see evidence of their eligibility
- if they show a valid exemption certificate, note this on your practice records along with the expiry date of the certificate

If the patient does not provide evidence

If the patient does not provide evidence of their entitlement to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment:

- **do not refuse treatment**
- put an X against the 'No' option in the 'Evidence of exemption or remission seen' box on the FP17PR form and Dental Activity claim
- advise the patient that NHS checks are routinely undertaken to verify that people are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment to prevent and detect fraud or error
- ask the patient to sign the declaration on the FP17PR form

If the patient is unsure of their entitlement

If the patient is unsure whether they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental services:

- ask them to pay for their dental treatment
- give them an HC5(D) refund form and explain they can claim a refund within three months
- explain that they can find out if they're entitled to free NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment and help with other NHS costs using the online eligibility checker at: www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick
- tell them about exemption certificates; why they are required and how to apply

If a patient later finds out they are entitled to receive free or reduced cost NHS dental services, they can claim a refund within three months of the date they paid for the treatment. To claim a refund the patient must submit:

- a completed HC5(D) form
- the receipt for the dental treatment

For more information about patient refunds, visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/help-nhs-dental-costs

Penalty Charge Notices

It is the patient's responsibility to make sure they claim correctly if they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment. This is the case regardless of whether the FP17PR form is completed by:

- the patient
- someone on the patient's behalf
- dental practice staff

At the NHSBSA, we're responsible for checking claims for free and reduced cost NHS dental treatment and recovering charges from patients who incorrectly claim they do not have to pay.

NHS Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are issued in accordance with the [National Health Service \(Penalty Charge\) Regulations 1999](#).

If a patient is sent a PCN, they'll be asked to pay the original NHS dental treatment charges, and an additional penalty charge. The penalty charge is five times the original amount owed, up to a maximum of £100.

For more information, visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-penalty-charges

To ensure that patients correctly claim for exemptions you can help them by displaying information including posters, guidance booklets and counter cards. You can download resources from our website: www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick

Who is entitled?

A patient is entitled to free NHS dental treatment if they:

Criteria	Acceptable evidence
Are under 18 years of age	N/A
Are 18 years of age and in full time education	N/A. However, they must put the name of their college or university on the FP17PR.
Are pregnant	An NHS maternity exemption certificate. The date the baby is due should also be written on the FP17PR. A maternity certificate (MAT B1).
Have had a baby within the last 12 months	Baby's birth certificate. The baby's date of birth should also be written on the FP17PR.
Are currently in prison or a young offender's institution	N/A

A patient is entitled to free NHS dental treatment if the individual is the receiving claimant or is included in an award (as a partner, or dependant person under 20) of:

Criteria	Acceptable evidence
Income Support (incapacity benefit and Disability Living allowance does not qualify)	A current letter for the relevant criteria which states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of person receiving benefit • date of birth • National Insurance number
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (contribution based does not qualify)	
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (contribution-related does not qualify)	
Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (Savings credit only does not qualify)	
Universal Credit (UC) and meets the qualifying criteria (Claiming UC doesn't automatically entitle people to free or reduced cost dental treatment. Visit	

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/UC for qualifying criteria).

A patient is entitled to free NHS dental treatment if they are named on one of the following certificates:

Criteria	Acceptable evidence
HC2 certificate	A current certificate that states the name of the patient and certificate number.
NHS Tax Credit exemption certificate and meet the qualifying criteria. (Tax credits don't automatically entitle people to free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment. To check the qualifying criteria, visit www.nhs.uk/healthcosts).	Exemption card that states name of patient or award notice (letter).

A patient is entitled to reduced cost NHS dental treatment if they are named on the following certificate:

Criteria	Acceptable evidence
HC3 certificate	Certificate must be current and display: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• patient's name• certificate number• maximum amount patient is required to pay for a course of NHS dental treatment

NHS Low Income Scheme

The NHS Low Income Scheme provides support for patients who need help with paying for NHS dental treatment. A patient can find out if they qualify for the scheme by completing an HC1 form.

However, the patient should continue to pay for any treatment carried out until any exemptions are confirmed. If a patient later finds out they are entitled to receive free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment, they can claim a refund within three months of the date they paid for the treatment.

For more information about the NHS Low Income Scheme and to apply, visit:
www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme.

Help and support

For more information, visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/help-nhs-dental-costs or contact us at:

- 0300 330 1343
- nhsbsa.dentalservices@nhsbsa.nhs.uk

Patients can find out if they're entitled to free NHS dental treatment and help with other NHS costs using the online eligibility checker:
www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick.