

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Issue Date: 14 December 2021

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: POLICY

Title: Role and Provision of Oral Surgery in Wales

Date of Review: December 2025

For Action by:

Chief Executives, All Health Boards &
Public Health Wales

Action required by:

Immediate

Sender: Alex Slade, Deputy Director for Primary Care
Paul Brocklehurst and Warren Tolley, Deputy Chief Dental Officers

Welsh Government Contact:

Andrew Powell-Chandler, Head of Dental Policy

andrew.powell-chandler@gov.wales

Warren Tolley, Deputy Chief Dental Officer

Warren.tolley@gov.wales

Enclosure(s): Guidance and annex documents on the above issue

Summary

1. The purpose of this Welsh Health Circular is to describe the expected national Oral Surgery function. It provides the vision for patient centric care utilising prudent health care principles by suitably trained dental registrants using a standardised pan-Wales approach.
2. The implementation of this service redesign and its implications has been considered by the All-Wales Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF) for Oral Surgery.

Action

3. Chief Executives of NHS organisations are requested to ensure that those providing NHS oral surgery work for the whole system in Wales and that provision is consistent with this guidance.
4. This circular provides guidance to Health Boards, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and other NHS organisations on the provision of NHS oral surgery in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Slade, Deputy Director for Primary Care



Warren Tolley
Deputy Chief Dental Officer for Wales



Paul Brocklehurst
Deputy Chief Dental Officer for Wales

Provision of NHS Oral Surgery in Wales

Oral Surgery within the NHS should be provided in a safe, timely, patient centred manner and be consistent with the principles of Prudent Healthcare and those outlined in the 'All-Wales Oral Surgery Referral Handbook':

<https://primarycareone.nhs.wales/files/information-for-dental-service/all-wales-oral-surgery-referral-handbook-for-general-dental-practitioners-pdf/>

1. The General Dental Service (GDS) contract expects all NHS dentists to undertake Oral Surgery at Level 1 complexity and referrals onto Level 2 and Level 3 providers should only be made by exception. Where repeated onward Level 1 referrals are being made, training or mentorship should be offered to improve the knowledge and skills commensurate with Level 1 provision. Consideration should be given to facilitate this sessional support.
2. Health Boards should improve current service provision by Specialists and Dentists with Enhanced Skills (DES) working within primary care at Level 2 complexity. This could be supported by dedicated DES Level 2 contracts to provide safe and timely access, ensuring patients remain within the primary and community care setting as far as possible.
3. Health Boards should assess the suitability of practices for the provision of Level 2 contracts for Oral Surgery and regularly complete appropriate practice inspections (using Dental Practice Advisors).
4. Level 3 oral surgery complexity should be provided by consultant-led services (Oral Surgery or Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery).
5. DES in Oral Surgery must have completed a formal accreditation process following the guidance of the SAF in Oral Surgery and HEIW.
6. Health Boards are required to up-skill and train DES for future NHS service provision in Oral Surgery, using a structured approach. Consideration should be given to facilitate this sessional support.
7. Health Boards can consider regularly collecting Patient Related Outcome Measures (PROMs) and Patient Related Experience Measures (PREMs) for Level 2 and Level 3 provision and should be able to provide summary reports to the Welsh Government if required to demonstrate service improvement (in line with 'Listening and Learning to Improve the Experience of Care').
8. The provision of sedation alongside oral surgery procedures is common and Health Boards need to consider suitable provision for Level 2 provision. Patient safety is of paramount importance and approval for sedation contracts is set out in the WHC for Sedation 2018:
https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-08/dental-services-service-standards-for-conscious-sedation-in-a-dental-care-setting_0.pdf
9. Health Boards should analyse Dental e-Referral Management System data on a regular basis to ensure current service provision aligns with the principles highlighted in this guidance and service improvement further enhances the access to safe, timely, patient-centred and appropriate level of care for all.

10. HEIW should assess the need to increase speciality training numbers for oral surgery to serve the population of Wales for future service provision.