

Special Care Dentistry Referral Guidelines for referring practitioners

These guidelines are intended to assist General Dental Practitioners (GDPs), Community Dental Service (CDS) Dentists and Primary Care Specialists make an informed decision when contemplating referring HSC patients to the Special Care Dentistry Service at the School of Dentistry.

The Special Care Dentistry Service is located in the School of Dentistry at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT). The Department aims to provide the highest quality care for patients as well as providing training for specialty trainees and undergraduate dental students.

All patient demographic details must be included in all referrals sent to SOD to ensure prompt administration processes. All referrals must include complete patient contact details; sufficient clinical details outlining the problem, with radiographs if appropriate. Medical and drug histories are essential.

The responsibility for making an appropriate referral rests with the referring health care professional. For information, three referral categories are used in the referral system: 'Red Flag' referrals are only for cases of suspected cancer (patient to be seen within 2 weeks); 'Urgent' cases are non-cancer cases which need to be seen urgently; all other cases are categorised as 'Routine'.

Where applicable, high quality radiographs should be provided for all Dental referrals. Normally these radiographs should be less than 12 months old and will be returned to the referring practitioners. Digital referrals and radiographs emailed to the Appointments Office would be welcomed:

SODReferrals@belfasttrust.hscni.net

NB. Any information sent by electronic means should be provided with an adequate level of encryption or password protection in line with Data Protection Guidelines.

The Belfast Trust Special Care Dentistry Service only accepts referrals for patients with within the Belfast Trust area. However it will accept patients from other Trusts who need inpatient care (pre and post op). Patients from outside the Belfast Trust area should be referred to the Special Care Dentistry Services in their relevant HSC Trust area.

The referral criteria enclosed should ensure that we are able to provide appropriate specialist care to those patients with complex treatment needs. It is important, however, that patients are aware of the practical service limitations and therefore do not have unrealistic expectations. All patients accepted for treatment should remain registered with their general dental practitioner or Community Dental Service (CDS) dentist.

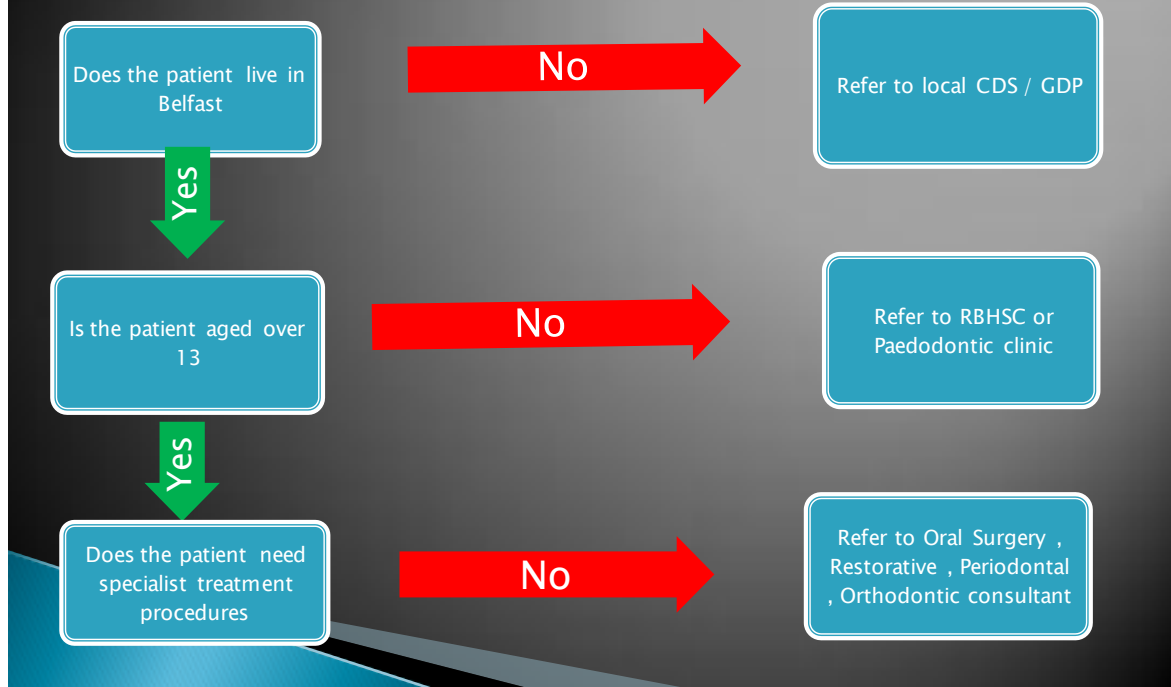
During treatment with the Special Care Dentistry service, it is expected that the referring practitioner will continue to see their patient for routine examinations and treatment and they will provide all other aspects of the patient's oral hygiene/care. Following completion of specialist treatment, patients will be discharged to their dental practitioner for long term care and maintenance.

These referral criteria are to ensure that referring dental practitioners have a clear understanding of which patients should be referred for consultant special care dentistry advice and treatment.

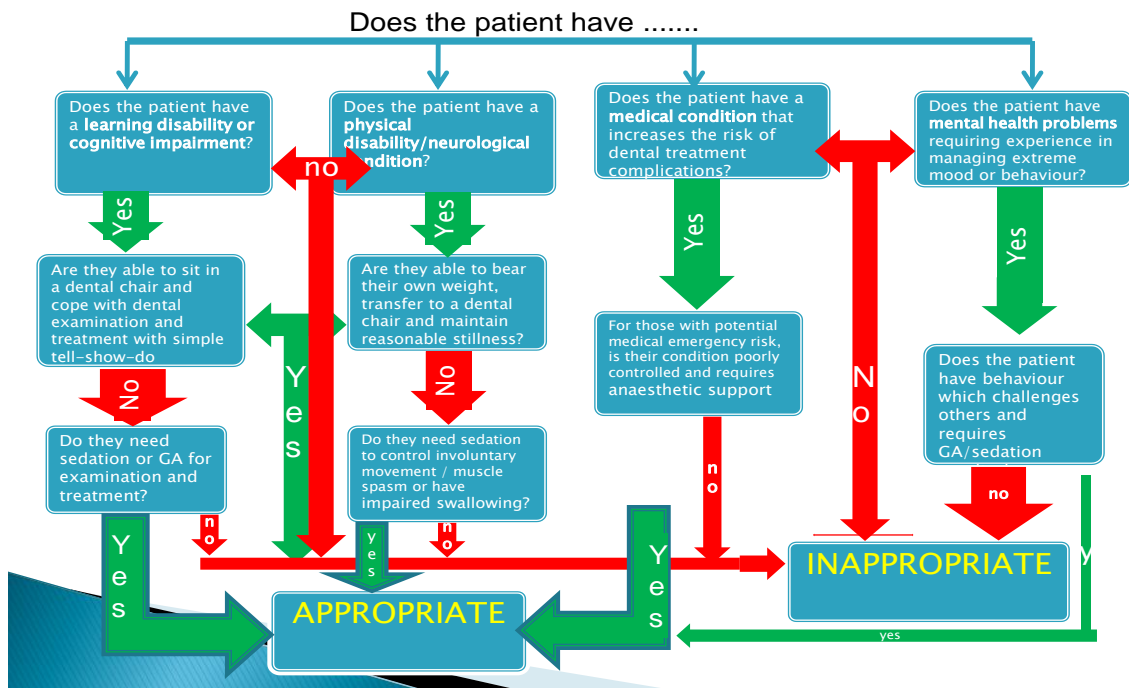
The referral criteria outlined below should ensure that we are able to provide appropriate specialist care to those patients with complex special care dentistry needs. Where a GMP wishes to refer a patient for a special care dental opinion/treatment, patients should, where possible, be directed to their General Dental Practitioner or CDS for triage in the first instance.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that referring specialists and GDPs have a clear understanding of which patients may be referred for special care dentistry advice and treatment. Acceptance for a consultation does not mean that the patient will be accepted for treatment; in some cases a treatment plan with guidance may be prepared for delivery in the primary care sector.

Referral Acceptance Criteria Flow Chart



Special Care Dentistry Referral Acceptance Criteria Flow Chart Continued



Referral Details

Referral letters should always be addressed to the Appointments Office in the School of Dentistry and should state what consultant led service the patients is being referred to.

Referral letters which do not meet the referral criteria will be returned to the referring practitioner. This prevents patient and clinician time being wasted on unnecessary hospital visits.

We are unable to accept patients for treatment on financial grounds or where local specialist waiting lists are long. We do not accept referrals for the routine dental management of dental phobics.

It is essential for the consultant to know certain details about the patient and the clinical diagnosis in order to prioritise an appointment.

- Patient/or carer (if appropriate) details including current contact telephone number so that the patient can be contacted to attend a clinic at short notice.
- Relevant medical history; including details of the patient's current medication
- Relevant social history;
- Clinical description of the dental problem in order to categorise the urgency and appropriateness of the referral;
- Radiographs and photographs should be supplied with the referral if available. If original radiographs are provided these can be copied and returned to the referring practitioner;
- A summary of the patient's dental health status along with the level of any dental treatment attempted and reason for failure;

Inappropriate referrals will be returned to the referring practitioner with an explanatory note.

**All referral letters should be sent to:
Central Dental Appointments Office:**

2nd Floor
School of Dentistry
Grosvenor Road, Belfast
BT12 6BA
Landline: 028 9063 9300
Fax No: 028 9063 4989
Email address: SODReferrals@belfasttrust.hscni

It is important that all practitioners adhere to this policy to avoid conflicting advice. Any deviation from this policy should be noted in the patients' records with the reason for variance.