

**From the Acting Chief Dental Officer
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BY EMAIL

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Date: 10 September 2020

Dear Colleague

Updated Northern Ireland Operational Guidance

I'm writing to make you aware of some amendments to the Northern Ireland Covid-19 dental Operational Guidance document. These amendments have been made in consultation with the GDS Re-establishment Group which was previously involved in the production of the 5 June 2020 Operational Guidance and subsequent updates. The GDS Re-establishment Group is led by HSCB and has representation from the Trusts, DoH and BDA.

It was felt that practitioners may find an updated version of the guidance useful following the recent publication of several reports relating to AGPs in dental practice. In addition, the Board has recently received a number of queries in relation to the fallow time following AGPs. Consequently, section 5.6.1 of the Operational Guidance has been reworded to provide clarification to practitioners and to assist in the implementation of reduced fallow times where adequate ventilation is present.

In summary, the position in Northern Ireland remains that in a neutral pressure room with six air changes per hour (ACH) the fallow period is 60 minutes. However, the fallow period may be reduced to a minimum of 20 minutes where there are 10 or more ACH. Please note the fallow period commences once the AGP has ceased. The updated guidance illustrates how practices may calculate the ACH value for each surgery. A written record should be kept of the ACH value for each surgery. Practices do not need to provide external validation of the performance of their mechanical ventilation equipment. It is sufficient to use the performance figures stated in the manufacturer's manual or specification.

Amendments to the Operational Guidance have also been made to maintain consistency with the UK Infection Prevention and Control guidance which was updated on 20 August 2020. This guidance outlines a risk stratification approach to patients during the remobilisation of health and care services with patients categorised into low, medium or high risk groups. The vast majority of primary care dental patients will fall into the medium risk category however, some may fall under

the low risk category. Level 2 PPE and fallow times are not required for patients in the low risk category. Further information is contained in the guidance document.

Minor updates have also been incorporated into the guidance following the issuing of letters from the Chief Medical Officer and the amendment of NI legislation including the extension of self-isolation from 7 days to 10 days and the introduction of quarantining following international travel.

The updated guidance is attached with all changes from the previous version highlighted. This will be shared with the RQIA and will be used as part of the 2020/21 annual inspection process.

The HSCB would like to thank the GDS Re-establishment group for their ongoing work in preparing this update to the Operational Guidance. It is expected that a substantial update to the Operational Guidance will be issued following the completion of the SDCEP Rapid Review of AGPs in Dentistry due to be published in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely



Michael Donaldson
Acting Chief Dental Officer