

APPENDIX 1



North East and  
North Cumbria

# **NHS Primary Care Dental Services & Dental Access Recovery**

## **Tees Valley Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee update**

December 2023

# Summary Overview of NHS Dentistry

- NHS England has delegated responsibility to North East and North Cumbria (NENC) ICB for commissioning dental services from 1 April 2023
- NHS Dentistry services MUST operate in accordance with Nationally set Government Regulation (2006)
- 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 local demand and 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.
- North East and North Cumbria ICB do not commission private dental services, however, 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.

# Context

- Patients are not registered with a dentist in the same way as GP practices – you can therefore contact any NHS dental practice to access care.
- As independent contractors, dental practice are responsible for managing their appointment books and are best placed to advise on the capacity they have available to take on new patients.
- Practices providing NHS treatment are listed on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). Practices are responsible for keeping the website updated and whilst it may currently indicate they are not taking on new patients, we would advise that patients do contact them to check the latest position on availability of routine appointments.
- Dental practices are being **encouraged to prioritise patients for treatment based on clinical need and urgency**, therefore appointments for some **routine treatments**, such as dental check-ups, may therefore still be delayed. (Some practices are operating waiting lists to manage those patients requesting routine NHS dental care).
- If your teeth and gums are healthy – a **check-up, or scale and polish may not be needed every 6 months**.

# Commissioned Capacity

Locality	NHS Dental Contracts (General Dental Services)*	UDA Capacity Commissioned 2023-24
Middlesbrough	9	301,316
Hartlepool	8	191,367
Redcar & Cleveland	17	273,097
Stockton on Tees	22	370,694
Darlington	12	176,473

\* As at 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

# Other Primary and Community Dental Services

In addition to routine General Dental Practice NENC ICB also commissions the following primary care and community dental services.

- Urgent dental care services - in-hours and out of hours appointments via NHS111 (see following slide for detail)
- Community dental services (CDS) – Service for vulnerable patients (adults and children) with additional needs that cannot be met within high street practices.
- Additional Services: Advanced mandatory (minor oral surgery services), Domiciliary care, sedation and orthodontic services (activity commissioned and rates paid vary across the NENC).

# Urgent Dental Care Services

Service Type	Geographical Coverage
NHS 111 Dedicated 'In Hours' Direct Booking Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Cumbria</li> <li>• Northumberland</li> <li>• Newcastle and North Tyneside</li> <li>• Gateshead</li> <li>• South Tyneside</li> <li>• Sunderland</li> <li>• Durham</li> <li>• Tees Valley</li> </ul>
NHS 111 Integrated Dental Clinical Assessment Service (DCAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NENC Wide</li> </ul>
NHS 111 Dedicated 'Out of Hours' Direct Booking Treatment Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Cumbria</li> <li>• North of Tyne</li> <li>• South of Tyne</li> <li>• Durham</li> <li>• Tees Valley</li> </ul>

# Challenges to access

- Dental services have struggled to recover from the impact of covid
- There are significant challenges with recruitment and retention of dentists
- As a result, some providers unable to deliver full commissioned capacity
- There is widespread recognition that the national dental contract requires reform (*see link to House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee report published July 2023 for further details - <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/40901/documents/199172/default/>* )
- A significant challenge is that dentists can hand back their contracts. A number of contracts have been handed back across the NENC area since the ICB took over commissioning responsibility
- This means local people across the NENC are experiencing problems accessing NHS dentists – areas of particular challenge include N Cumbria, North Northumberland, Darlington, parts of Co Durham and Sunderland

# Our approach to tackling these challenges - Three phases

Improving access to dentistry will not be a quick fix

We are tackling this in three streams:



Immediate actions to stabilise services



A more strategic approach to workforce and service delivery



Developing an oral health strategy to improve oral health and reduce the pressure on dentistry, this needs to be progressed with partners around awareness and promotion



# Immediate Actions Undertaken

- c£3.8m non-recurrent investment agreed to date for 2023-24 to:
  - Increase NHS 111 dental clinical assessment capacity
  - Increase out of hours dental treatment services
  - Extend access arrangements to provide where possible an additional 27.5k patient treatment slots between July 2023 and end of March 2024 (to supplement the circ 4.3k slots funded in Q1)
- Flexible commissioning arrangement offered to practices to provide a training grant to support the employment of overseas dentists
- Implemented a local commissioning process to re-provide (where possible) activity when contracts are handed back (see slide overleaf)

# Dental Access Recommissioning (UDAs)

Locality	UDAs commissioned 2023-24 (recurrent)	UDAs commissioned 2023-24 (Non-recurrent)	UDAs commissioned 2024-25 (Non-recurrent)*
Durham		14,600	20,100
North Tyneside		1,500	2,000
Stockton on Tees		4,000	11,000
Newcastle		3088	5,730
South Tyneside		4185	10,000
Darlington		4707	4,707
N Cumbria (Carlisle)		3720	3,720
N Cumbria (Eden)	7,000		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>32,080</b>	<b>53,537</b>

\* Commissioned capacity to be made recurrent if providers demonstrates they can deliver this additional activity

# Further Action and Next Steps

- Funding earmarked to progress formal procurements to secure new market interest/NHS dental practices to address gaps in provision where it has not been possible to re-commission UDAs from existing NHS practices (inc. in the Darlington locality).
- Advert in British Dental Journal to attract overseas dentists and to support them through National Dental Performer List process (required to deliver NHS dental care).
- Work with key stakeholders on further local initiatives to improve workforce recruitment and retention, service delivery sustainability and improved access particularly within CORE20 areas and for disadvantaged groups.
- Work with Healthwatch to update patient and stakeholder comms.
- Work with local system partners to progress development of an oral health strategy to improve oral health and reduce the pressure on dentistry.
- Work with NHS England regional and national teams to influence national Dental System Reform.

# Advice for Patients with an Urgent Dental Treatment Need

- If you develop an **urgent dental issue** telephone your regular dental practice (or any NHS practice if you don't have a regular dentist).
- It is important that when you ring the practice, you fully explain the nature of your dental problem so that the urgency of your dental treatment need can be determined.
- If the practice is unable to offer an appointment because their NHS urgent access slots have already been taken up, they will advise you to ring another NHS dental practice, or alternatively you can visit [www.111.nhs](http://www.111.nhs) or call 111.
- The NHS111 health advisor will undertake a clinical triage and where the dental need is deemed to be clinically urgent, an appointment will be made at the nearest in-hours urgent dental care hub, or alternatively depending on the time of the call, into the dental out of hours treatment services.
- If the issue is not deemed urgent, patients will be signposted to another NHS dental practice and/or given self-care advice until an appointment can be offered.
- You should be advised to make contact again if your situation changes/worsens.