

# NHS General Dental Services contract reform

What the new NHS General Dental Services contract means for patients in Wales

**July 2026**



# The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people.

Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this document can be found on the Senedd's website:  
[research.senedd.wales](https://research.senedd.wales)

Copies of this document can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

**Welsh Parliament**  
**Tŷ Hywel**  
**Cardiff Bay**  
**CF99 1SN**

X: [@SeneddResearch](https://twitter.com/SeneddResearch)  
Senedd Research: [research.senedd.wales](https://research.senedd.wales)  
Subscription: [Newsletter](#)

© **Senedd Commission Copyright 2026**

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading or derogatory context. The material must be acknowledged as copyright of the Senedd Commission and the title of the document specified.

# NHS General Dental Services contract reform

What the new NHS General Dental Services contract means for patients in Wales

**July 2026**

---

**Author:**

Rebekah James

The previous Welsh Government introduced the **National Health Service (General Dental Services Contracts and Patient Charges) (Wales) Regulations 2026** that brought into force a reformed NHS General Dental Services contract from 1 April 2026.

This briefing sets out what patients can expect as a result of the new contract.





# Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. New NHS General Dental Services contract for Wales .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Access to NHS dental services.....	8
Mandatory services.....	8
Information for patients.....	9
NHS dental charges in Wales.....	10
Urgent care package .....	10
New patient assessment.....	11
Recall appointments.....	11
Simple restorative care package:.....	11
Extensive restorative care package.....	11
Periodontal care package: .....	12
Denture care package: .....	12
Stabilisation care package:.....	12
Anterior root canal care package:.....	12
Posterior root canal care package:.....	12
Crown, bridge, inlay, onlay and veneer care package:.....	13
Miscellaneous care package:.....	13



# 1. Introduction

The **National Health Service (General Dental Services Contracts and Patient Charges) (Wales) Regulations 2026** (the Regulations) were introduced by the previous Welsh Government and aim to enhance patient care through **“improving access, prevention, quality, and contract monitoring”**.

The new NHS General Dental Services contract **emphasises prevention, self-care** and care based on a patient’s **clinical need and risk**. It aims to **prioritise people with higher clinical needs**. It also introduces a new charging and treatment model, replacing the previous three-band system with a **‘care package’ model**.

This briefing sets out what the Regulations introduce for NHS dental patients in Wales.

## 2. New NHS General Dental Services contract for Wales

### Access to NHS dental services

The [Explanatory Memorandum to the Regulations](#) states that the new contract includes the following in relation to accessing NHS dental services:

- **New patients requiring urgent care** must be provided with an appointment **within 72 hours** through the local health board's urgent care programme or rota arrangement.
- A **Dental Access Portal** is available, which is a centralised online dental appointment allocation system administered by Digital Health and Care Wales. Through the portal, **new patients can register for NHS dental services** and be allocated to practices for new patient assessments.
- Patients who have received a course of treatment within the previous 36 months (including recall appointments) are considered **'active patients'** and remain with their dental practice for ongoing care. Recall appointment is a term for a 'check-up'.
- Patients who fail to attend appointments or who have not attended for 36 months may be **de-listed** (no longer considered an active patient) and **returned to the Dental Access Portal**, freeing up capacity for other patients who require care.

### Mandatory services

Dental practitioners that have a contract with the local health board are known as 'dental contractors'. [Dental contractors](#) hold an annual contract with their local health board and the funding received is based on an annual contract value. [The Explanatory Memorandum to the Regulations](#) states that as part of the annual contract, dental contractors are required to provide **mandatory services** which are segmented into the categories set out in the following table:

<p><b><u>Urgent access for new patients</u></b> (7% of contract value)</p>	<p>Providing urgent care within 72 hours through a local health board programme or rota arrangement.</p>
<p><b><u>Recall appointments</u></b> (3% of contract value)</p>	<p>For patients requiring recall appointments between 18 and 24 months since the most recent appointment, based on risk assessment in accordance with NICE guidance.</p>
<p><b><u>New patient assessments</u></b> (10% of contract value)</p>	<p>Allocated through the Dental Access Portal.</p>
<p><b><u>Care packages</u></b> (70% of contract value)</p>	<p>Providing needs-based treatment through defined bundles of dental services based on assessed clinical need and risk.</p>
<p><b><u>Prevention services</u></b> (5% of contract value)</p>	<p>Embedding preventative care and self-care support.</p>
<p><b><u>National Priorities</u></b> (5% of contract value)</p>	<p>Addressing priorities set by Welsh Ministers through directions.</p>
<p>Urgent care for active patients</p>	<p>Provided in addition to the above proportions as required.</p>

## Information for patients

**Dental contractors are required** to provide information to patients and comply with **Welsh language duties**. **Contractors must display** prominently in practice premises and on their website (if they have one) information including NHS charges; its commitment to quality assurance; the procedure for notifying concerns; and how to access the practice’s privacy policy.

The **Explanatory Memorandum to the Regulations** states that dental contractors are also expected to have a **patient information leaflet** available which includes details of the practice, practitioners, services available, surgery hours, how to access urgent care, NHS 111 Wales contact details, the Dental Access Portal web address, patient rights and responsibilities, and the arrangements for de-listing.

When a patient has been assessed and a care package is required with delivery over more than one appointment, the contractor must give the patient a **treatment plan**. The **Explanatory Memorandum to the Regulations** provides more detail on what the treatment plan should include.

### NHS dental charges in Wales

The Regulations change the way patient charges are calculated, moving away from the previous three separate bands, to a model based on care packages.

**The amount a patient pays** for NHS dental treatment depends on the type of care provided. A patient will usually pay **one charge per course of treatment** or care package, even if the treatment takes place over more than one appointment.

There is a **maximum total charge of £384 for a course of treatment** (or multiple courses delivered at the same time).

Some treatments may also involve **separate laboratory charges that are charged directly to the patient**, for example for crowns, bridges or dentures. Previously, the costs of clinical care and laboratory fees were combined, but this has now been split into two separate payments. The change is intended to make costs more transparent and predictable.

Details of **which patients are exempt from NHS dental charges** are provided on the Welsh Government website.

Dental practitioners should display a poster about NHS charges in their waiting room and patients are encouraged to ask how much their individual treatment plan will cost.

The **Welsh Government website** provides the following information on the **patient charges** that are in place for NHS dental treatment:

#### Urgent care package

---

- **£37.50**
- Urgent dental care includes an oral health assessment and treatment to relieve pain or prevent significant worsening of the presenting issue.

- Where appropriate, urgent care should provide a long-term solution and may include permanent treatment, such as restorations, with a patient's consent. A patient may be referred onwards if further care is needed.

### **New patient assessment**

---

- **£27.21**
- A new patient assessment includes a full clinical and global health assessment, including soft tissue examination and X-rays where appropriate. It also includes preventative care – further details are provided on the [Welsh Government website](#).

### **Recall appointments**

---

- **£25.00 per visit**
- Recall examinations must follow [NICE guidance](#) and be based on a patient's individual level of risk. Dentists must record a patient's recall interval and monitor their oral health to ensure they remain on the most appropriate recall pathway.

### **Simple restorative care package:**

---

- **£36.03**
- Includes fillings, temporary crowns, Hall crowns and extractions for up to a combined total of 4 teeth.

### **Extensive restorative care package**

---

- **£68.75**
- Includes the same treatments as the simple restorative package for between 5 and 8 teeth.

**Periodontal care package:**

---

- **£48.53**
- For patients with gum disease who can engage with treatment. This includes tailored oral hygiene instruction and plaque removal.

**Denture care package:**

---

- **£86.40**
- Includes upper and lower dentures.
- Laboratory charges are not included and must be paid separately unless patients are exempt from NHS dental charges.

**Stabilisation care package:**

---

- **£75.00**
- For patients with extensive tooth decay (7 or more affected teeth).
- Includes extractions, preventative care, restorations, and support for gum disease.

**Anterior root canal care package:**

---

- **£91.18**
- Root canal treatment for up to two front teeth (teeth 1 to 3).

**Posterior root canal care package:**

---

- **£182.72**
- Root canal treatment for up to two premolar or back teeth.
- Laboratory charges are not included and must be paid separately unless patients are exempt.

### **Crown, bridge, inlay, onlay and veneer care package:**

---

- **£140.44**
- Includes: up to two crowns; up to a three unit bridge; a single crown and a single cantilever bridge provided together.
- Temporary restorations and laboratory charges are not included and must be paid separately unless patients are exempt.

### **Miscellaneous care package:**

---

- **£25.00**
- For treatments that fall outside other care packages or outside the **guarantee period**. A list of what this may include is set out on the **Welsh Government website**.
- Laboratory charges are not included and must be paid separately unless a patient is exempt.