

Escalation process and assessment of urgent referral pathway patients – January 2022

Guidance for GDPs

For all patients referred to primary care dental services, the responsibility for provision of emergency dental care remains with the patient's registered dental practice while patients are waiting to be seen within Public Dental Service PDS.

GDPs should use all resources available to them to manage acute dental problems for their patients while waiting for referral treatment. Due to the high level of demand, there is currently a waiting list for child dental anxiety management and dental general anaesthesia services.

Where the child has presented again with acute pain or infection, and it has not been possible to control symptoms in primary care, we have introduced a process for GDPs to escalate a referral case for further assessment in PDS. This process does not replace the referring dentist responsibility to provide emergency dental care when the patient contacts the practice.

Where a GDP is presented with red-flag systemic symptoms below, they should contact the Maxillofacial On-call team via ARI switchboard to discuss the immediate medical needs of the patient and agree transfer to the appropriate department

- airway compromise
- uncontrolled haemorrhage
- severe dental trauma
- pyrexia, >38°C
- poor feeding
- reduced urine output

The PDS primary care service escalation process is designed to ensure the PDS team are aware of child patients whose clinical condition may require a review of their level of priority on the waiting list.

Where the GDP has already referred a child patient for treatment and their clinical judgement is the child has an increasingly urgent need due to further episodes of acute uncontrolled pain, or infection requiring antibiotics on two or more occasions, the GDP should contact the Dental Advice and Referral Centre by email to gram.pcdreferralhub@nhs.scot

The GDP should

- use email subject 'Escalation of Paediatric Referral'
- include the child's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and date of original referral.
- include a summary of dental care which has been provided since the original referral and why they consider the child should be re-assessed.
- include referring dentist details – practice address and contact telephone number
- tell parent /carer the escalation request is for consideration for an earlier assessment appointment or a re-assessment of their child's condition. There is no guarantee when the child will be seen for treatment.
- provide any immediate emergency dental care as far as can be achieved in the practice