

UPDATE ON GENERAL DENTAL ACCESS

REPORT OF NHS ENGLAND

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to Sunderland's Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in respect of general dental access following the previous update that was received on 7 July 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 No 'formal' registration in NHS dentistry - patients can contact any NHS dental practice to access care.
- 2.2 Dental contracts and provision is activity and demand led with the expectation practices deliver and manage their available commissioned activity to best meet the needs of patients presenting to the practice.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 NHS England do not commission private dental services but the NHS dentistry regulations do not prohibit the provision of private dentistry by NHS Dental Practices.
- 2.5 COVID- 19 pandemic and requirement to following strict infection prevention control guidance significantly impacted on access to dental care over the last 2 years – demand for dental care remains high across all NHS dental practices.

3. GENERAL DENTAL ACCESS PROVISION

- 3.1 22 NHS dental providers delivering general dental services across 26 practices locations within Sunderland Local Authority boundary. 538,319 Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) commissioned per annum (circa £14.9m).
- 3.2 Practice in Washington (11,000 UDAs) due to close at the end of August 2022 as provider is retiring – intention is to re-commission this activity as quickly as possible.
- 3.3 In 2019-20 (pre-Covid) approximately 90% of the total commissioned capacity in Sunderland had been utilised. demonstrating that at that time we were reasonably meeting the dental needs of the population.

- 3.4 Urgent and Emergency dental services are also available to patients out-with general dental practices via NHS 111. Where patients present into NHS 111 they will be remotely triaged and where clinically appropriate be booked into the nearest in hours or out of hours treatment centre. Patients with non-urgent/routine dental needs will where appropriate be provided with self-care advice and sign-posted to NHS dental practices.
- 3.5 Community Dental Service provided by South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust for vulnerable patients with additional needs that cannot be met within high street practices.

4. PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES

Covid-19 Impacts

- 4.1 Infection Prevention Control (IPC) and capacity constraints 2020-2022, backlog of unmet need, continuing high demand for care.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention

- 4.2 Not just a local issue, providers and performers choosing to retire early/move to private dentistry/away from the dentistry all together (Dentists/nurses/therapists).

Dental System Reform

- 4.3 Legacy 2006 NHS Dental regulatory UDA system –discussions on-going at a national level between NHSE and the BDA on dental system reforms – feedback from discussions awaited together with contracting guidance from July 2022.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note and comment on the update and information provided.

Contact Officer: Pauline Fletcher, Senior Primary Care Manager, NHS England - North East and Yorkshire (North Cumbria and the North East).