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NHS Exempt Laboratory Tariff - Explanatory Note

This alert has been cascaded to the following:

All Wales Dental Practices
All Wales Heads of Primary Care & Primary Care Leads

Please see attached a note from the Chief Dental Officer clarifying the arrangements when laboratory items are provide to patients who are exempt from NHS dental charges".

Thanks

Andrew Pryse

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NHS laboratory tariff – Clarification notes for dental technicians & laboratories (2026 GDS Regulations)

This note should be read alongside the supporting Vignettes document.

1. Purpose of the national laboratory tariff

The national NHS laboratory tariff sets the **maximum reimbursable laboratory fee** for patients who are **exempt** from NHS dental charges.

While there is no specific national tariff for patients who normally pay NHS dental charges, the laboratory tariffs should still be used as guidance. Non-exempt patients may choose from the full range of dental appliances and materials, including those previously available only on a private basis. However, they may request items listed on the NHS exempt tariff as one of their treatment options and this should be respected.

2. Charging arrangements

Care packages that require laboratory work include a separate fee for the preparatory clinical work, but unlike the UDA banding no longer include the laboratory fee.

For **non-exempt patients**:

- The patient pays the **whole value** of the laboratory invoice issued to the practice.
- The patient also pays the **relevant NHS patient charge** for the care package.
- The contract holder may only charge the patient **the exact laboratory invoice amount** for each item - no additions or mark-ups are permitted.

3. Tariff clarification: Prosthetics

All denture prices are **per denture**.

- **Full acrylic denture:** £150 per denture
Example: upper + lower = £300 maximum reimbursement.
- **Partial acrylic denture:** £90 per denture
Example: upper + lower = £180 maximum reimbursement.
- **Chrome denture (full or partial):** £200 per denture
Example: upper + lower = £400 maximum reimbursement.

4. Tariff clarification: Bridges

The tariff is calculated **per unit**. A unit is defined as **either a retainer or a pontic**.

For clarity:

- A simple conventional cantilever bridge = **2 units**
- A fixed bridge with one pontic = **3 units**
- An adhesive bridge uses the same definitions:
e.g., a single-wing adhesive cantilever bridge with one pontic = 2 units

5. Worked examples

- **Adhesive bridge:** £50 per unit
2-unit adhesive bridge = £100 maximum reimbursement.
- **Conventional bridge:** £57 per unit
2-unit simple cantilever = £114 maximum reimbursement.
- **Fixed 3-unit bridge:**
3 units × £57 = £171 maximum reimbursement.