VISAGE ORTHODONTICS INVERNESS

NHS braces in Scotland. The honest guide.

Who qualifies, how the referral really works, how long things take – and how to find out where you stand before you ever sit in a waiting room.

INSIDE

- The five steps from your dentist's chair to braces
- IOTN – the score that decides NHS funding, in plain English
- Check your eligibility from home, free
- The part nobody talks about: keeping the result

THE PATHWAY

Five steps, honestly described

1. **Your dentist refers you.** NHS orthodontic referrals can only come from a dentist, through the NHS system (SCI Gateway). You cannot self-refer - but you can ask, and you can name the clinic you want: Visage Orthodontics Inverness.
2. **You are assessed.** An orthodontist examines you and records your IOTN score - the national yardstick (see table). Healthy teeth first: the NHS expects no untreated decay and good brushing.
3. **Funding is approved.** Above the cost limit, NHS Scotland signs off funding first ("Prior Approval") - this alone can take up to 12 weeks.
4. **You wait for a slot.** Waiting lists are real, and in the Highlands they can be long. Use the time to get informed - it costs nothing.
5. **Treatment - then retention.** Braces do the moving; retainers keep the result. This last part is for life, and it is the step most people under-estimate (see back page).

IOTN in plain English

Score	Meaning	NHS?
Grade 4-5	Clear clinical need - impacted or missing teeth, prominent front teeth, severe crowding or bite problems	Eligible
Grade 3	Moderate - depends how visible the problem is (the "aesthetic component", scored 1-10; 6+ counts)	Borderline
Grade 1-2	Mild - mainly about appearance	Not funded

Adults: NHS orthodontics in Scotland rarely covers over-18s, whatever the teeth look like. Most adult treatment is private - and that is a funding rule, not a verdict on your smile.

BEFORE YOU JOIN ANY LIST

Find out where you stand - from home, free

1. The two-minute NHS check

Three questions, instant honest indication - likely, borderline or unlikely. No photos, no email address needed to see your result.
invernessorthodontics.co.uk/nhs-check

2. The eligibility scan

A few guided photos through our clinical portal and a clinician reviews your case against the real IOTN criteria. You get a personal steer, the exact words to say to your dentist - and you join our pre-assessed list, so you are first in line when your referral arrives.
invernessorthodontics.co.uk/nhs-eligibility

3. If the NHS says no - or the wait says never

You will know early, before months on a list. Private treatment at our clinic is specialist-led with published fees and 0% finance, and a free consultation commits you to nothing.
invernessorthodontics.co.uk/fees

THE PART NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

Keep the smile you paid for. For life.

1 in 10

In the landmark University of Washington follow-up studies, only around one in ten patients still had well-aligned lower front teeth 10 to 20 years after their retainers stopped. The other nine watched years of treatment quietly undo itself.

If you had NHS braces as a teenager: your first retainers normally come with the end of treatment - but replacements after loss, damage or wear are usually yours to pay for privately. You went through so much for that smile. Don't let it be for nothing.

SMILE FOR LIFE

Our retention membership from **£14.99 a month**: replacement retainers, an annual check with the orthodontist and member pricing on the finishing touches - with a permanent invisible lingual wire fitted free on the Pro and Max plans.
invernessorthodontics.co.uk/smile-for-life

Sources: IOTN & NHS criteria - PCA(2011)D06, NSS Practitioner Services prior-approval rules, NHS Grampian referral guidance. Relapse figures - Little et al., University of Washington postretention studies (AJO-DO). Correct as at November 2026. This booklet is general information, not clinical advice; eligibility is always decided at a clinical assessment. Contact: [phone TBC] · [email TBC].