POLICY NOTE

THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (TRAVELLING EXPENSES AND REMISSION OF CHARGES) (SCOTLAND) (NO. 2) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2021

SSI 2021/241

The above instrument was made in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 75A and 105(7) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and all other powers enabling them to do so. The instrument is subject to negative procedure.

The purpose of this instrument is to make amendments to the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 2003 that will enable those aged 18 to 25 inclusive to access NHS dental care with no patient charge.

Policy Objectives
To provide free at the point of use NHS dental care for young people, aged 18 to 25 inclusive:

- As people move from child dental service to young adulthood, this is often a time when this cohort loses touch with their dentist, particularly as they may be leaving home for the first time and living independently;
- The impact of moving away can have a profound effect on diet, with young people more likely to eat unhealthy foods, with a detrimental impact on oral health;
- Similarly there may be an increase or significant change in oral health damaging behaviours such as smoking and increased alcohol consumption;
- This group is also more likely to be impacted by cosmetic improvements to smile and appearance and access tooth whitening products on-line etc.;
- In summary we have a world-leading Childsmile Programme, and a general move to providing free NHS dental care for 18-25 years of age builds on the continuity of dental care throughout a person's lifetime.

At present patients pay 80% of the cost of their NHS dental treatment up to a maximum of £384 per course of treatment, unless they belong to one of the groups entitled to free NHS dental treatment or qualify for help with health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme.

The policy is an extension of the Programme for Government (2019/20) commitment to provide free at the point of use for care experienced young people. Due to the circumstances of the pandemic, it has not been possible to take forward this commitment and Ministers are now minded to widen this to include all adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

The provisions will come into force on 24 August 2021.

Consultation
The Government made a key election pledge to provide free at the point of use NHS dental care to all adults in Scotland during the Parliamentary period.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care met with BDA Scotland on 8 June 2021.

Impact Assessments
We have undertaken a Business Regulatory Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (pre-screen).

The Business Regulatory Impact Assessment shows the costs for Scottish Government are likely to be £7-£10 million annually, increasing as demand and operating costs increase. Dental practices are likely to face increased demand, but will make cost savings on administration.

The Equality Impact Assessment shows that the amending regulations should have a positive impact on the oral health of young people.

The Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment shows the policy should reduce health inequalities across the whole cohort of young people.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment pre-screen suggests there are likely to be no or minimal environmental effects; the Assessment is currently with the Consultation Authorities.

We have also given consideration to a Data Protection Impact Assessment, a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment, and an Island Community Impact Assessment, which were considered to be unnecessary for these amending regulations.

Scottish Government
Dentistry and Optometry Division

June 2021