



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Assessment of Clinical Oral Risks and Need (ACORN)

1. What is ACORN?

ACORN is a toolkit designed by dental professionals during the GDS Reform Programme that supports dental teams to carry out a comprehensive risks and needs assessment in a systematic manner. It summarises findings from the patient history and clinical examination. It supports practices to give personalised advice and agree a preventive annual dental care plan.

2. How often should the ACORN be completed?

ACORN should be carried out well once a year i.e. every 12 months.

3. Do I need to carry out ACORN when a patient attends for urgent dental care?

No.

4. Is ACORN all about ticking boxes on the FP17W for submitting data?

No, ACORN is not a tick-box exercise. While the 8 ACORN data points on FP17Ws you submit for patients can be aggregated to understand the 'risk and needs' profile of your practice population.

Key objectives of the use of the ACORN toolkit are:

- Understand what matters to patients
- Effectively communicate level of risk and need to patients (or their carers) and work with patients in making them understand changes they need to make to prevent dental diseases
- Agree on the oral health outcomes patients want to achieve over a period of time or after a course of dental care.
- Utilise the principles of shared decision making in formulating a preventive dental care plan
- Monitor changes in the 'risks and needs' of patients who receive ongoing care from the service/practice.

5. Is ACORN database monitored?

Yes, based on 8 ACORN data points on FP17W submitted by your practice, NHS BSA will analyse data and provide 'risks and need' profile of your practice on e-Den. Data is also analysed to monitor what % of your routine patients receive ACORN.

Please contact NHS BSA if you have any queries regarding FP17Ws data entry and data displayed on e-Den - nhsbsa.dentalinsight@nhs.net.

6. How many types of ACORN toolkits are there?

There is only one type of ACORN toolkit, a standardised approach of oral health risks and needs assessment in NHS dental practices in Wales.

ACORN guidance can be found here [Dental Reform - Primary Care One \(nhs.wales\)](https://nhs.uk/dental-reform/primary-care-one).

7. Can ACORN be done remotely?

Yes, a lot of it can be done remotely. Certainly the risk assessments component of the ACORN can be completed remotely either via telephone or video.

8. Should I offer patients who attend for urgent dental care an appointment to come back to the practice for full assessment?

Yes. It is expected that a patient who is not receiving regular dental care from a practice is offered a chance to come back for ACORN and an annual personalised preventive dental care planning. If a patient declines the offer, practice should note this on the patient record.

9. Is training available on how to carry out ACORN?

Yes, online training is available from the HEIW (<https://ytydysgu.heiw.wales/go/qwlmhnn>). ACORN guidance is available from the POne website.

10. If a patient demonstrates clearly that their behaviours have changed within the 12 months following an ACORN, can an ACORN be repeated earlier than 12 months?

ACORN should be carried out well once a year. Following ACORN and annual dental care plan, patients may need to come back for review appointments. Any improvement in risks and need seen in those review visits can be recorded on patient notes but full ACORN does not need to be completed. Comprehensive risks and needs assessment using ACORN toolkit is repeated in 12 months from the previous ACORN.

11. As an NHS dental practice, can I refuse to carry out ACORN but participate in the GDS Reform Programme?

No, ACORN is fundamental part of GDS Reform Programme. For practices that do not want to be part of the GDS Reform Programme, the default contractual position is delivery of Units of Dental Activity (UDA) target under the existing GDS/PDS Regulations. It is expected that the majority, if not all, of NHS practices will take up the offer of working under non-UDA conditions as a part of the GDS Reform Programme restarting on 1 April 2022. Please discuss it with your health board, if required.

12. Prevention and Quality Improvement seem quite important in delivery of dental services. Is there any training available?

Yes, free training courses (Making Prevention Work in Practice, Designed to Smile in Practice and other relevant CPD courses) are available from the HEIW. You can also contact your QI Dental Educator for support on any quality improvement projects or initiatives at HEIW.DentalQI@Wales.nhs.uk.