

Prior Approval Reform

Prior Approval Changes for General Dentistry

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Dental Reform – Prior Approval for General Dentistry

From 1 November 2026, Prior Approval for General Dentistry will move from the current financial threshold to a system based on clinical criteria and clinician experience. These changes were introduced in [PCA\(D\)\(2026\)2](#) and apply to courses of treatment with an acceptance date on or after 1 November 2026.

Please note that these changes do not apply to Orthodontic treatment, which will continue to be subject to the financial prior approval threshold, currently £660.

Information about the development of the new Prior Approval arrangements has previously been published in our [monthly schedule communications](#) and [Mouthpiece](#). Further updates will continue to be provided through future Schedule Communications.

Below we have created guidance for practitioners.

Before 1 November 2026	On or after 1 November 2026
Prior Approval based on £660 threshold	Prior Approval based on clinical criteria and clinician tier
Same threshold for all clinicians	Thresholds may differ for Tier 1 and Tier 2

1. What qualifies as ‘high clinical risk’ Requiring Approval?

A treatment plan may be deemed to have a high clinical risk if one or both of the following apply:

1. The clinician has limited experience of working within Scottish NHS Dentistry; and/or
2. The treatment plan includes certain individual items or combination of items.

1.1 Tiers explained

A tiered system for individual clinicians will be introduced. Clinicians will be allocated one of two tiers depending on their Scottish NHS Dentistry experience: Tier 1 or Tier 2.

Tier 1 is for clinicians who are experienced in NHS Dentistry in Scotland.

Tier 2 is for clinicians with limited NHS Dentistry experience in Scotland, including:

- Vocational Trainees (VTs)
- Provisionally listed dentists
- Dentists who have completed mandatory or vocational training in the last 12 months.

1.2 Treatment Items and Combination Treatments Requiring Prior Approval

The clinical risk categorisation of individual treatment items and/or combination of treatments will be consistent across both tiers; however, the threshold limits may differ per tier.

[Table 1](#) details the items and their thresholds per tier. If a course of treatment includes any item or combination of items that meet or exceed the threshold for a list number’s tier on the acceptance date of the claim, then the course of treatment must be submitted for approval. Practitioner Services will issue the most up to date information to PMS Suppliers relating to treatment items and combinations of items when changes occur in future.

Example 1

A treatment plan includes the following items:

- Six Intraoral Radiographs (6 x A004)
- One Crown Placement (1 x D002)
- One Laboratory made soft splint (1 x G014)

All three of the above proposed items are below the prior approval threshold for both Tier 1 and Tier 2 list numbers.

See [Appendix 1](#) for a visual representation of this example.

Example 2

A treatment plan includes the following items:

- Nine Intraoral Radiographs (9 x A004)
- Two Surgical Extractions (2 x E002)

A Tier 1 dentist would not need to send for prior approval. However, due to the individual item threshold for Surgical Extractions, a Tier 2 dentist would require prior approval.

See [Appendix 2](#) for a visual representation of this example.

Example 3

A treatment plan includes the following items:

- Two Intraoral Radiographs (2 x A004)
- Seven Posterior Composite Supplements (7 x C005)

A Tier 1 dentist would not need to send for prior approval. However, due to the individual item threshold for Posterior Composite Supplements, a Tier 2 dentist would require prior approval.

See [Appendix 3](#) for a visual representation of this example.

Example 4

A treatment plan includes the following items:

- Two Intraoral Radiographs (2 x A004)
- Seven Posterior Composite Supplements (7 x C005)
- Three Endodontic Treatments for Incisor/Canine/Lower Premolar (3 x C006)
- One Endodontic Treatment on an Upper Premolar (1 x C007)

Both tiers would require prior approval. A Tier 1 dentist would require approval due to a combination of 4 or more Endodontic treatments (3 x C006 and 1 x C007). A Tier 2 dentist would require approval because both the individual threshold of four Posterior Composite Supplements and the combination of 3 or more Endodontic treatments (3 x C006 and 1 x C007) have been triggered.

See [Appendix 4](#) for a visual representation of this example.

Example 5

A treatment plan includes the following items:

- Seven Intraoral Radiographs (7 x A004)
- One Crown Placement (1 x D002)
- Two Post and/or Cores (2 x D005)
- Two Inlay/Onlay Placements (2 x D006)
- A two-unit Resin Retained Bridge (2 x D015)

Both tiers would require prior approval. A Tier 1 dentist would require approval due to a combination of 6 or more Extra Coronal Restoration treatments (1 x D002, 2 x D005, 2 x D006, and 2 x D015). A Tier 2 dentist would require approval because both the individual threshold of a two-unit bridge and the combination of 4 or more Extra Coronal Restoration treatments (1 x D002, 2 x D005, 2 x D006, and 2 x D015) have been triggered.

See [Appendix 5](#) for a visual representation of this example.

2. How to know what Tier you are in

Your Practice Management System (PMS) will display information relating to your tier. If you have multiple list numbers, the tier will be displayed for each list number. This will be an automated process based on information returned to the PMS by Practitioner Services.

Not all list numbers belonging to a dentist will necessarily be assigned to the same tier. Trainer list numbers (i.e. Vocational Training List numbers) will always be in Tier 2. Assistant List numbers may be in either Tier 1 or Tier 2 depending on the tier that the assistant listed qualifies for.

As Tier assignments can change over time, dentists should be aware that the Tier applicable to a treatment plan is the Tier that applied on the treatment plan acceptance date, which may differ from their current Tier.

2.1 Change of Tiers

If a list number moves from one tier to another, the practice will be notified via an electronic update message. This notification will include the new tier for the list number and the start date of the new tier. Your PMS will display the details of your current and historic tiers for your list numbers.

The period a list number remains in Tier 2 depends on the circumstances. Provisional list numbers will remain in Tier 2 for the duration of the provisional listing period, which may be up to six months while the dentist completes the mandatory training and Test of Knowledge. Following successful completion of these requirements, provisionally listed dentists will remain in Tier 2 for a further 12 months.

Dentists who have successfully completed mandatory training or vocational training remain in Tier 2 for 12 months following completion.

As the new prior approval system comes into force on 1 November 2026, dentists who completed mandatory training before that date may spend less than 12 months in Tier 2 depending on when they completed the training. Trainer list number types will remain in Tier 2 indefinitely.

2.2 Prior Approval – Patterns of Treatment

Regulation 27 allows the Scottish Dental Practice Board (SDPB) to review the way a dentist provides NHS dental treatment. There has been no change with the introduction of the new clinical prior approval.

If the SDPB believes that a dentist's pattern of NHS treatment is substantially different from the usual pattern of treatment in the local area or across Scotland, it may find that further investigation is necessary.

The dentist will be informed in writing about the pattern that has been identified and given the opportunity to respond. The dentist will have 28 days to respond.

If the dentist does not respond within 28 days, or if their response does not provide reasonable grounds for the differing pattern of treatment, the SDPB may require the dentist to obtain prior approval before providing, (or assisting with the provision of) NHS treatment, or a description of treatment specified in the direction. This requirement can remain in place for a period of between three and nine months.

In these circumstances, the dentist will have the right to appeal under Regulation 29.

The dentist can still provide or assist with providing the following treatment without obtaining prior approval:

- Treatment following an injury or in an emergency.
- Any treatment provided privately (i.e. non-NHS treatment).
- Treatment provided during a single consultation, consisting of one examination of the patient and up to two radiographs.

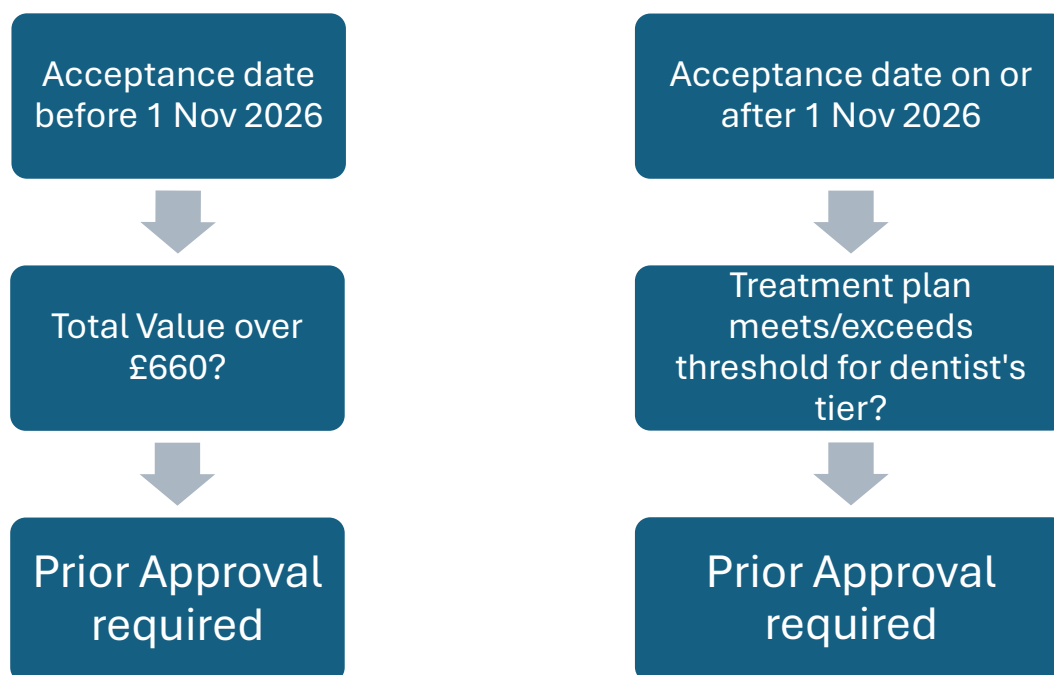
For more information on Regulation 27, please visit the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2010/208/regulation/27/made>

3. Circumstances Requiring Prior Approval or Reapproval

Prior Approval will be triggered by the relevant criteria based on the acceptance date. For treatment plans with an acceptance date before 1 November 2026, prior approval will be triggered by financial criteria, i.e. whether the treatment plan exceeds £660.

For treatment plans with an acceptance date on or after 1 November 2026, prior approval will be triggered by the clinical and tiered criteria as explained out in [PCA\(D\)\(2026\)5](#). In these circumstances, prior approval will be triggered based on the tier of the list number at the start of the treatment. Your PMS may introduce prompts and validation messages advising practitioners when a course of treatment requires Prior Approval or Reapproval.



3.1 Change of Treatment Plan

ANY change to a previously approved treatment plan will require reapproval, even if the clinical criteria for prior approval is no longer met. For instance, if the treatment that was being completed by a tier 1 dentist contained nine Posterior Composite Supplements (C005 x 9) and this has changed to now include only seven Posterior Composite Supplements (C005 x 7), this would still trigger a reapproval.

If a change is made to a treatment plan which does not change the treatment items involved (e.g. a change to filling surface(s) or material), reapproval will still be required. The amendment should be made and code **9002 01** entered. This zero-value discretionary fee code will indicate that reapproval is required and allow you to submit for reapproval. Further details on discretionary codes can be found in our [discretionary fee guide](#) which will be updated on this page: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/claims/access-the-discretionary-fee-guide/>.

Reapproval will not be required in the following circumstances.

1. If the difference is due to the patient failing to return (PFTR). The 'PFTR' or 'Patient failed to return' box should be ticked before submitting for payment.
2. If the treatment is part of a Continuation Case, and the treatment that has been approved will be completed by a different list number, you must indicate this on your practice management system and follow the Continuation Case process.
3. If a patient declines treatment which has been approved you must tick the box on your practice management system to indicate this, and supply observations relating to the case, noting that any items claimed in the Statement of Dental Remuneration must satisfy the narrative conditions as detailed with each item.

3.2 Continuation Cases

A continuation case is a course of treatment started under one list number and completed by another list number within the same practice. The Continuation Case process will remain the same. For details on the Continuation Case Process, please visit our website:

<https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/claims/general-dental-treatment-continuation-cases/>.

However, based on the acceptance date, the criteria triggering an approval or reapproval may differ.

Where the acceptance date of the treatment plan is before 1 November 2026, the entire treatment plan (all parts) will be subject to the financial trigger for approval and reapproval. For instance, if a treatment plan was started on 1 October 2026, and the second dentist continued the course of treatment from 1 December 2026, the treatment plan will require prior approval or reapproval if the value exceeds £660, as the start date for both parts of the continuation case is before 1 November 2026.

Where the acceptance date of the treatment plan is on or after 1 November 2026, prior approval and reapproval will be triggered by the clinical and tiered criteria in place on the start date explained above for the entire treatment plan (all parts). The treatment plan will require prior approval or reapproval based on the treatment items included and the tier of the dentist's list number on the acceptance date of the case. If all parts are completed by a tier 1 dentist, the prior approval/reapproval criteria will remain the same. If, however, part 1 is completed by a tier 1 dentist and part 2 by a tier 2 dentist, prior approval may be triggered by the dentist's clinical thresholds [in this table](#).

Important: A continuation case may require prior approval where the remaining treatment items in part 2 do not meet or exceed the applicable clinical threshold levels, but the combined treatment items across the whole course of treatment do. Where approval is required but no prompt is generated, select **"Request Review"** to submit the case for prior approval.

For example, a course of treatment started by a Tier 1 list number includes the following codes:

- A001 01
- A004 06
- E002 02

The Tier 1 list number does not require approval. The Tier 1 dentist is unable to complete all the treatment and completes only the following:

- A001 01
- A004 06
- E002 01

The course of treatment is then continued by a Tier 2 dentist. The only outstanding treatment to be carried out is a surgical extraction (E002 01). The item in isolation does not meet or exceed the clinical threshold for a tier 2 list number. However, the course of treatment as a whole does require approval because it meets or exceeds the clinical threshold for a tier 2

list number. Therefore, the dentist will be required to send it for prior approval using the “Request Review” option.

3.3 Validation and Error Messages

Practitioner Services will introduce new validation messages to support the implementation of the new Prior Approval criteria. Eight new error messages will be introduced, and some existing error messages will be amended so that they apply only to treatment plans with an acceptance date before 1 November 2026. Details of the new validation messages and associated error codes can be found on our website at: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/edental/edental-error-messages/>.

3.4 Summary

When is approval required?

No approval originally required → Treatment plan changed → Revised treatment meets/exceeds applicable threshold → Approval required
No approval originally required → Treatment taken over by another list number (either Tier 1 or Tier 2) → Treatment plan changed → Revised treatment meets/exceeds applicable threshold for list number's tier → Approval required
No approval originally required (Tier 1 Dentist) → Treatment taken over by another list number in Tier 2 → No change to treatment plan, but whole course of treatment meets/exceeds threshold for Tier 2 list number → Approval required

When is reapproval required?

Approved treatment plan → Treatment continued by same list number → Treatment items added, removed or treatment amended → Reapproval required
Approved treatment plan → Treatment taken over by another list number (either Tier 1 or Tier 2) → Treatment plan changed → Reapproval required

When is approval/reapproval not required?

No approval originally required → Treatment taken over by another list number (either Tier 1 or Tier 2) → No change to treatment plan → Whole course of treatment under the clinical threshold for list number's tier → Approval not required
No approval originally required → Treatment taken over by another list number → Change to treatment plan → Whole course of treatment still under the clinical threshold for list number's tier → Approval not required
Approved treatment plan → Treatment taken over by another list number → No change to treatment plan → Whole course of treatment still under the clinical threshold for list number's tier → Reapproval not required

For a more visual flowchart of the continuation process, please see [Appendix 6](#).

4. What actions you should take

Practices should ensure that Prior Approval requests are kept up to date in the lead up to Practitioner Services implementation of the system changes on 27 October 2026. As both the pre-November value-based criteria and the post-November clinical risk-based criteria will operate concurrently, maintaining current Prior Approvals and responding promptly to requests for additional information or supporting evidence will help minimise disruption and delays to patient care and practice administration.

Changing PMS

Please remember that you must notify practitioner services if you intend to change PMS. For additional guidance on this, see our June paid July 2026 Schedule Communication:

<https://www.nss.nhs.scot/media/6917/dent-2026-june-paid-july.pdf>

5. Further guidance and information

The list of treatment items and threshold levels may be updated through amendments to the Statement of Dental Remuneration (SDR). The treatment items and threshold levels applicable from 1 November 2026 are set out in **SDR Amendment No. 169** and **PCA(D)(2026)5**. The SDR can be accessed on this page:

<https://www.scottishdental.nhs.scot/dental-team/statement-of-dental-remuneration/>.

Practitioner Services continues to work closely with PMS suppliers to support the implementation of these changes. You can find the PMS timescales for implementation on this page: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/dental-reform/prior-approval-reform-pms-supplier-readiness/>. If you have any questions about the implementation timescales, please contact your PMS.

Training in the form of TURAS (e-learning) modules has been made available to support practices with the implementation of these changes as of 17 September 2026. A link to the TURAS module has been shared in PCA(D)(2026)5:

<https://www.publications.scot.nhs.uk/files/pca2026-d-05.pdf>.

Practices should also refer to the Dental Reform webpages, where Practitioner Services guidance will be published and signposted to the relevant SDR amendments and PCA circulars. You can find these webpages here: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/browse/dental-services/dental-reform>

Any further updates will be communicated by Practitioner Services as required.

Table 1

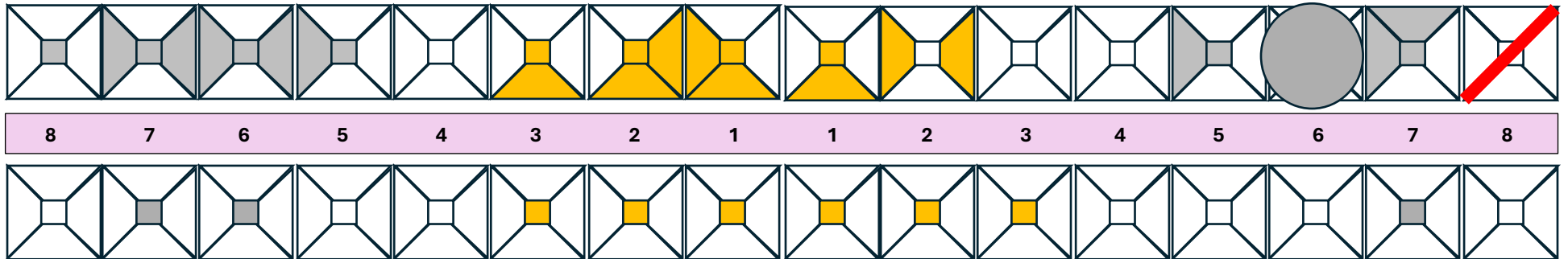
Item Code	Fee Code	Item Description	Tier 1		Tier 2	
			Individual treatments (equal to or greater than)	Combination treatments	Individual treatments (equal to or greater than)	Combination treatments
1-(d)	A004	INTRAORAL RADIOGRAPH	15		15	
3-(e)(1)	C005	POSTERIOR COMPOSITE SUPPLEMENT	8		4	
3-(e)(2)	C015	SUPPLEMENT FOR 2 FILLINGS ON ONE TOOTH	3		2	
3-(f)	C006	ENDODONTIC TREATMENT (INCISOR/CANINE/LOWER PREMOLAR)	4	Total number of 4 or more treatments in treatment plan – PA trigger	3	Total number of 3 or more treatments in treatment plan – PA trigger
3-(g)	C007	ENDODONTIC TREATMENT (UPPER PREMOLAR)	3		3	
3-(h)	C008	ENDODONTIC TREATMENT (MOLAR)	3		3	
3-(j)	C010	RE-ROOT CANAL TREATMENT SUPPLEMENT	2		2	
3-(k)	C011	INTERNAL BLEACHING	2		2	
4-(b)	D002	CROWN PLACEMENT	4	Total number of 6 or more (including units) in treatment plan – PA trigger	3	Total number of 4 or more (including units) in treatment plan – PA trigger
4-(c)	D005	POST and/or CORE RETENTION for CROWNS and BRIDGES	4		3	
4-(d)	D006	INLAY/ONLAY PLACEMENT	4		3	
4-(e)	D009	REPLACEMENT VENEER	3		2	
4-(f)	D012	CONVENTIONAL BRIDGE (per unit)	3		2	
4-(g)	D015	RESIN RETAINED BRIDGE (per unit)	4		2	
5-(b)	E002	SURGICAL EXTRACTION	3		2	
5-(c)	E003	ADVANCED SURGICAL EXTRACTION	3		1	
5-(d)	E004	ADVANCED SURGICAL PROCEDURES	2		1	
7-(g)	G013	ACID ETCHED SPLINT (per union)	3		1	
7-(h)	G014	LABORATORY MADE SOFT SPLINT / FLUORIDE TRAY / TRAUMA RETAINER / EXTERNAL BLEACHING TRAY (per appliance)	2		2	
7-(i)	G015	LABORATORY MADE HARD SPLINT (per appliance)	2		2	

Table 1: These values are correct as at 1 November 2026

A001
A004 06
B001
G014

Appendix 1

C001	C003	C003	C002		C002 C004	C003 C004	C003 C004	C002 C004	C012 C014			C002	D002	C003	E001
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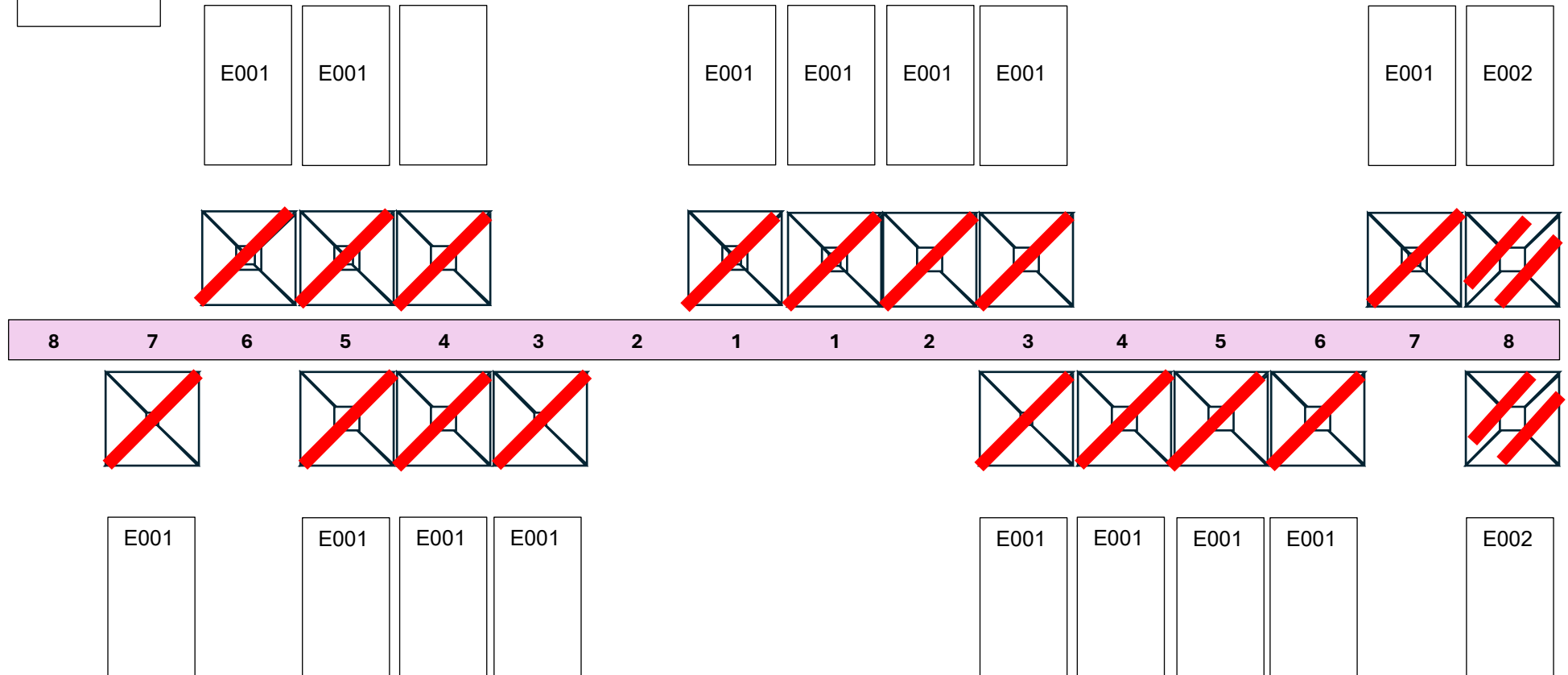


	C001	C001			C001 C004	C001 C004	C001 C004	C001 C004	C001 C004	C001 C004				C001	
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Item	Code	Number of items proposed	Threshold $\geq$		Prior Approval Required
			Tier 1	Tier 2	
1-(d)	A004	6	15	15	No
4-(b)	D002	1	4	3	No
7-(h)	G014	1	2	2	No

A002
A004 09
G004 02
G010 02

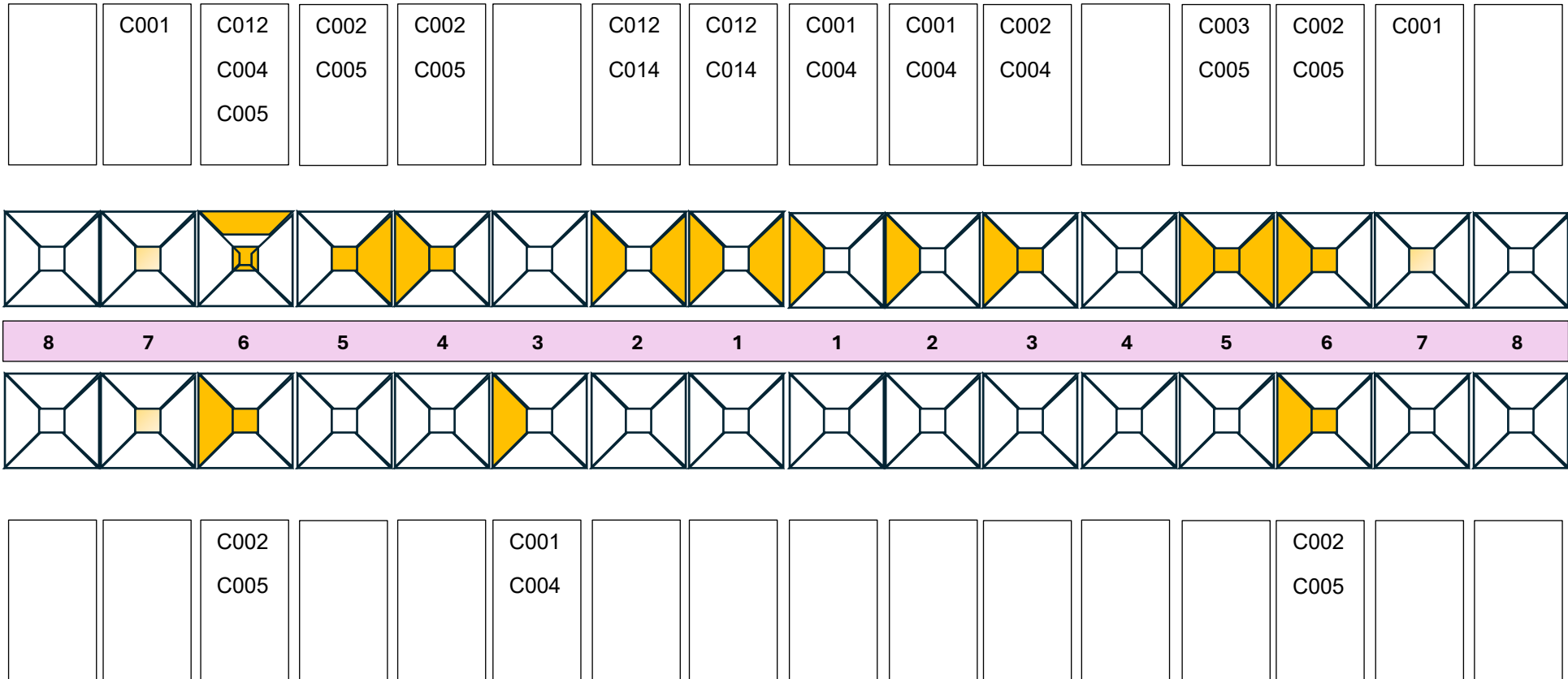
Appendix 2



Item	Code	Number of items proposed	Threshold $\geq$		Prior Approval Required	
			Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2
1-(d)	A004	9	15	15	No	No
5-(b)	E002	2	3	2	No	Yes

A001
A004 02
B001

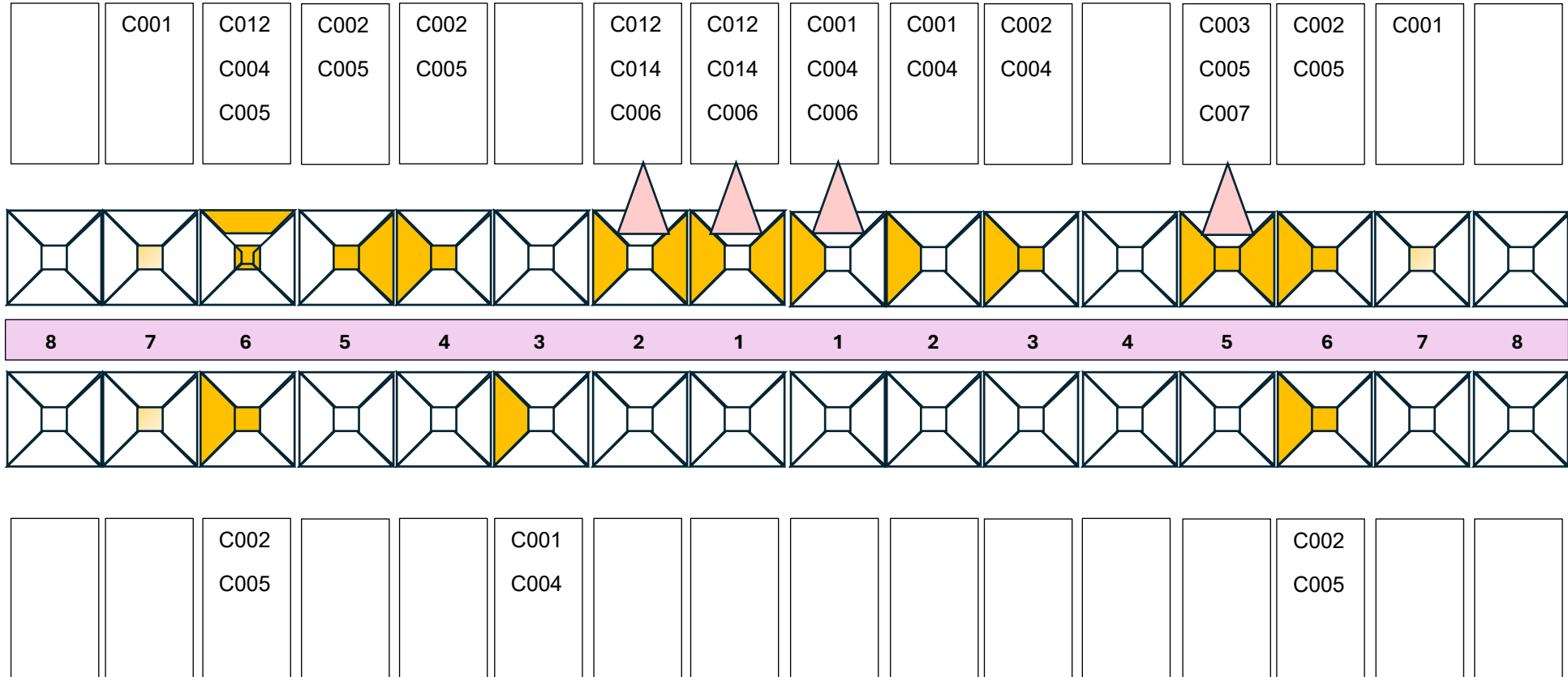
Appendix 3



Item	Code	Number of items proposed	Threshold ≥		Prior Approval Required	
			Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2
1-(d)	A004	2	15	15	No	No
3-(e)	C005	7	8	4	No	Yes

A001
A004 02
B001

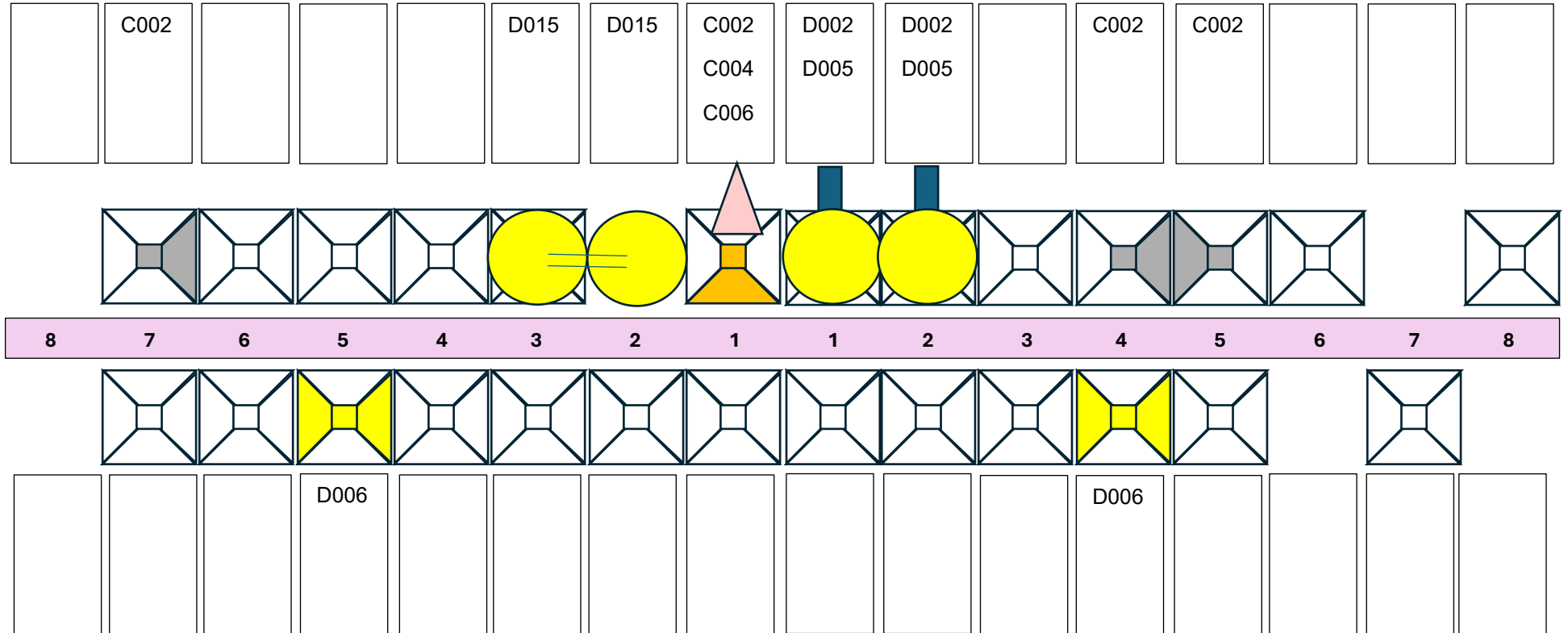
Appendix 4



Item	Code	Number of items proposed	Threshold ≥		Prior Approval Required		Combination Prior Approval Items Proposed		Combination Prior Approval Items Threshold ≥		Prior Approval Required	
			Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2			Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2
1-(d)	A004	2	15	15	No	No						
3-(e)	C005	7	8	4	No	Yes						
3-(f)	C006	3	4	3	No	Yes	4		4	3	Yes	Yes
3-(g)	C007	1	3	3	No	No						

A001
A004 07
B001
A006

Appendix 5

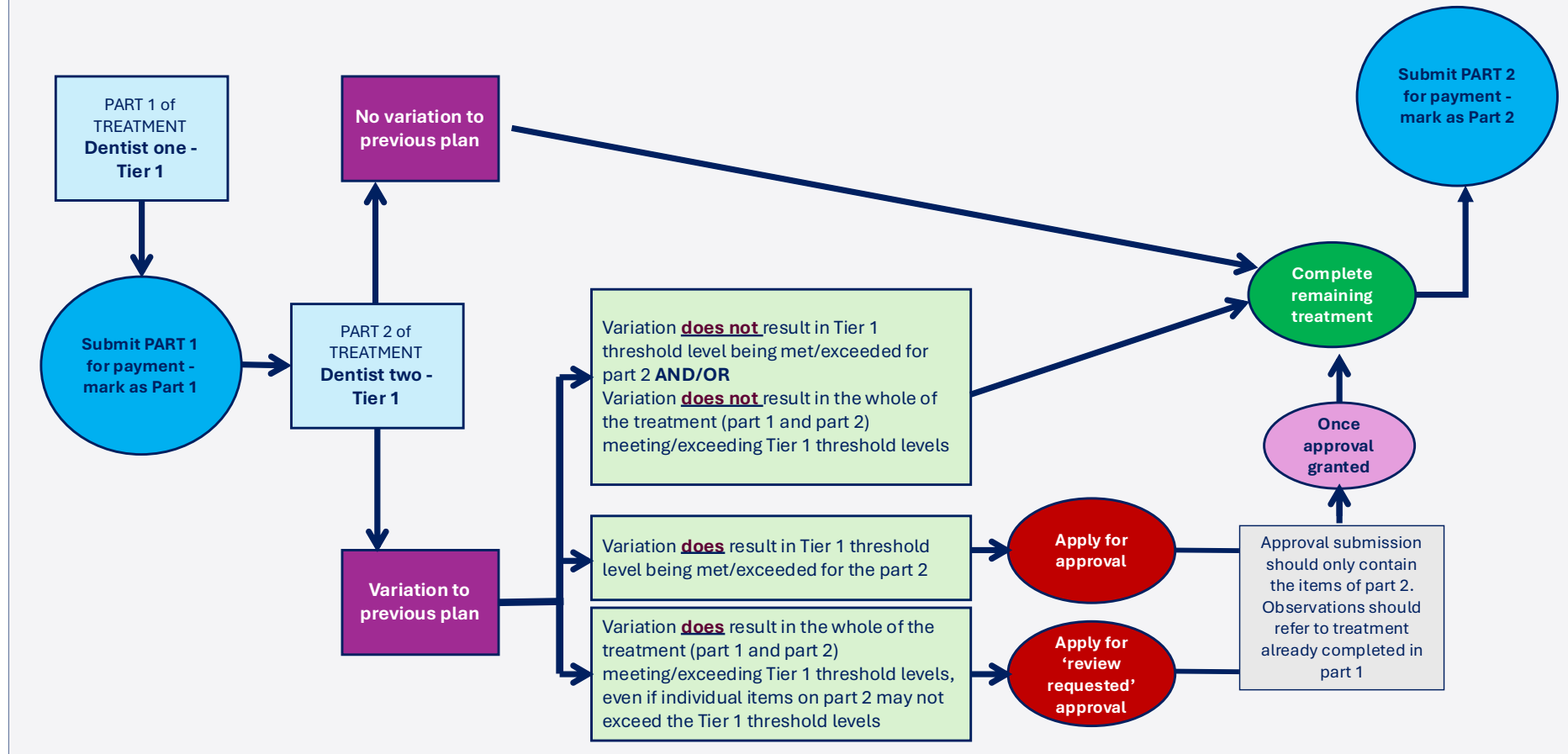


Item	Code	Number of items proposed		Threshold ≥		Prior Approval Required		Combination Prior Approval Items Proposed		Combination Prior Approval Items Threshold ≥		Prior Approval Required	
				Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2			Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 2
1-(d)	A004	7		15	15	No	No						
4-(a)	D002	2		4	3	No	No	8	6	4	Yes	Yes	
4-(b)	D005	2		4	3	No	No						
4-(d)	D006	2		4	3	No	No						
4-(g)	D015	2		4	2	No	Yes						

Appendix 6

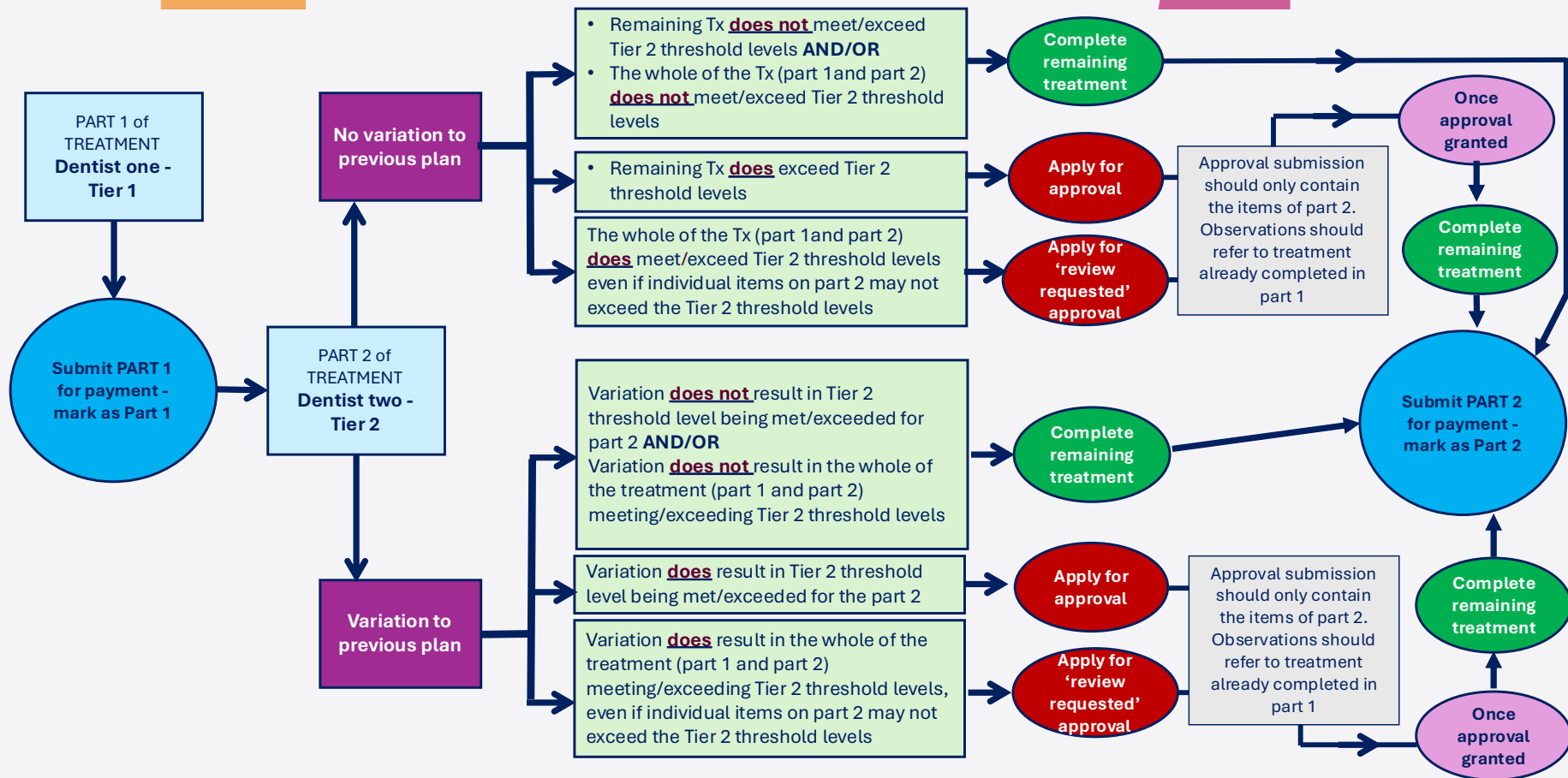
Tier 1 → Tier 1

No Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment

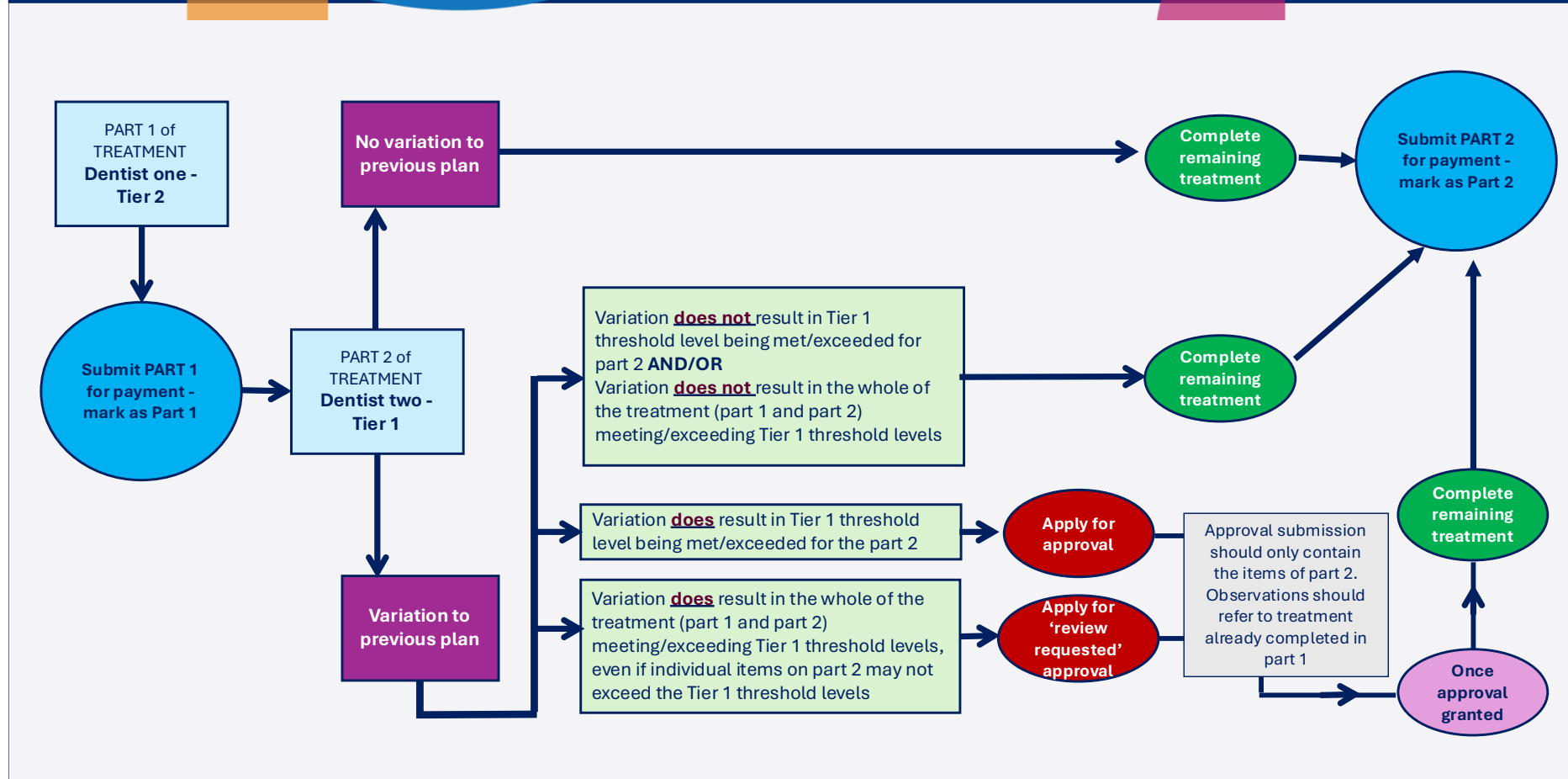


Tier 1 → Tier 2

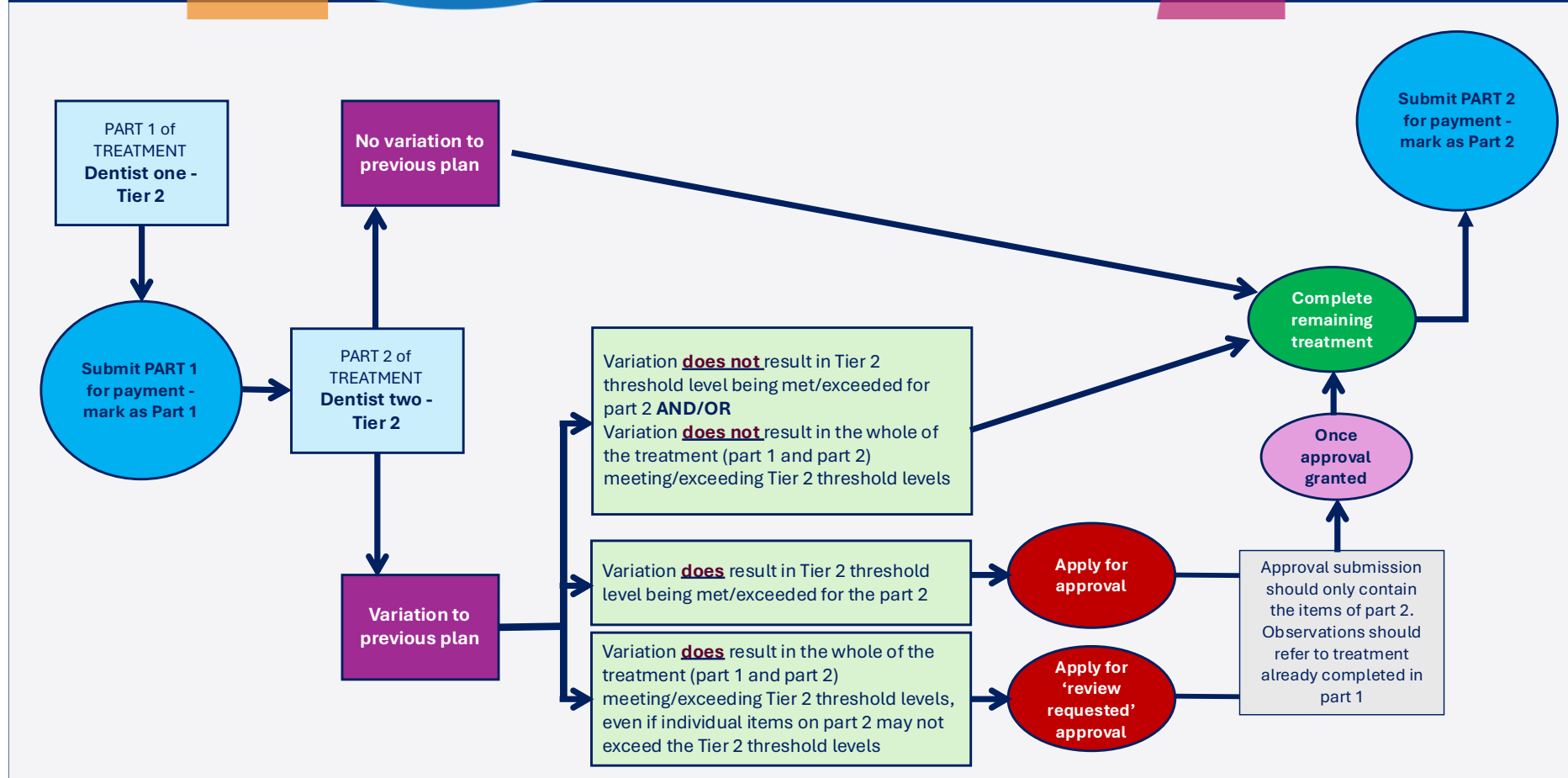
No Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



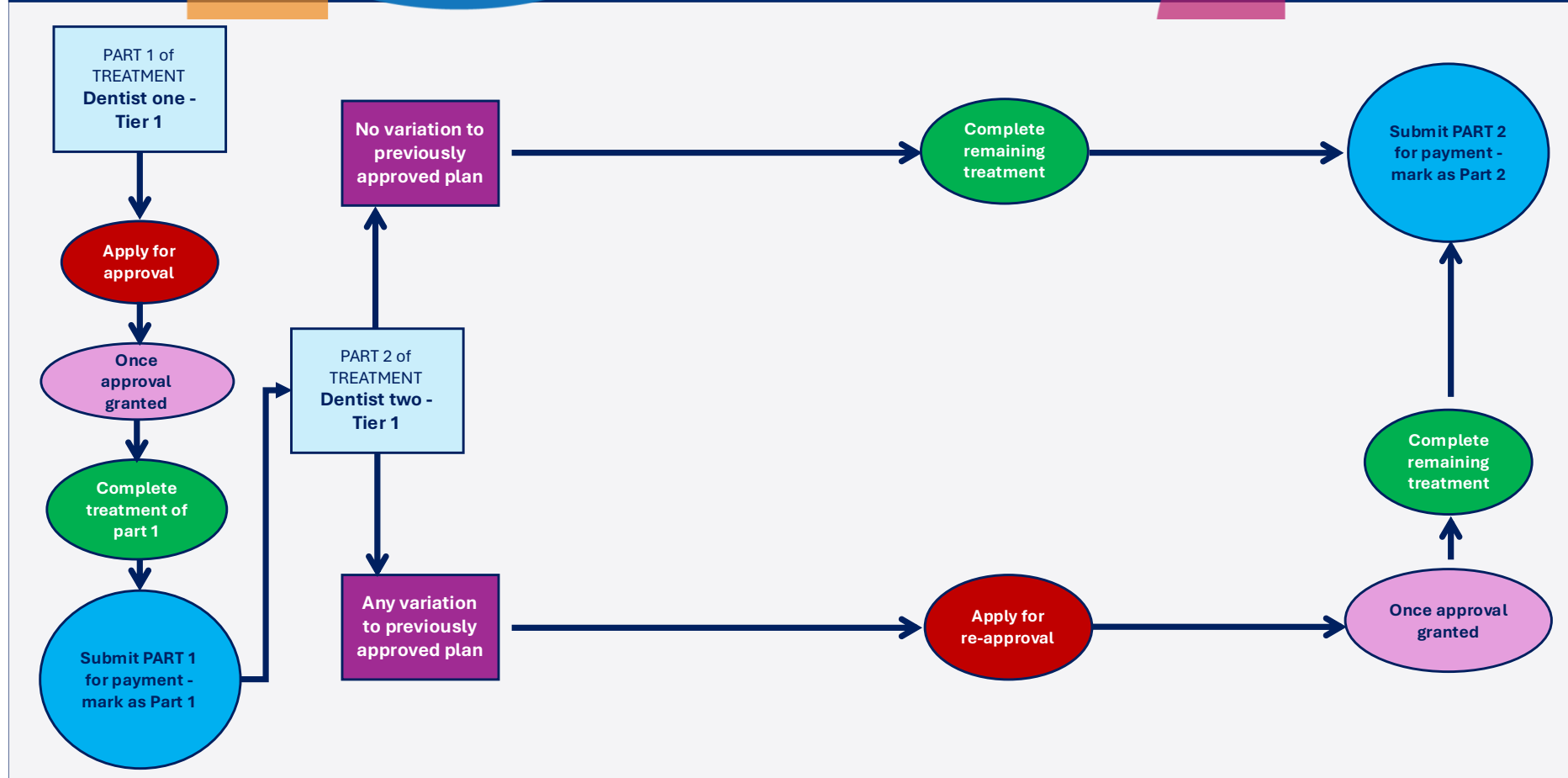
Tier 2 → Tier 1
No Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



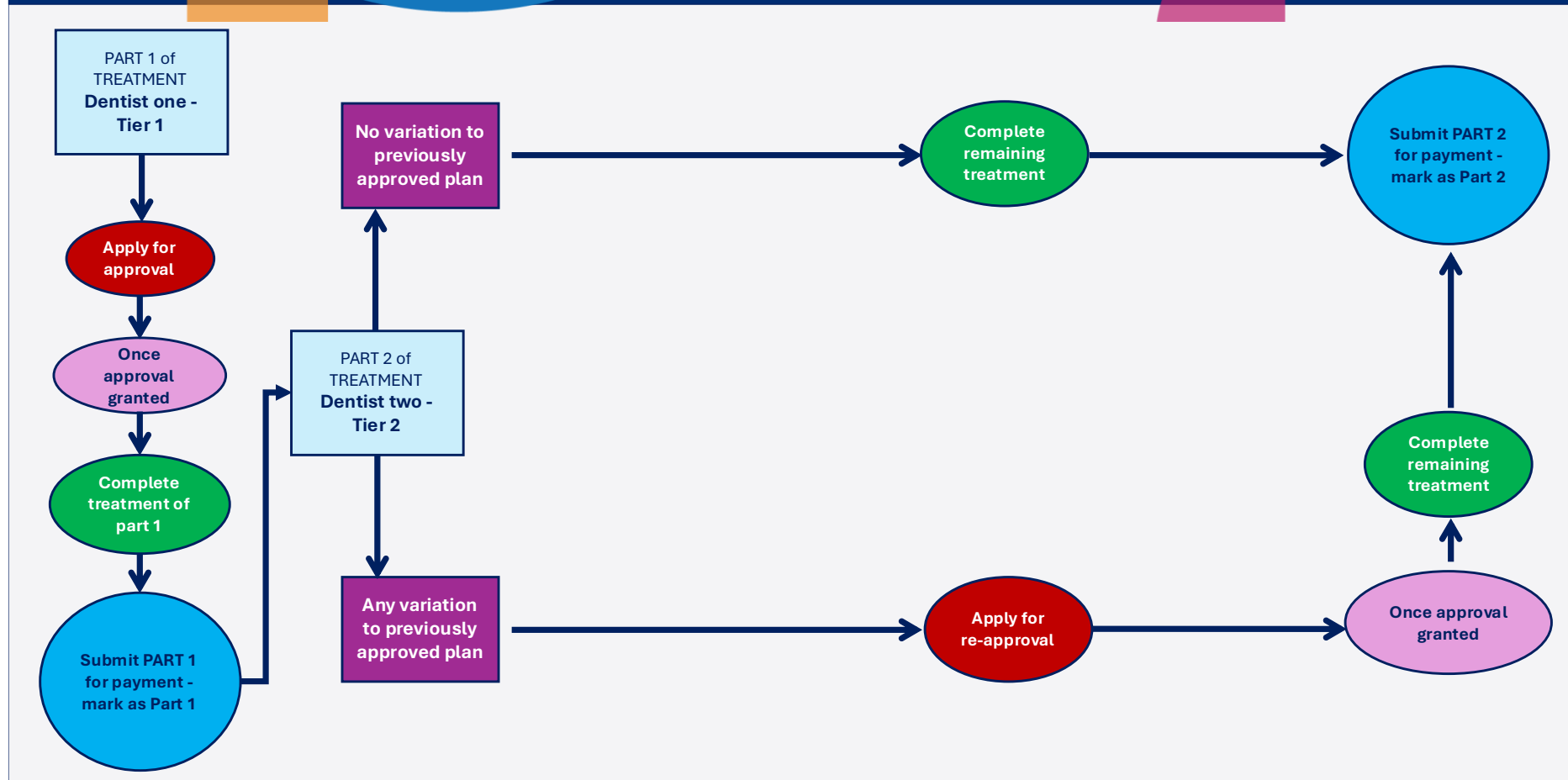
Tier 2 → Tier 2
No Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



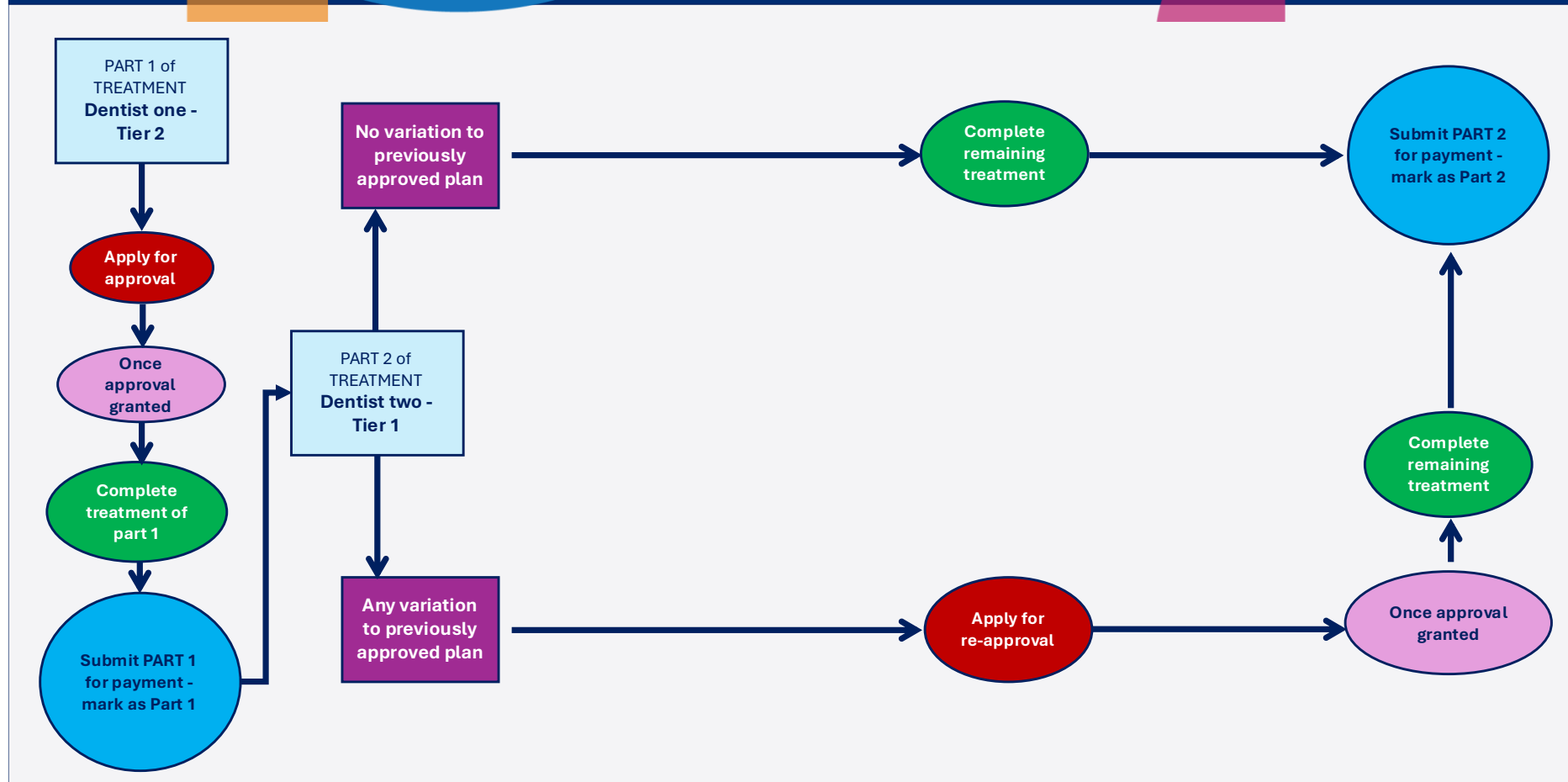
Tier 1 → Tier 1
Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



Tier 1 → Tier 2
Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



Tier 2 → Tier 1
Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment



Tier 2 → Tier 2
Prior Approval required at start of whole course of treatment

