

The provision of NHS Dental Services in Cambridgeshire

To: Adults & Health Committee

Meeting Date: 22 September 2021

From: NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England

Key decision: No

Purpose: To update the Committee regarding the current provision of NHS dentistry services to the local population.

Recommendation:

- a) Members of the Adults & Health Committee are asked to note the content of the report.

NHS England and NHS Improvement - East of England want to assure members that we are working closely with providers and stakeholders to achieve the resumption of safe and effective dental services. This is being undertaken in a manner that takes into account the need for fallow time between appointments to allow the venting and cleaning of surgeries. The safety of patients, the public and dental practice staff remains paramount.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The committee has requested information regarding the current provision and access to dentistry in Cambridgeshire.

2. Main Issues

Recovery and restoration of NHS Dental Services

- 2.1 Across East of England all Dental Practices providing NHS services are open for face-to-face appointments. Within Cambridgeshire there are 4 Urgent Dental Care practices which continue to be utilised to meet the urgent needs of patients.
- 2.2 NHS England and NHS Improvement's Chief Dental Officer announced that from 8 June 2020, dental provision should be restored. This is based on clinical need as set out by national guidance and the sequencing and scheduling of patients for treatment as services resume, should take into account:
- The urgency of need;
 - The particular un-met needs of vulnerable groups; and
 - Available capacity to undertake activity
- 2.3 NHS dentists are following the advice of the Chief Dental Officer, which is to prioritise urgent cases and those with outstanding treatments. Therefore, very few dental practices have the capacity to see routine examinations at the moment. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the difficulties Covid-19 presents for dental care, the day-to-day capacity of dental practices is significantly reduced, and this is reflected in their contractual requirements which is determined nationally.
- 2.4 Nationally between 1 April to 31 September 2021 (Quarter's 1 and 2 2021 / 22) practices have been allowed (contractually) to provide as a minimum, 60% of their normal contracted activity. The 60% of contractual delivery is based upon fallow time (the need to allow the aerosol particles to settle, for up to an hour, in the surgery, before cleaning surfaces and being able to see the next patient). In practice this has reduced the throughput of patients from 25 – 30 patients per dentist per day to 5 – 7 patients per dentist per day. Currently all providers are being paid 100% of their contract value if they can evidence that they are providing the minimum threshold of activity.

Noting the limitations set out above, NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England started and continues to undertake the following to ensure patients, requiring urgent dental care, are able to receive treatment:

- UDCs are still in operation, to support urgent dental access and contingency in case of further occurrences of local / national lockdown.
- We emphasise the need to prioritise treatment based on the urgency of a patient's needs and have asked all dental practices to hold at least one urgent care slot, per dentist, per day for any patient that presents with urgent needs (not just the practice's regular patients). This is above and beyond their normal appointment slots.

- Contractual follow up and support with practices to ensure that they are delivering the full suite of dental services

Dental Transformational Strategy

- 2.5 NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England has developed a Transformational Dental Strategy. The aim of which is to support a model that delivers universal access to urgent dental care and patient-focused preventative care to improve oral health and quality of life and reduced health inequalities across the life course and in all communities including our more vulnerable populations. This is underpinned by building a resilient and effective dental workforce better suited to meeting our patient needs, in line with Health Education England's, programme of Advancing Dental Care which develops a wider skill mix of dental professionals.
- 2.6 By aligning general dental services to Primary Care Networks (PCNs) this will build resilience and capacity and the treatment of co-morbidities (such as periodontal disease and diabetic health) as we emerge from the pandemic and align to the NHS Long Term Plan.
- 2.7 The eight dental strategy transformation workstreams shown below will be rolled out in phases:

1a. Urgent Care in normal contracted hours
1b. Prevention and stabilisation in normal contracted hours
2. Urgent care and stabilisation weekday outside of normal contracted hours
3. Prevention and Oral Care in Early Years
4. Oral Health in Care Homes
5. Advanced Restorative Care
6. Advanced Paediatric and Orthodontic Care
7. Diabetes Prevention in Primary Dental Care
8. Prevention and Treatment for Oral Cancer Patients

- 2.8 The programmes are being rolled out in phases. Programme 1a was rolled out initially with Urgent Dental Care practices. A phased roll-out plan is currently being devised with the wider Dental Practices across the region. The Commissioning Team is prioritising the roll-out to areas across the region where dental access need is of a greater concern

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/>