

**Chief Executives of HSC Bodies<sup>1</sup>**

**For information:**

Director of Finance and  
Director of Human Resources  
of each body

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST BT4 3SQ  
Email: [PandE@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:PandE@health-ni.gov.uk)

**HSC (TC8) (1) 2026**

Date: 2 June 2026

Dear Colleague

**Terms and Conditions of Service: Community Dental Service (CDS) –Guidance on Pay Progression**

**Introduction**

1. This circular provides HSC Employers with guidance on the process for pay progression of Community Dentists employed under the Community Dental Services (NI) Terms and Conditions of Service (2015). This guidance has been agreed between the Department of Health, the British Dental Association and HSC Employers.

**Guidance**

2. Under the 2015 community dental contract, [set out in Circular HSC (TC8) 01/2019 and published by the Department on 29 March 2019], the pay framework is divided into five pay scales, to reflect the varying levels of

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<sup>1</sup> HSC Trusts, the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Business Services Organisation (BSO), the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Agency (NIBTS), the Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland (CCGANI), the Northern Ireland Practice & Education Council for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting (NIPEC), the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), the Patient & Client Council (PCC), the Northern Ireland Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA).

experience and competence of dentists employed within the community dental service.

3. Guidance has been agreed and is attached to assist employers understand and implement the new process. The guidance includes;
  - Details on the two forms of pay progression that are applicable,
  - The process for a pay progression review,
  - A pay progression review template.

### **Action**

4. HSC Employers will be expected to review current processes to ensure that the correct procedures have been appropriately adopted and implemented, for those staff who fall with the remit of this circular.
5. Employing organisations should also ensure that the attached guidance is circulated to all relevant personnel.

### **Enquiries**

6. Employees should direct personal enquiries to their employer. The Department of Health cannot advise on individuals' personal circumstances.
7. Employers should direct enquiries about the content of this circular to, Workforce Policy Directorate, Room D1, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SJ (email: [p&e@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:p&e@health-ni.gov.uk)).

### **Further copies**

8. Copies of this Circular can be obtained from the Department's website at [Workforce Policy Guidance](#)

Issued by



**Katherine Ferguson**  
**Head of Pay and Employment Unit**  
**Workforce Policy Directorate**

## Pay Progression Guidance Community Dentist Contract (2015)

### 1. Introduction

This guidance should be read in conjunction with Schedule 10 of the Community Dentists TCS (2015). There are five pay scales to reflect the varying levels of experience and competence of dentists employed within the Community Dental Service:

- Community Dental Officer;
- Senior Community Dental Officer;
- Assistant Community Dental Clinical Directors;
- Specialist Community Dentist;
- Community Dental Clinical Director.

Pay progression for those employed under the Community Dental Services (NI) Terms and Conditions of Service (2015), **is not automatic**. The new system was designed to ensure that all Community Dentists have the appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

The principles for progression are that:

- The process should be fair and clear, as straightforward as possible to implement and neither the process nor the gathering and demonstrating of evidence should be onerous.
- The evidence required must be as objective as possible.
- There should be 'no surprises' at any review, good employment practice is to provide the dentist with feedback on a continuing basis; and
- The requirement for the dentist to fully participate in the annual appraisal process and job plan reviews.

Where one or more of the criteria are not achieved in any year, the employer will have the discretion to decide where appropriate, that the dentist should nonetheless be regarded as having met the criteria for that year.

Full details can be found in Schedule 10 (Pay Progression) of the relevant Terms & Conditions of Employment.

## 2. Pay Progression Process

There are two forms of pay progression applicable:

<b>Progression through gateways</b>	Gateways will occur after 2 years of continuous service at the <u>Community Dental Officer and Senior Community Dental Officer grade.</u>
<b>Pay Progression</b>	The normal requirements for pay point progression will need to be satisfied annually between the gateway and the top of the pay scale.

	Community Dental Officer	Senior Community Dental Officer	Assistant Community Dental Clinical Director	Specialist Community Dentist	Community Dental Clinical Director
		1	1	1	1
<b>Pay Point</b>	Pay Progression meeting				
	2	2	2	2	2
	Gateway Pay Progression meeting		Pay Progression meeting		
	3	3	3	3	3
	Pay Progression meeting			Pay Progression meeting	
	4	4		4	4
	Pay Progression meeting				Pay Progression meeting
	5	5			5
	Pay Progression meeting				
	6	6			

### 3. Progression through gateways

Gateways will occur after two years of continuous service at the Community Dental Officer and Senior Dental Officer grade and will be dependent on the dentist meeting the required criteria, as outlined in the pay progression template (Appendix 1).

### 4. Normal pay progression

The normal requirements for pay point progression will need to be satisfied **annually** between the gateway and the top of the pay scale.

Dentists should not be penalised if an appraisal has not been completed within the required timeframe through no fault of their own. In these circumstances they will not be prevented from moving to the next pay point on the salary scale.

Dentists should not be penalised if any element of the competency framework has not been met for reasons beyond their control. Therefore, if the dentist has been prevented by any action or inaction on the part of the employer from satisfying any element of the competency framework, they will not be prevented from moving to the next pay point on the salary scale.

Employers and dentists will be expected to identify problems affecting the likelihood of meeting objectives as they emerge, rather than wait until the appraisal and job plan review.

If, at appraisal, both the employer and the dentist agree that the criteria required for pay progression **have not** been achieved but may be reached within the subsequent three months, an interim target date may be set. This date should be set for a further three months. If at this point the required competencies and criteria have been achieved, then pay progression should be awarded from reset date. The annual appraisal cycle and pay review point should be reset from this date.

If the required criteria and competencies **are not achieved**, then the dentist will be required to demonstrate these by the next annual appraisal. This will be 12 months from the extended appraisal cycle. Salary progression **will not be** authorised until the successful completion of the appraisal and job planning process.

Pay progression **is not backdated** to the original incremental date if the required criteria have not been met at the time of appraisal. Rather, pay progression is awarded from the

date the criteria and competencies are deemed to have been achieved, and this will be the new incremental date for the purposes of future pay progression.

## **5. Process**

On receipt of notification that a pay progression review meeting is required, the Clinical Manager is responsible for setting up the meeting with the dentist to review whether requirements for progression have been met. It is the responsibility of both the dentist and clinical manager to ensure that the pay progression meeting takes place in advance of the dentist's pay progression date.

The clinical manager and dentist will complete and sign the relevant pay progression template. This will be used as the basis for confirmation of movement to the next pay point. (Appendix 1)

The clinical manager is responsible for ensuring the Pay Progression Review paperwork is submitted to Human Resources at **<employer to insert relevant contact>** as soon as possible after the date of the pay progression review meeting to ensure that pay progression can be implemented on HRPTS in time for the dentist's pay progression date.

## **6. Facilitation and appeals**

Where a dentist disputes a decision that they have not met the required criteria to progress to the next pay point, the mediation and appeal procedure at Schedule 7 of the relevant Terms and Conditions of Service should be followed.

## Appendix 1: Community Dentist 2015 Contract – Pay progression review template

<b>Name</b>		<b>Role</b>		<b>Clinical Manager</b>	
<b>Date of pay progression</b>		<b>Date of pay progression review meeting</b>		<b>Date of last appraisal</b>	

Pay progression criteria	YES / NO	Gateway progression criteria	YES / NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in the annual appraisal process;</li> <li>• Participated in the annual job plan review;</li> <li>• Made every reasonable effort to meet the time and service commitments in the job plan;</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate achievement of the band-specific competencies using agreed evidence;</li> <li>• Has made every reasonable effort to meet the time and service commitments of their job plan and participated in the annual job plan review;</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met the personal objectives in the job plan; or where this is not achieved for reason(s) beyond the dentist’s control, made every reasonable effort to do so;</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated satisfactorily in the annual appraisal process;</li> <li>• Met the personal objectives in their job plan, or where this has not been achieved for reasons beyond the dentist’s control, made every reasonable effort to do so; and, worked towards any changes identified in the last job plan review as being necessary to support achievement of joint objectives.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked towards any changes identified in the last job plan review; and</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated progress towards, or maintenance of, competencies using agreed evidence.</li> </ul>			

### Summary of pay progression review meeting (Complete after review meeting)

<b>Dentist’s Summary:</b>	
<b>Clinical Manager’s Summary:</b>	

**Assessment of standards (Complete after review meeting)**

<p><b>Pay Progression has been:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Approved <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Deferred <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Select as appropriate)</i></p>	<p>If deferred, give specific reasons for this decision and complete the box below 'Action plan and timescales'.</p>
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**Action plan and timescales**

<p>If applicable, clinical manager and dentist to agree an action plan and timescales if the doctor does not meet the required standards.</p>
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<b>Dentist 's signature</b>		<b>Date</b>		<b>Clinical Manager's signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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**Completed and signed form to be returned via Clinical Manager's work email to <employer to insert relevant contact> for pay progression to be processed on HRPTS.**