

Response to Member Questions

HASC – 27 March 2023

Questions

Cllr Bernie Bentick

Background:

Between April 2022 and April 2023 NHS England expected regional Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to take on delegated responsibility for primary, secondary and community dental services.

Concerns have been expressed about the number of NHS dentists turning to private practice. In May 2022, the British Dental Association reported that **3,000 dentists had stopped providing NHS dental services since the start of the pandemic** and their survey of high street dentists found nearly half (45%) reported reducing their NHS commitment since the onset of the pandemic.

Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, being 1% of England's population, would expect about £23 million annual budget, plus 1% of the recent additional £50 million funding injection announced in 2022 to increase activity to pre-pandemic levels.

In 2020/21 the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) predecessors to Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System saw 79,000 dental patients, about 16% of the whole population, of which 16% were non-paying adults and 30% were children (the rest were paying adults).

My Question to Shropshire Council's Health and Adult Care Overview Committee is:

1. Has STW ICS a comprehensive contract in place for NHS Dental Care and what is the value for 2022/23 and 2023/24?
2. How many of Shrewsbury and Shropshire's Dental Practices currently take new adult patients and what is the total capacity, compared with the need?

Response

To confirm that NHS England commission Dental Services currently, however from April 2023 this will be delegated to NHS STW

1. Has STW ICS a comprehensive contract in place for NHS Dental Care and what is the value for 2022/23 and 2023/24?

NHS England – Midlands currently holds multiple NHS dental contracts across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin to deliver the comprehensive range of dental services across primary, community and secondary care. On 1st April 2023 all of these contracts will transfer under delegation arrangements from NHS England

– Midlands to the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. In summary these contracts relate to --

- **Primary Care** - currently there are 67 NHS general dental practices across the ICS area and this will increase to 68 when the new NHS dental practice in Oswestry opens on 1st April 2023. These practices provide routine dental care which includes check-ups, scale and polish, fillings, extractions, crowns, bridges, dentures etc. Of these practices, 6 also provide orthodontic services and in addition to these, a further 4 practices provide NHS orthodontic services with no other NHS dental services.

One practice in Telford provides Intermediate Minor Oral Surgery (IMOS) including conscious sedation and a second provider is currently being sought for Shrewsbury. The IMOS providers provides services such complex extractions as an alternative to patients having to attend secondary care.

- **Community Dental Services** - the Shropshire Community Dental Service is commissioned from the Shropshire Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and it provides the following community dental services –
 - In hours urgent dental care for patients across Shropshire that do not have access to a regular dentist.
 - Urgent and emergency dental treatment and advice out of hours for the local population and visitors to the county.
 - A full range of dental care to both children and adults with special care needs.
 - By referral, treatment under general anaesthesia and conscious sedation.
 - Domiciliary dental services for patients that are unable to attend a dental surgery due to medical and mobility difficulties.
 - The clinically led Shropshire Dental Advice Line which can be accessed by dialling 01743 237916.
- **Secondary Care** – local secondary care dental services are commissioned from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and these specialities include oral, maxillofacial, restorative and orthodontic surgery. Contracts are also in place to enable local patients to be referred to alternative secondary care dental providers and this includes access to the Birmingham Dental Hospital.

The contract values for 2022/3 and 2023/23 are as set out below –

	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24 Comments
Primary Care	£21,768,000	£21,718,000	Uplift pending and includes a national reduction relating to patient charges associated with Dental Trainee activity
Community Care	£3,306,837	£3,303,837	Uplift pending
Secondary Care	£5,451,009	£6,685,000	Draft contract value
Total	£30,525,846	£31,706,837	

2. How many of Shrewsbury and Shropshire’s Dental Practices currently take new adult patients and what is the total capacity, compared with the need?

Details of dental practices that are currently accepting new NHS patients are available online via www.nhs.uk. The acceptance status of each practice is entered and amended by individual dental practices and the date of the entry is available for the public to see; this provides an indication of how current the entry is. If an entry is over 90 days old it is automatically removed, as it may be out of date. Across an area, the acceptance status can change on a daily basis but at the moment most practices are not indicating that they are currently accepting new patients, this is whilst they continue to work through their backlog of patients or due to dental vacancies.

The Shropshire Dental Advice Line regularly collates details of local dental practices that are accepting new patients and they can be contacted on 01743 237916.

It is important to note that registration with an NHS dentist has not existed since 2006. Many practices have maintained a list of NHS patients they offer to recall, but patients are unable to register with an NHS dentist in the same way as for a GP. Dentists are commissioned to provide a level of dental activity rather than to care for a specific group of patients.

Dentists may still need to prioritise patients with dental problems rather than providing routine check-ups. It should also be noted that not all patients will require six monthly reviews and it is recommended that adult patients with good oral health are seen less frequently, sometimes each year or every two years, and for children this is at a recommended interval of between three and 12 months.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) 276,001 Shropshire patients attended NHS dental practices within a 24 month period and this figure had remained relatively static during the preceding 2 years. At the lowest point during the pandemic (February 2022) 204,914 patients attended NHS dental practices and by January 2023 the number of patients accessing NHS dental practices had increased to 239,267. Since the lowest point in February 2022, the number of patients attending an NHS dental practice within the previous 24 month period has been increasing month on month. The gap between the historic level of Shropshire patients that regularly accessed NHS dental practices and those that are currently attending NHS dental practices is 36,734 patients.

The Shropshire Community Dental Service provides urgent dental care for patients across Shropshire that do not have access to a regular dentists; these patients should contact the Shropshire Dental Advice Line on 01743 237916 directly.