

Title:	Access to NHS Dentistry in Devon
Date:	19 th September 2016
Author:	Andrew Harris, Contract Manager (Dental)
Directorate:	Direct Commissioning
Presenter:	Andrew Harris, Contract Manager, NHS England South (South West)

Purpose: This paper is to provide an update to the Devon Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the present position regarding the access to NHS dental services.

Recommendations:
 To note the current position regarding access to NHS dental services

Background/Current Position

Historically access to NHS dental services in Devon has been difficult with an insufficient number of NHS places available to meet the level of demand from the public for dental services. Since the introduction of the present NHS dental contract in April 2006, there has been a steady rise in the number of patients in Devon who have been able to access a NHS dentist. The number of patients accessing NHS dentistry in Devon has risen from 364,730 (48.6%) in March 2006 to 446,766 in December 2015 (57.9%). Whilst the percentage of the population accessing a NHS dentist has remained at about 58%, in the last 12 months there has been a noticeable increase in demand for places with an NHS dentist which is seeing increases in the number of patients on a waiting list for a NHS dentist.

Dental Access in Devon

Following the organisational changes within the NHS in 2013, the responsibility for the commissioning of NHS dental services transferred from Primary Care Trusts to NHS England.

Access to NHS dental services has historically been difficult both nationally and locally with parts of the south and south west of England having the greatest challenges. Since the introduction of a new dental contract and local commissioning of dental services in 2006, we have seen a steady improvement in access to dental services.

The percentage of the population of Devon, accessing a dentist compares favourably when viewed against the access rates for the South of England (52.29%) and England (56%). Despite the history of increased access we are beginning to see demand for NHS places increase leading to an increase in the number of patients waiting to get a NHS dentist.

As a part of the regular national patient survey undertaken by the NHS, patients are asked to provide information on their experience of getting an appointment with an NHS dentist. For the period July to September 2015, 95.% of patients surveyed in the NEW Devon CCG area advised they had been successful getting an appointment with a dentist, whilst 77.1% of people who were new to a dental practice advised they had been successful getting an appointment. The table below provides some comparative information from the NHS survey.

	Successful in getting a dental appointment – July- Sept 2015	Successful in getting an appt when new to a practice – July - Sept 2015
NEW Devon CCG area	95%	77.1%
South of England	94.5%	77.3%
England	94.3%	76.4%

In 2013, NHS England extended the existing dental helpline to enable all patients in Devon and Cornwall to be assisted to find a NHS dentist. When there are not spaces available for immediate access to a routine appointment with a dentist, the helpline team will hold a waiting list and work with practices to ensure people on the list are offered a dentist as soon as places are available in their preferred area.

In the 12 months between July 2015 and June 2016, the dental helpline handled more than 25,000 calls. During the same period, the number of people on a waiting list for a dentist in Devon increased from 2,162 to 6,269. The table below provides a breakdown of the waiting list numbers and the comparison between June 2015 and July 2016.:

	Number of people on waiting List June 2015	Number of people on Waiting List July 2016
East Devon	120	560
Exeter	846	3900
Mid Devon	113	370
North Devon	316	474
South Hams & West Devon	110	192
Teignbridge	657	773

Whilst the waiting list for a dentist has increased in all areas, the areas of greatest increases have been for Exeter and East Devon.

Whilst the increased number of patients waiting demonstrate an increase in demand, NHS places continue to become available with more than 4,000 patients whose names have been on the waiting list have been given places with NHS dentists, between January and July 2016.

There are currently 15 practices in Devon and a further 7 in neighbouring Plymouth and Torbay with open lists and readily able to accept new NHS patients. Between January and July 2016

Urgent Dental Care

Access to urgent dental care would normally be expected to be available within 24 hours of making contact with the NHS. There are a number of arrangements which are in place for patients who may have an urgent dental problem, these include:-

On weekdays between 9am and 5pm

- Access to daily urgent appointments with their own dental practice
- Access to daily urgent appointments through either dental access centres in Exeter, Barnstaple, Plymouth, Torquay and Newton Abbot or a network of

dental practices across the county who hold daily urgent care appointments for people without a dentist.

Outside of these days and times

- Access to telephone advice and information on management of dental problems on weekday evenings – including signposting for dental emergencies and assistance getting a dental appointment for an urgent condition.
- Access to urgent dental clinics at Exeter, Barnstaple, Newton Abbot and Plymouth at weekends and on bank holidays

Only those cases with a significant dental emergency, such as rapid facial swelling, uncontrolled bleeding or facial trauma, would be expected to be treated at accident and emergency department.

Summary

Access to NHS dentistry in Devon has improved with in excess of 80,000 more patients able to access NHS dental services than in 2006. NHS places continue to be made available, but there has been growing demand which NHS services are not currently meeting.

NHS England is working to achieve further improvements in access to dental services, by

- Validating the existing waiting list
- Working with dental providers to ensure existing contracts are delivering to their maximum potential,
- working with Public Health England to inform both current and future dental needs
- developing plans to commission dental services to meet those areas of demand within available resources.
- working with practices as part of the dental contract reform programme to test an alternative contract model