

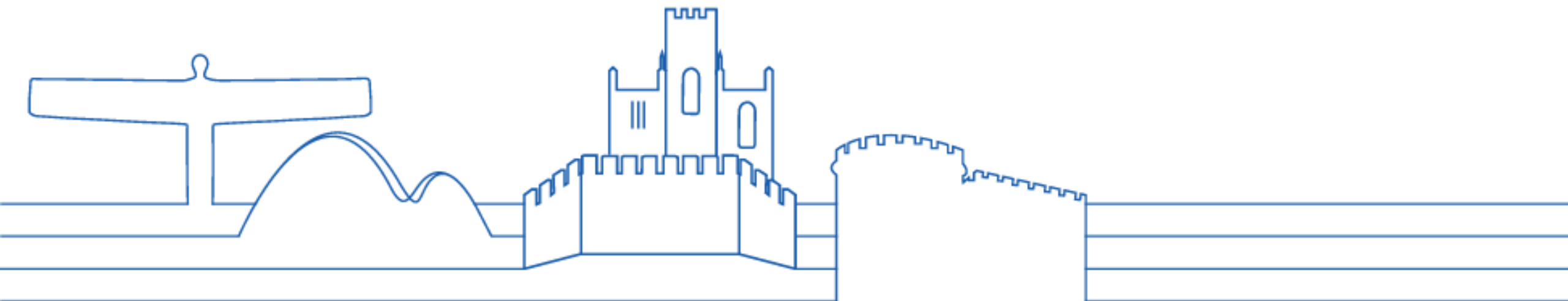


**North East and
North Cumbria**

Update on NHS Dentistry

Sunderland Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 July 2023



Summary Overview of NHS Dentistry

- Commissioning responsibility transferred from NHS England to the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) with effect from 1 April 2023.
- **Nationally set Government Regulation (2006) and dental policy.**
- Under NHS Dentistry national regulation there is **no ‘formal registration’ of patients** with dental practices as part of their NHS Dentistry offer, patients can therefore approach any dental practice offering NHS care for access.
- Dental contracts and provision is **activity and demand led** with the expectation practices deliver courses of treatment with **recall intervals appropriate to clinical need** and manage their available commissioned capacity to best meet both local demand and the clinical needs of patients presenting to their practice.
- The contract regulations set out the contract currency which is measured in **units of dental activity (UDAs)** that are attributable to a **‘banded’ course of treatment prescribed under the regulations.**
- **NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) do not commission private dental services** but the NHS dental regulations do not prohibit the provision of private dentistry by NHS Dental Practices.
- The prolonged **COVID- 19 pandemic period** required NHS Dental Practices to follow strict Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance which significantly restricted levels of access to dental care. As a result **backlog demand for dental care remains high with the urgency and increased complexity of patient clinical presentations** further impacting the ability for the NHS Dental Care system to return back to pre-COVID operational norms.

NHS Commissioned Capacity



North East and
North Cumbria

Commissioned general dental access @ 1 July 2023 Units of Dental Activity (UDAs)

NHS General Dental Service Contracts (Practices)	UDAs Commissioned
19 (22)	474,824

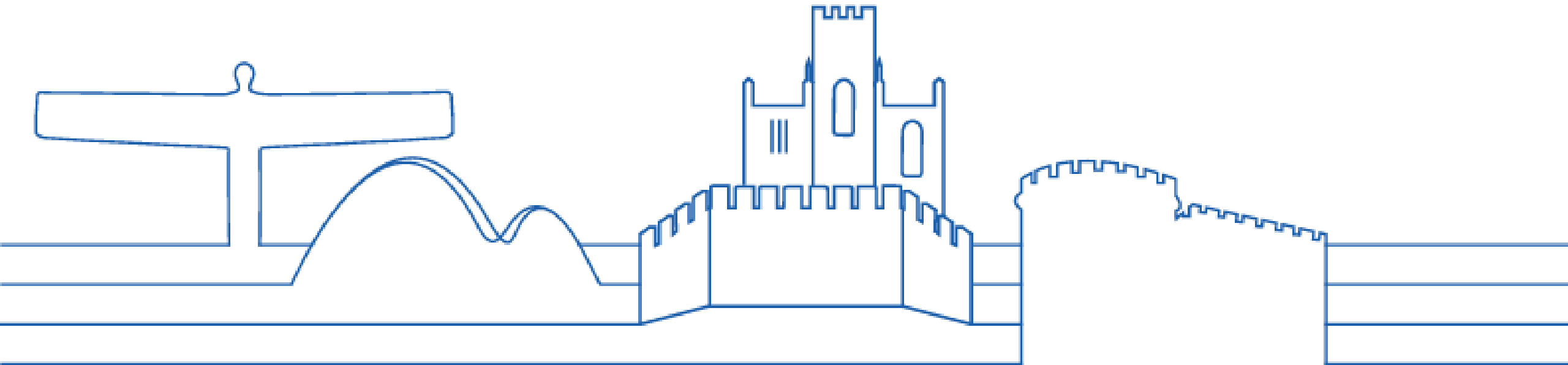
Recent changes to position since last report to the Committee:

- Mr G A Conlon (Washington) – 11,000 UDAs – NHS contract handed back wef 31.08.22 (9,237 UDAs re-commissioned)
- Silver and Charlton – UDA reduction 11,717 – wef 31.10.22
- Breeze Dental Practice (Ryhope) - 15,280 UDAs – NHS contract handed back wef 31.03.23
- BUPA Dental Care Ltd (Hylton Road) – 23,665 UDAs – NHS contract handed back wef 30.6.23

Other Primary Care Services

- Orthodontic Services - 2 specialist providers
- Urgent dental care services - in-hours and out of hours appointments via NHS111
- Community dental service – vulnerable patients with additional needs that cannot be met within high street practices
- Oral Surgery
- Domiciliary care

Pressures and Challenges



1. COVID-19 Impacts

- During the **first wave of the pandemic** in the interest of patient and dental staff safety, **routine dental services were paused in March 2020** and urgent dental care centres (UDCs) were established to provide access only to clinically confirmed urgent dental care.
- In **July 2020 all practices gradually re-opened for limited face to face care** in strict accordance with Nationally mandated COVID-19 NHS Dentistry Standard Operating Procedures and IPC constraints.
- As part of those arrangements practices were required to **prioritise patients based on clinical need and urgency into their significantly reduced safe operating capacity**, creating inevitable delays and backlogs over time for patients seeking non-clinically urgent and more routine dental care at that time.
- As part of those nationally mandated COVID-19 response arrangements practices were provided with **income protection** but also **mandated to operate at significantly reduced and safe levels of face to face access levels** throughout the prolonged COVID-19 Pandemic period as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 0% between March – July 2020 (remote triage only unless designated UDC) ○ 20% between July - December 2020 ○ 45% between January - March 2021 ○ 60% between April - September 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 65% between September - December 2021 ○ 85% between January - March 2022 ○ 95% between April 2022 – June 2022 ○ 100% from July 2022
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- All dental practices are now able to safely provide a full range of treatment however **demand for care remains extremely high** with dental practices having to **balance addressing the backlog of care with managing new patient demand**, whilst also facing **workforce recruitment and retention issues** which continues to mean a delay in meeting demand for more routine and non-urgent care.

2. Dental Workforce Recruitment and Retention

There are a number of factors relating to workforce recruitment and retention that are affecting the ability of NHS dental practices to deliver the full level of commissioned access, these include:

- **Younger generation and newly qualifying dentists** more often choosing not to pursue an NHS Dentistry career or where they do, they are seeking a work life balance that limits their working commitment to part time NHS Dentistry
- **More experienced dentists and increasing dental nurses** are choosing to retire early, move into private dentistry or pursue a different career path.
- General recruitment issues **attracting new dentists into NHS Dentistry** due to a range of issues including but not limited to; difficulties securing GDC and Performers List registration for overseas dentists, Dental Student and Foundation Dentistry Places being limited nationally and dentists not perceiving working within the current NHS Regulatory arrangements as being attractive in terms of pay, conditions, work life balance etc.

This creates difficulties for NHS Dental Practices locally and nationally to **maintain and/or replace the level of clinical workforce** they need in order to reliably deliver their full NHS Dentistry capacity as they continue to try to fully recover from COVID-19 Pandemic impacts.

3. NHS Dental Contract

- Current **NHS Dental Regulations/contract** was introduced in **2006**.
- **March 2021** the Department of Health requested that **NHS England lead on and develop national dental system reforms for England**.
- In **July 2022**, NHS England published a **national package of ‘initial reforms’** to the NHS dental regulatory contract.
- Awaiting publication of **National Dental Plan** and **further dental system reforms**.

Children and adults accessing NHS primary dental care

(NHS Digital 2022)

Area	Percentage of children (0-17 years) in 12 months before 31 March 2022	Percentage of Adults (18 years+) in 24 months before 31 March 2022
England	45.4%	34.6%
North East	45.8%	39.1%
Cumbria	48.3%	30.6%
Sunderland	43.0%	40.7%

What is being done about difficulties accessing NHS dental services?

- New reforms to the dental contract – the first in 16 years
- NHS dentists paid more for treating more complex cases, such as people who need three fillings or more.
- Dental therapist can accept patients for NHS treatments, providing fillings, sealants, preventative care for adults and children, which will free up dentists' time for urgent and more complex care.
- Dental practices are now contractually required to update the NHS website and directory of services to give greater visibility on the availability of dentist.
- Dental practices who have workforce available have opportunity with local commissioner agreement to increase their activity by a further 10% to see as many patients as possible.
- Acknowledged further reforms required – discussions taking place at national level to identify solutions to recruitment and retention pressures, and to understand and address the constraints of the current national NHS dental contract mechanisms.
- National Dental Plan.

Local actions

- **Additional funding** made available to all NHS dental practices who have the capacity to deliver **additional clinical sessions** to provide treatment to patients with **urgent dental care needs** as well as prioritisation of **looked after children** and unscheduled care patients with **dental complaints and complex high care needs** to help reduce oral health inequalities (Sunderland - 408 sessions in 2022-23 and 204 session April – June 2023).
- Increased local investment during 2022-23 into **specialist orthodontic service** to secure additional treatment capacity in order to help **reduce waiting times** for patients.
- Funding made available to **improve access to clinical triage** via NHS111, as well as **additional treatment capacity** in the dental out of hours treatment services.
- Funding of an advert in the British Dental Journal to try to **attract overseas dentists** and to support them through the process of getting on the National Dental Performers List which is required to enable them to delivery NHS dental care.
- Introduced a flexible commissioning arrangement that provides a **training grant** to support the **employment of overseas dentists**.
- **Re-commissioning of activity**, where possible, from NHS contracts that have been handed back with other local NHS dental providers.

Next Steps

- Plans being finalised for **formal procurement** process to try to **secure new market interest/NHS dental practices** to address gaps in provision from contract hand-backs.
- **Review of oral health and care** across the whole of the North East and North Cumbria – to be concluded by end October 2023 – views of our citizens and partnership and evaluation of current services – make recommendations aligned to ICB Better Health and Wellbeing for All Strategy
- **Continue to work with the local dental professional leads and wider partners** to explore all local opportunities to improve NHS Dentistry access for patients and influence the development of national system and workforce developments during 2023-24 and beyond.

Advice for patients

- If your teeth and gums are healthy – a **check-up, or scale and polish may not be needed every 6 months.**
- **Stopping smoking** and **limiting alcohol intake** along with **reducing the amount of sugary drinks and food** can all be beneficial in keeping your teeth and gums healthy.
- **Every dental practice is working extremely hard to provide care to as many patients as possible,** if a routine appointment is not yet available, please be understanding of the challenges that practices are facing.
- Dental practices are being **encouraged to prioritise patients for treatment based on clinical need and urgency.**
- Appointments for some **routine treatments**, such as dental check up, may still be delayed.
- If you develop an **urgent dental issue** telephone your regular dental practice (or any NHS practice is you don't have a regular dentist) for advice on what to do next or visit www.111.nhs / ring 111.
- If the dentist decides the issue is not urgent, you may be given advice on how to self manage the dental problem until an appointment becomes available. You should be advised to make contact again if your situation changes/worsens.

Key messages

- You **do not need to register** with a dental practice like you do with a GP practice – you can contact any NHS dental practice to seek care. Dental practices manage their own appointment books and are best placed to advise on the availability of appointments.
- All dental practices are able to safely provide a full range of treatments however **demand for care remains extremely high** with dental practice having to balance addressing the backlog of care with managing new patient demand.
- **High treatment needs** for patients and **workforce recruitment and retention** issues continues to mean delay in practices being able to full meet the demand for more routine dental care, ie check-ups.
- **Children are identified as a priority group for recall**
- **NHS dental care for children is free.**
- **All opportunities are being explored** locally to:
 - Increase the number of appointments available and improve access for patients with priority for patients with greatest dental clinical need, ie those requiring urgent dental care and vulnerable/high risk groups such as children.
 - Support practices to recruit and retain dentists.



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Thank you – Questions?

