DNA Policy for NHS Borders managed Dental Services

1. Patients shall be informed when completing a needs assessment form and by publicity notices at reception that due to continuing demand on the service, failure to keep appointments may result in deregistration and taken off the waiting list. This will ensure that those who do keep appointments are not disadvantaged in having to wait longer due to others wasting clinic time. All patients will be given a copy of the latest leaflet ‘Registering with a dentist for NHS treatment’ under the production by the Scottish Government Health Directorates (SGHD). This emphasises patient responsibility and the disadvantage of not attending regularly or missing an appointment.

2. Patients who fail to keep the first appointment offered after coming to the top of the waiting list will not be offered a further appointment. If a patient who fails to keep their first appointment requests to be seen again they will be informed that they have been placed at the bottom of the waiting list and will have to wait their turn again. Exceptions will be bereavement on serious illness. Any other reason must be agreed by a senior dentist.

3. Patients who fail a recall appointment for routine recall examination will be considered for deregistration. As these patients are registered the dentist must agree this action with the dental practice manager and the senior dentist and the form GP200 used if appropriate.

4. Exceptions will be children and those with adverse medical or special needs.

   Every effort will be made by dental staff to identify reasons in those groups graded category 1, 2 and 3 and to prevent recurrence. Children who fail should be followed up by the Childsmile team. A letter should be sent after a failed appointment explaining that the appointment has been failed and the follow up arrangements. The Social Work department may need to be involved in serious cases where there is a concern of neglect.

5. For patients undergoing a course of treatment

   There will not be an arbitrary discontinuation of treatment appointment. Patients who fail appointments without valid reason such as bereavement or serious illness will be fitted in when an appointment arises. This can include being called at short notice for cancellation slots or at appointment times that are less popular. The patient will be expected to arrange a suitable appointment to complete any outstanding care and treatment within one month of a failed appointment. If they have not done so, notification will be sent of the outstanding treatment and amount owing at the commencement of week 5 following a missed appointment. The patient will be asked to confirm in writing if they wish to remain registered or not and if they wish to complete the course of treatment.

6. Continuous lifetime registration is in force from April 2010.
Advice from SGHD is that salaried dentists like independent dentists can de-register a patient at any time provided they give the patient the required 3 months notice of the ending of the arrangement. The dentist should use his/her best endeavours to complete any outstanding care and treatment before the arrangement ends but it may not be possible to do this, e.g. if the patient fails to attend or if there is no appointment available before the end of the 3 months – paragraph 11 of schedule 1 to the NHS (General Dental Services) (Scotland) Regulations 1996 refers.

It is known from national surveys that attitudes to regular dental attendance vary. Detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this policy, however it should be noted that in the most recent UK Adult Dental Health Survey in 1998 that one third of those surveyed in Scotland only visited a dentist when in trouble. Discussion of patient’s motivation both at the initial visit and after a failed appointment should be undertaken to ensure that the service offered matches the patient’s expectations. (Reference: Office for National Statistics, Adult Dental Health Survey – Oral Health in the United Kingdom 1998. pp 229-287)

A GP200 form must be used to deregister patients who fail without good reason. The patient should be notified of the reason, the treatment still required and how to obtain emergency care and the procedure for appeal. As the dentist carries professional duty of care the dentist must decide if a patient is to be deregistered and must complete and sign form GP200.

6 In cases where a dentist considers that deregistration using GP200 is the most appropriate course of action it is recommended this is discussed with the practice manager and the senior dentist. If deregistration is agreed then a GP200 is completed and a full note made in the patients record of the reason. The patient must be informed of the reason and reasonable effort made to complete outstanding treatment within 3 months.

7. The practice manager will produce a quarterly report to the service manager listing numbers and reasons for deregistration. The patient must be informed of the reason and reasonable effort made to complete outstanding treatment within 3 months.

8. All persons whether registered or not are entitled to emergency care via the usual process.

9. Reminders must be given to all unless specifically refused. Text will be used where possible otherwise telephone or post. In addition those patients who have been shown to be unreliable should be given afternoon appointments and should be called in the morning of the appointment day to confirm attendance. If they are unable to attend the appointment they should be given to another able to attend at short notice.

10. Patients will be asked at each visit by reception if their address or phone number has changed and reminded that it is their responsibility to inform the clinic of their change of address or circumstances. Notices will be displayed to reinforce this message.