



Appendix 1 – Orthodontic Referral Guidelines for referring practitioners

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

The Orthodontic Department 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 orthodontic 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 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 CDS dentist. During treatment in the Orthodontic Department, 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 your 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 orthodontic advice and treatment. The referral criteria outlined below should ensure that we are able to provide appropriate specialist care to those patients with complex orthodontic needs.

Within Northern Ireland there are two levels of HSC orthodontic provision:

1. Government funds the HSC to provide routine orthodontic treatment for children *and* adults through "High Street" Specialist Orthodontists and GDPs who work within the primary care General Dental Services. Within Northern Ireland there are a significant number of orthodontic specialists working as specialists in primary care. Where possible GDPs and CDS dentists should initially refer their patients to their local "High Street" Orthodontic Specialist as this represents the most efficient use of the HSC orthodontic services. These orthodontic specialists work closely with the School of Dentistry Consultant Orthodontic service and will refer onwards any cases that require either treatment planning advice or treatment from the consultant orthodontic service. However, GDPs and CDS dentists can also refer patients who meet the referral criteria outlined in this document directly to the BHSCT consultant orthodontic service.
2. The Hospital Consultant Orthodontic Service provides tertiary care treatment for those patients requiring complex interventions such as those who have cleft lip and palate, those requiring jaw surgery and those having other severe multidisciplinary dental problems including severe hypodontia. In addition, treatment planning advice is provided to GDS orthodontic specialists for less complex cases.

During any orthodontic treatment delivered in the School of Dentistry it is expected that the patient's own general dental practitioner (GDP) or CDS dentist continues to see them for routine examinations and treatment, and will provide all other aspects of the patient's

dental care. If the patient requires any routine extractions, restorations and/or prostheses, it is expected that the GDP or CDS dentist will provide these treatments. All patients accepted for treatment in the School of Dentistry Orthodontic Department should remain registered with their GDP or CDS dentist, and will be discharged back to their GDP or CDS dentist following completion of specialist treatment for long term care and maintenance, including the maintenance of any removable or bonded orthodontic retainer appliances.

The BHSCT referral guidelines are based on “The Role of the Hospital Consultant Orthodontist” published by the British Orthodontic Society and take into account the high level of provision of “High Street” specialist orthodontic care within the Northern Ireland GDS.

Under normal circumstances patients will only be accepted for **treatment** in the Consultant Orthodontic Service in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) if they meet one of the following criteria:

1. **Patients with severe skeletal problems** requiring treatment by means of combined orthodontic and orthognathic surgical treatment..
 - Patients may need to remain under review in order to allow facial growth to be completed before making a definitive treatment plan. In some cases, when growth is complete, patients who do not need or decline jaw surgery will be referred back to the referring specialist orthodontic practitioner for provision of their orthodontic treatment.

2. **Patients with complex multidisciplinary dental problems** requiring a combined orthodontic and restorative approach (*severe hypodontia*) where close liaison is required with hospital restorative dentistry specialists.
 - Less complex cases in this category (for example, where only one tooth is absent in a quadrant) will be referred back to GDS specialist orthodontists & general dental practitioners or CDS dentists with appropriate orthodontic and restorative treatment plans.

3. **Patients requiring co-ordinated care for cleft lip and palate** and other congenital dentofacial anomalies.

4. **Severe problems of un-erupted, displaced or malformed teeth**, or the effects of trauma and pathology in the dento-alveolar structures of the child and young adult.
 - o Less complex cases in this category (for example isolated palatally ectopic canines) will be referred back to GDS specialist orthodontists with appropriate treatment plans.

5. **Children with growth related problems or syndromes** who also have a malocclusion.

Patients referred from GDS specialist orthodontists with less complex problems will be referred back to the specialist with an appropriate treatment plan where it is considered by the consultant orthodontist that the treatment required is within the scope of practice of a GDS specialist orthodontist.

Most children and adults with medical problems or special needs can receive orthodontic care in “High Street” specialist orthodontic practice and patients with less complex orthodontic problems will be referred back to the specialist with appropriate treatment plans or to the GDP or CDS dentist with advice to refer to a High Street specialist orthodontist.

The department is not able to provide mandibular advancement appliances for patients with snoring and/or sleep apnoea.

Where a General Medical Practitioner wishes to refer a patient for an Orthodontic opinion/treatment, patients should where possible in the first instance, be directed to a General Dental Practitioner for triage. Patients should also be under a capitation/continuing care arrangement with their General Dental Practitioner.

Referral Details

Referral letters should always be addressed to the Appointments Office in the School of Dentistry and should state that they are an orthodontic referral. The Orthodontic Department operates a pooled referral system and patients may be assessed by any of the Consultant Orthodontists. Referral letters which obviously 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 orthodontist waiting lists are long. In addition, we are unable to accept patients for continuation of orthodontic treatment where they have moved to N.I. from elsewhere. Such patients should be referred to a local specialist orthodontist within the GDS unless they fulfill the criteria listed above.

We currently only accept referrals from patients with addresses within the Belfast Trust and South Eastern Trust areas. Patients from outside these areas should be referred to the Consultant Orthodontists in their relevant HSC Trust area.

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

- **Patient details** including current contact telephone number so that the patient can be contacted to attend a clinic at short notice;
- **Relevant medical history;**
- **Relevant social history;**
- **Clinical description of the orthodontic 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 motivation to wear orthodontic appliances;
- **Inappropriate referrals will be returned to the referring practitioner with an explanatory note.**

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

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.

