

Private Dental Plans CODE OF PRACTICE

General

In offering patients the option of receiving their dental care under alternative payment methods, including, but not limited to, a dental plan, the practice undertakes to provide patients with adequate information about the choices available, work with clear and fair contracts, ensure they understand the payment procedures for each option and, where appropriate, any on-going costs or exclusions, and have in place a system for dealing with complaints and feedback.

The practice should at all times demonstrate a high degree of honesty and diligence in accordance with good professional practice and observe the General Dental Council's standards and associated guidance by:

- Putting patient's interests first and acting to protect them.
- Respecting their dignity and providing them with choices.
- Protecting the confidentiality of their information.
- Co-operating with other members of the dental team and other healthcare colleagues in the interests of patients.
- Maintaining your professional knowledge and competence.
- Being trustworthy.

Adequate Information

- All information about payment methods is presented to the patient in a way that they can understand.
- Patients are given sufficient information about the plan and the alternative options available, such as treatment on a fee-per-item basis, deferred payment methods and others as applicable to allow them to make an informed choice.
- Information about the plan is provided in a timely way – for example, at the patient's first appointment with the practice or at a routine dental examination. Where information about the plan is on display in the practice, it includes the name and contact details of individual(s) who can provide more information or answer any questions the patient might have.
- The terms and conditions relating to the plan are provided and explained to the patient. The patient has a clear understanding of what is included and excluded.
- No member of the dental team makes a promise or representation or gives warranties or guarantees that are not in line with the terms of the plan.
- The patient is given adequate time (away from the surgery, if required) to consider their options and to ask questions. The practice respects that the time required will vary from patient to patient.
- The patient's express consent is obtained before progressing with membership of the plan.
- Where the option of a fee-per-item arrangement is offered, an indicative price list is available.

Clear and Fair Contracts

- The individual needs of the patient are assessed and, in consultation with the patient, a treatment plan is developed and the terms on which care is provided are agreed. Continuation of treatment in progress is not conditional upon registration under the plan.
- Patients are not required to sign up to the plan as a pre-condition of receiving treatment or a course of treatment.
- Patients are not subject to undue influence to consider membership of the plan through, for example, disproportionate financial incentives or the continuation of treatment.
- Where a practice restricts its funding method to a dental plan, new patients are made aware of this before the start of any care or treatment.
- Patients are advised of any changes to the terms of their plan and are given the opportunity to ask questions and to reconsider their membership of the plan.
- Patients who agree to membership of the plan have a without liability cooling-off period of at least 14 days (or a statutory or regulatory minimum, if longer), which is set out in writing.
- Patients receive clear information about how to cancel their membership of the plan and the notice periods that apply, which are sufficient to allow completion of any outstanding treatment.

Protecting Payments

- In explaining payment alternatives to patients, members of the dental team will put the interests of the patient before personal opinion or the financial interests of the dental practice.
- Where the dentist does not offer the option of treatment on a fee-per-item basis in addition to the plan, the patient is given advice on how to find an alternative dentist within a reasonable travel time who offers dentistry under other funding methods.

Complaints

- The practice has a written procedure for dealing with complaints and feedback, which is advertised and available to patients and should ensure that there is a clear route for patients to take up administrative issues or complaints with the provider of the plan.
- The complaints procedure complies with professional requirements and the requirements of the plan.
- All complaints and feedback are recorded and monitored.

