

NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT – EAST OF ENGLAND RESPONSE TO COVID-19
AND THE DELIVERY OF NHS DENTAL SERVICES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

To: Health Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday 15 October 2020

From: NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England

Purpose: To update the Committee regarding the current provision of NHS dentistry services to the local population during the Covid-19 pandemic and the plans on local recovery for dentistry.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report for information.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Health Committee has requested information regarding the current provision and access to dentistry during COVID-19 and plans for resumption of dental services.

2. Main Issues

Response to COVID-19

- 2.1 Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 25 March 2020, in relation to implementing social distancing measures to slow down the spread of COVID-19, all non-urgent face to face dental activity was stopped.
- 2.2 In response to this directive and in conjunction with Public Health, NHS England and Improvement made a number of necessary changes to the delivery of dental services in the East of England region.
- 2.3 Across every NHS region local Urgent Dental Care (UDC) systems were created to provide care for people with urgent dental problems.
- These hubs were established to meet the distinct needs of people with the following urgent dental care needs:
1. Those who were possible or confirmed COVID-19 patients – including patients with symptoms, or those living in their household.
 2. Those who were 'shielding', as being at most-significant risk from COVID-19.
 3. Those who were vulnerable/at increased risk from COVID-19.
 4. Any other people who did not fit one of the above categories.
- 2.4 Seven Urgent Dental Care centres were put in place in Cambridgeshire as a response to the restrictions, this was then followed by three additional Minor Oral Surgery Urgent Care Dental Centres. The capacity of each UDC is reviewed regularly, to ensure patients are seen as quickly as possible.
- 2.5 All Dental Practices with an NHS contract were expected during the initial restrictions, to offer advice, analgesics and antibiotics (3As) to any patients who presented to them in need of urgent dental care.
- 2.6 A further publication from the Office of the Chief Dental Officer set out guidance for the resumption of face to face dental services on 8 June 2020 where the necessary Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements were in place.
- 2.7 The letter also highlighted that the sequencing and scheduling of patients for treatment as services resume should take into account:
- the urgency of needs
 - the particular unmet needs of vulnerable groups

- available capacity to undertake activity

Progression to resumption of the full range of routine dental care would be risk-managed by the individual practice and could include aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs), subject to following the necessary IPC and PPE requirements. Dental practices also took steps to risk assess their workforce and take commensurate actions.

Non-Aerosol Generating Procedures include

- Examinations;
- Handscaling with suction;
- Simple extractions;
- Removal of caries (tooth decay) using hand excavation.
- Using slow-speed handpiece with high volume suction.
- Local Anaesthesia.

AGP procedures include:

All other procedures utilising ultrasonic scalers, high speed drills with associated water spray etc.

Current Position

- 2.8 There are now 38 NHS Dental Surgeries providing face to face services, and 7 offering advice, analgesics and antibiotics (3As) in Cambridgeshire. This is alongside the seven Urgent Dental Care centres and three Oral Surgery Urgent Dental Care centres put in place as a response to the initial restrictions.
- 2.9 All practices have been advised that they are to treat both regular and new attendees requiring urgent dental care and at least one urgent appointment, per dentist, per day should be made available to support referrals from the 111 service.
- 2.10 Additionally, there are three practices one in Ely, Littleport and March that are part of the Urgent Care and Stabilisation Project which aims to treat urgent care dental patients, and where appropriate provide stabilisation treatment to the patients to improve their overall oral health.

NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England actions to support the resumption of dental services

- 2.11 NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England acknowledges that the suspension of primary care dental services had an impact on patient's ability to receive dental care and has been working to put a number of measures in place to support the resumption of dental services which include:
- We emphasised the need to prioritise treatment; urgency of need
 - Dental practices to hold one urgent care slot, per dentist, per day for any patient that presents with urgent needs (not just for usual patients to that practice). Above and beyond their normal appointment slots.

- Supporting providers to attend FIT testing training to support the resumption of face-to-face full range of services. Three face fit testing courses (10 places in each course) have been delivered in Cambridgeshire. Those who undertook the course are continuing to support practices with face fit testing for face masks.
- Amending the Directory of Service to ensure that patients are sign-posted to UDC's and practices with urgent slots as the first responder practices to contact (ensuring patients are sign-posted to practices that are able to clinically diagnose and treat).
- Ensuring that GP and Community Pharmacies and other stakeholders are made aware of how patients can access urgent and emergency dental care.
- Encouraging and working with providers and wider dental team to prioritise access and clinical needs of patients to reduce inequalities.
- Working with the Health Oversight Scrutiny Committees (HOSC's) and Healthwatch to explain local provision and sign-post patients.
- Working with the Local Dental Committee's to send out communications to their respective members supporting NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England regarding the resumption of dental services.
- Encouraging practices to work in a Hub and Spoke model to sign post patients with urgent needs between themselves to ensure the patient is seen in accordance with their needs.
- A BAME risk assessment has been undertaken with all providers and we continue to offer support and guidance regarding safer working practices to ensure the sustainability of services.
- All providers have reminded to update NHS UK (formerly NHS Choices) and practice website with their current NHS capacity to see patients.
- We are in the process of producing patient education / sign-posting information, which we plan to publish at the beginning of October 2020, when the new national contractual position is known.

3. Source documents

3.1 Source documents

NHS England and NHS Improvement *regular updates to general dental practices and community dental services regarding the emerging COVID-19 situation.*

3.2 Location

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/>