



## SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

<b>Meeting Date</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2023			
<b>Title of report</b>	NHS Dental Access in Shropshire			
<b>This report is for</b> (You will have been advised which applies)	Discussion and agreement of recommendations	Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception)	Information only (No recommendations)	X
<b>Reporting Officer &amp; email</b>	Darrell Jackson – Senior Commissioning Manager, NHS England - Midlands <a href="mailto:darrell.jackson1@nhs.net">darrell.jackson1@nhs.net</a>  Kate Taylor-Weetman – Consultant in Dental Public Health, NHS England - Midlands <a href="mailto:kate.taylor-weetman@nhs.net">kate.taylor-weetman@nhs.net</a>			
<b>Which Joint Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address? Please tick all that apply</b>	Children & Young People	X	Joined up working	
	Mental Health		Improving Population Health	X
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity		Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	
	Workforce		Reduce inequalities (see below)	X
<b>What inequalities does this report address?</b>	Access to services			

**Report content - Please expand content under these headings or attach your report ensuring the three headings are included.**

### 1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview and scope of existing NHS Primary Care dental services in Shropshire which at practice level excludes practices within Telford and Wrekin. Associated financial values for these services are also included.

The report highlights the significant impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on dentistry and provides a benchmark in terms of pre-pandemic access levels, the level that access ultimately reduced to and the current recovery position.

The report sets out the numerous regional initiatives involving both recurrent and non-recurrent funding to improve NHS dental access levels and provides an overview in terms of specific areas of work to improve oral health and NHS dental access for vulnerable groups of patients. These include recent specific financial allocations to Shropshire Local Authority to support local oral health improvement initiatives.

The report highlights recent national work aimed at improving the NHS dental contract as part of the Contract Reform work; further improvements are currently being developed nationally.

The report reflects on the dental challenges and provides a summary of the current local position in Shropshire.

### 2. Recommendations

That the Board notes the content of this report.

### 3. Report

#### **Overview of NHS Dental Services - Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin).**

Routine NHS dental care, i.e., check-ups, scale and polish, fillings, extractions, crowns, bridges and dentures etc. is provided by 44 general dental practices within Shropshire, excluding Telford and Wrekin. Four of these practices also provide NHS orthodontic treatment for patients under the age of 18 that meet the NHS eligibility criteria. A further 24 NHS dental practices are located within Telford and Wrekin and these dental practices are accessed by many Shropshire residents. Two of these practices also provide orthodontic treatment.

In terms of routine dental care, across Shropshire (excluding Telford and Wrekin) 400,441 Units of Dental Activity (UDA) are commissioned annually. This currently equates to £13.827m per annum. The UDA rates across the Shropshire excluding Telford and Wrekin range from £24.09 to £37.56 per UDA; the average UDA rate for the ICB area is £31.12.

The table below sets out the various NHS dental treatment bands, the number of UDAs that are credited to a dental provider for completing a course of NHS treatment under each band, examples of treatment within each of the treatment bands and the 2023/24 patient charge applicable for fee paying adult patients.

<b>Treatment Band</b>	<b>UDAs</b>	<b>Examples of Treatment</b>	<b>Patient Charge*</b>
Band 1	1	Clinical examination, scale & polish, marginal correction of fillings, applying sealants or fluoride preparations, treating sensitive roots and adjusting dentures.	£25.80
Band 2a	3	All treatment under band 1, plus fillings, extractions, treatment of severe gum disease and relining & rebasing dentures.	£70.70
Band 2b	5	All treatment under band 1, plus fillings and/or extractions of 3 or more teeth and/or non-molar endodontic care (root canal) to permanent teeth.	£70.70
Band 2c	7	All treatment under band 1, plus molar endodontic care (root canal) to permanent teeth	£70.70
Band 3	12	All treatments under bands 1 & 2, plus bridges, crowns and dentures.	£306.80
Band 4	1.2	Urgent dental treatment to treat pain and stop the decline in dental health.	£25.80

*\*The total patient charge is determined by the highest band of treatment received. The maximum patient charge for a course of treatment is £306.80, irrespective of whether the course of treatment also include band 1 & 2 treatments.*

NHS orthodontic treatment is also provided for patients under the age of 18 that meet the NHS eligibility criteria by two specialist orthodontic only practices in Shropshire and a further 2 specialist orthodontic practices in Telford and Wrekin serve the local population.

In terms of orthodontic treatment, across Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) 7,682 Units of Orthodontic Activity (UOA) are commissioned annually. This equates to £1.289m per annum and the commencement of approximately 365 courses of orthodontic treatment each year. Dental providers are credited with 1 UOA for each patient assessment that concludes that the patient is not eligible for NHS orthodontic treatment and 21 UOAs for a course of NHS orthodontic treatment, including the original assessment.

Intermediate Minor Oral Surgery (IMOS) for procedures such as complex extractions should be delivered from a provider in Shrewsbury but following two recent failed procurements an interim service is currently being provided by a provider with sites in Wellington and Malinslee. Intermediate Minor Oral Surgery procedures were historically undertaken in secondary care and delivering this within primary care reduces pressure on local hospitals. Work is currently ongoing to secure a IMOS provider in Shrewsbury.

Community Dental Services across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin are provided by the Shropshire Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the 202/24 that annual contract value for the Community Dental Service is £3.3m. The Shropshire Community Dental Service provides the following services –

- In hours urgent dental care for patients across Shropshire that do not have access to a regular dentist from their Dental Access Centres located in Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Dawley.
- Urgent and emergency dental treatment and advice out of hours for the local population and visitors to the county. This can be accessed by calling NHS111.
- 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, although minimal treatments are available within a residential setting.
- The clinically led Shropshire Dental Advice Line which can be accessed by dialling 01743 237916.
- Dental surveys of school children to inform local dental service planning and targeting and prioritisation of preventive programmes to improve oral health.

Most secondary care dental services are commissioned from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and these specialities include oral and maxillofacial surgery, restorative and orthodontic dental services. Contracts are also in place to enable local patients to be referred to alternative secondary providers and this includes access to the Birmingham Dental Hospital.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Dentistry.**

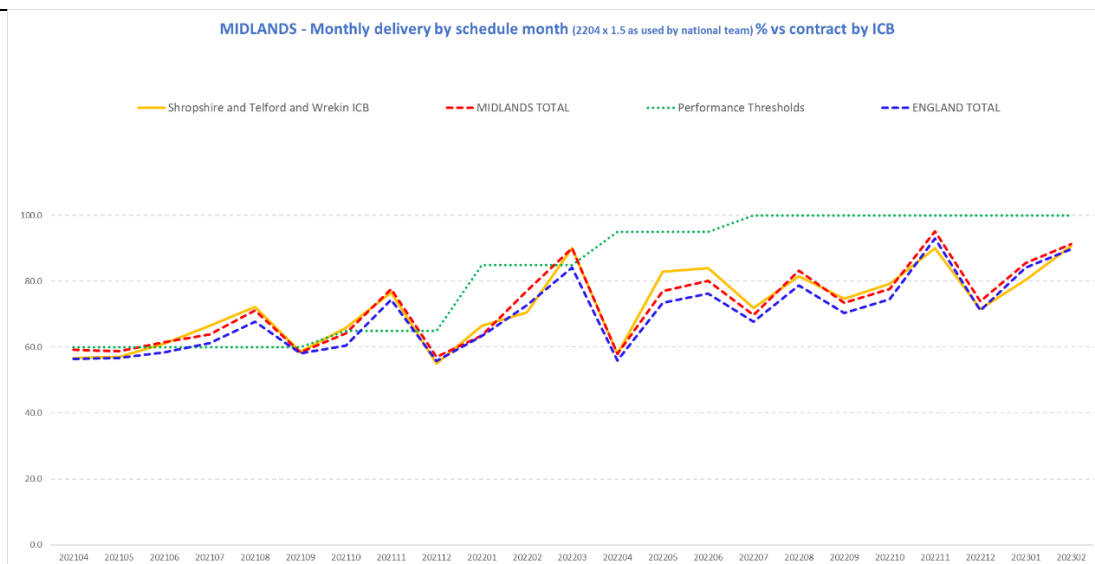
During the COVID-19 pandemic, dentists faced many challenges and between 25<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 all routine dentistry was suspended as all dental practices were forced to close. During this period, all dentists were required to provide telephone advice to patients and remotely prescribe antibiotics and analgesia as necessary. NHS England quickly established a strategic network of Urgent Dental Centres which were able to provide urgent dental treatment for the local population.

Social distancing requirements and infection prevention control guidelines aimed at combating COVID-19, reduced dental capacity across both public and private sectors, due to the introduction of post aerosol generating procedure (AGP) “downtime” between patients. Such procedures included the use of high-speed drilling and initially required a treatment room to be cleaned and vacated for one hour after such a procedure.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased, NHS England commenced working towards restoring NHS dental services to pre-pandemic levels by gradually increasing dental contracted activity thresholds and linked to full payment protection. The dental contract delivery thresholds incrementally increased as follows –

- 20% from 8<sup>th</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020
- 45% from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021
- 60% from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- 65% from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021
- 85% from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022
- 95% from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- 100% from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

The chart below sets out NHS dental delivery in terms of Units of Dental Activity provided from April 2021 to February 2023. The green dotted lines indicate the above delivery thresholds and compares delivery at Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (yellow line) against the Midlands Region (red line) and England (blue line).



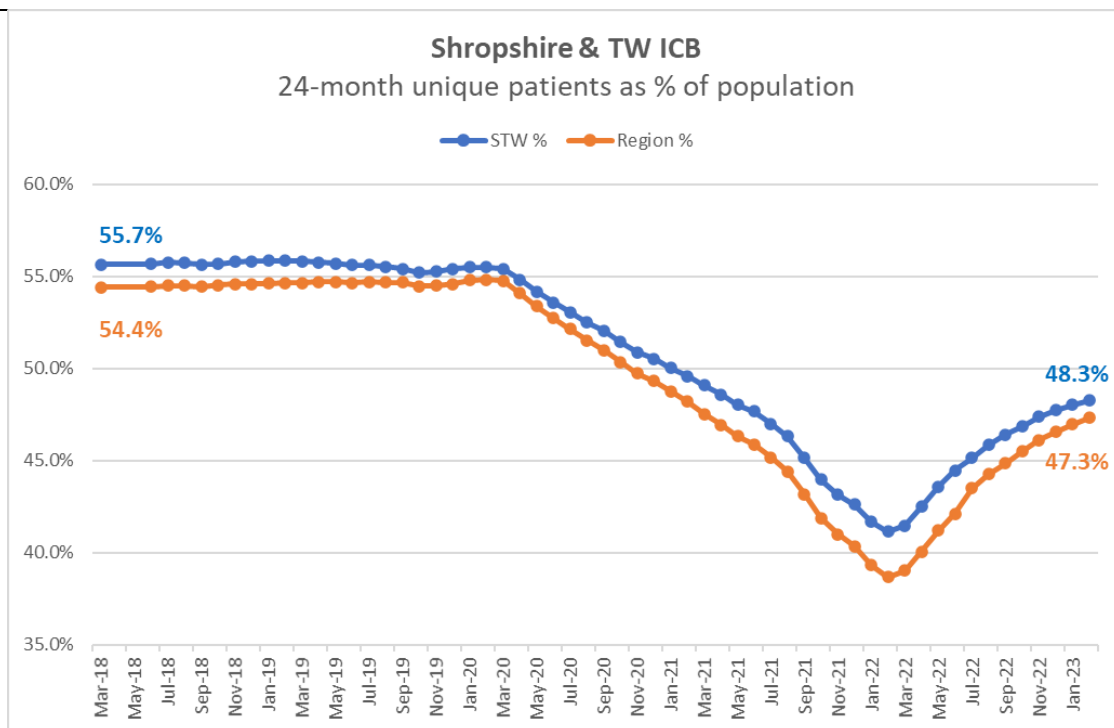
The total impact of the reduced delivery thresholds and the period during which routine dentistry was suspended, is equivalent to every dental practice being closed for one year.

The gradual increases in the minimum contractual delivery thresholds aimed to provide gradually more access for patients whilst ensuring that practices were financially supported to allow them to stay open and continue providing care.

Whilst levels of delivered NHS dental activity have risen safely and significantly, as practices can see more patients each day, they are not yet able to offer a dental service equal to the pre-pandemic level and consequently many practices are not currently able to take on new NHS patients whilst they continue to manage the backlog of patients that will not have seen a dentist recently. It is important to highlight 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.

In line with the Dental Standard Operating Procedure: Transition to Recovery, dentists are continuing to prioritise patients with the highest need or priority, such as those needing urgent care, children and those most at risk of oral disease rather than providing 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 between three and 12 months. This decision is based on a dentist undertaking an oral health risk assessment of each patient and agreeing the recall frequency with them.

The chart below sets out the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on dental access across NHS England – Midlands compared to the impact across the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB area. NHS dental access is measured in terms of 24-month unique patient counts and is expressed as a percentage of the population.



### Non-recurrent Local Initiatives to Improve NHS Dental Access & Oral Health.

As highlighted above, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on dental services and NHS England – Midlands developed several region wide initiatives to help restore dental access to pre-pandemic levels. The regional initiatives are summarised below –

- Ventilation Surveys – this initiative provided financial support to dental practices to enable them to commission ventilation surveys which would ultimately recommend actions to enable dental practices to increase the airflows within their surgeries to reduce standstill periods between aerosol generating procedures involving for example high speed drilling. By increasing airflows, standstill periods can be reduced with more patients being able to be treated per hour.

Four dental practices in Shropshire applied for and received funding to undertake ventilation surveys and there were collectively reimbursed £1,559.

- Weekend Dental Access Scheme – this initiative enables participating dental practices to provide additional routine access during dedicated weekend clinical sessions. Participating practices are also required to reserve a minimum of one urgent access appointment per day Monday to Friday for patients signposted by the Shropshire Dental Advice Line or NHS111.

Three dental practices in Shropshire participated in this scheme and provided 112 additional 3.5-hour weekend clinical sessions at a cost of £47,300.

- Orthodontic Waiting List Scheme – this initiative enables participating orthodontic practices to accept additional non-recurrent funding to start additional courses of orthodontic treatment with the aim of reducing their orthodontic waiting list.

Two orthodontic practices in Shropshire participated in this scheme and commenced 150 additional courses of orthodontic treatment as a cost of £231k.

- Golden Hello Scheme for Dentists – this initiative was launched during June 2022 to support dental practices within targeted rural and coastal areas recruit and retain new NHS

dentists that will either relocate or commute to identified targeted areas such as Shropshire. Eligible full-time dentists receive a Golden Hello payment of £15k upon commencement with a requirement to repay a proportion of the payment if they leave within the first 5 years.

Across Shropshire 12 practices applied for Golden Hello funding to support their dental recruitment campaigns and in total 14 dental vacancies were supported. To date 3 new part-time NHS dentists have been recruited and Golden Hello payments totalling £13,885 have been paid.

- Community Dental Service Paediatric Support Scheme – this initiative is to support local Community Dental Service providers by securing additional capacity from support practices and for them to provide shared care for defined groups of children where appropriate. This will enable the Community Dental Services to focus their specialist skills to deal with the most complex cases and increase access for identified children.

Currently a dental practice in Wem is supporting the Shropshire Community Dental Service by providing two dedicated clinical sessions each week. There are plans to expand the number of support practices during 2023/24.

- Homeless individuals are the focus for a new pilot in which the Shropshire Community Dental Service is working with the Shrewsbury Ark and a local pharmacy to help prevent dental disease and provide a bespoke dental treatment service for them. The Healthy Smile team will provide oral health training to staff and volunteers at the Ark to enable them to deliver the Making Every Contact Count agenda, facilitate clients' access to high fluoride toothpaste from the pharmacy and support attendance at dental appointments provided by the experienced dental team from the Community Dental Service. This pilot will be evaluated to ensure that a cost-effective model is developed to improve the oral health of individuals.
- The Care to Smile mouthcare programme for care home residents developed by the Healthy Smile team is offered free of charge to all care homes. Residents of care homes who have their own teeth are often at increased risk of tooth decay due to a dry mouth (both medication and age related), changing dietary habits including the use of fluid thickeners, and challenges to the provision of routine mouthcare due to disease or disability related changes to compliance with an effective mouthcare regimen. High strength fluoride toothpaste is recommended for those at increased risk of or from tooth decay, but it is a prescription only item. A pilot is under development to increase the use of high fluoride toothpaste by residents which will further protect them from tooth decay and the related morbidities that can occur.
- In a joint initiative between the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Staffordshire Local Authorities, NHS England – Midlands will make £2,500 available for each LA to enable them to commission the development of an oral health e-learning resource for the early years settings to upskill the early years workforce on oral health.
- NHS England – Midlands is also providing £7,500 funding to Shropshire Local Authority to enable it to provide an early years oral health resource toolkit to targeted schools and preschool settings to support delivery of the oral health element of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. The Oral Health Improvement Team, who are providing the targeted supervised toothbrushing programme have identified 19 schools and 6 early years settings that would benefit from these resources. Each resource packs include a giant dental care model with toothbrush, a demonstration puppet with toothbrush, dentist dressing up outfit costume for 3-5 years, little Dutch wooden birthday cake, children's wooden role play dentist kit, a range of oral health books, wooden mouth puzzle and artwork all contained in a 35-litre plastic box with lid.

- NHS England – Midlands is providing a further £40,000 to enable Shropshire Local Authority to purchase toothbrushes and toothpaste for vulnerable groups during the current cost of living crisis. Under this initiative, toothbrushes and toothpaste will be distributed to places of worship, charities, warm spaces, etc, as identified by the LA. Telford & Wrekin Local Authority will also receive £40,000 under this initiative along with all Local Authorities across the wider West Midlands area.

### **Recurrent Local Initiatives to Improve NHS Dental Access and Oral Health.**

- **Shropshire Dental Advice Line** - during 2020/21, NHS England – Midlands commissioned a Shropshire Dental Advice Line via the Shropshire Community Dental Services, this was a non-clinical advice line that was able to direct patient to local dental services.

Based on the initial success of the Shropshire Dental Advice Line, during 2021/22 additional recurrent funding was awarded to the Shropshire Community Dental Service to enable them to redesign the function of the Dental Advice Line and upgrade it to become a clinically led Dental Advice Line. This aligned the Shropshire Dental Advice Line to the Staffordshire Dental Advice Line which has successfully operated across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent for over 20 years. The upgraded clinically led Shropshire Dental Advice Line enables patients to speak to clinicians who can triage treatment requirements to ensure that patients are signposted to the most appropriate clinical setting or offered clinical advice. Many of the callers are directly booked into Dental Access Centres provided by the Shropshire Community Dental Service or are signposted to alternative local dental practices.

The Shropshire Clinical Dental Advice Line went live on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022, and it can be accessed by dialling 01743 237916 between 08:00 and 21:00 Monday to Friday.

- **New NHS dental practice in Oswestry** – following a decision by {My}Dentist Oswestry to terminate their NHS dental contract in 2019, NHS England undertook a procurement to secure a replacement dental practice. Unfortunately, the procurement failed to secure a new dental provider. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays but subsequently, a second and enhanced procurement was undertaken which offered a 10-year contract term, the ability to incrementally expand the practice over a 3-year period and the offer of a £100k grant to support initial set-up costs were offered.

Following the second procurement, a provider was successfully appointed to establish a new NHS dental practice in Oswestry and the Pearls Dental Practice located at 5 Willow Street, Oswestry commenced the provision of NHS dental service on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

- **Establishment of an Oral Health Improvement Team** – The Healthy Smile team. During 2020/21 NHS England – Midlands awarded recurrent funding of £310k to the Shropshire Community Healthcare NHS Trust to enable it, via the expansion of the Shropshire Community Dental Service, to establish a dedicated Oral Health Improvement Team to work across Shropshire and Staffordshire to develop programmes in the local community to support the local population to improve their oral health.

The team is commissioned by NHS England - Midlands to provide regular oral health training to the wider professional workforce including those from education, the voluntary sector, health and social care to support them in their role of promoting oral health and signposting people to dental services.

- **The Care to Smile mouthcare programme** – This has been established for care home staff and provides training and support to staff to enable them to assess residents' daily mouthcare requirements, develop a mouthcare plan and provide support to individuals to carry out daily mouthcare.
- In addition to the above and to further reduce oral health inequalities, working with local authority colleagues, the most deprived communities are identified and offered enhanced support. Programmes commissioned include:
  - **The Brilliant Brushers programme** – this is a supervised toothbrushing programme, which supports school and nursery staff to deliver the oral health element of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYSS) framework.
  - **The Brushing for Life programme** – this includes targeted provision of toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste to very young children via local health visitors, who also provide oral health care advice to patients/carers.

### **Dental Contract Reform.**

Currently, work is underway to transform the NHS Dental contract with the aim to ensure patients who are most at need can access dentistry. The NHS has announced the first step in this program and within the next 12 months it will implement the following changes:

- Introduce enhanced Units of Dental Activity (UDA) to support patients who have higher clinical needs whilst recognising the range of different treatment options currently remunerated under Band 2.
- Recognising that recruitment and effective delivery of care in some parts of the country is restricted by very low UDA values which impacts on patient access. To address this, a minimum indicative UDA value of £23 was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

One dental practice in Shrewsbury had its UDA rate increased from £21.79 to £23 under this initiative. The 2022/23 Doctors and Dentist Pay Review Body (DDR) uplift of 4.75% for NHS dental contracts, further increased the minimum UDA rate to £24.09.

- Renewed guidance and monitoring of patient recall periods.
- Improve the use of clinical skill mix in NHS dental care to support access to services.
- Improve information for patients by requiring more regular updating of the Directory of Services which the public can access via [www.NHS.uk](http://www.NHS.uk) under the "Find a Dentist" section.

This is an initial step, and further work is underway to transform the national contract and to support the transition of dental services onto the Integrated Care Board footprints.

### **Current Challenges.**

There remain many challenges to NHS dentistry and the most fundamental of these relates to the recruitment and retention of dentists, particularly in rural areas. Post pandemic, it is evident that many dentists that commuted considerable distances to work in Shropshire have secured positions closer to their homes and they have consequently left local practices. The Regional Golden Hello Scheme was established with some success to mitigate this. There are plans to further develop the Golden Hello Scheme during 2023/24.



Whilst many dentists no longer want to commute long distances, others now want to work part-time and this is placing pressure on some existing dental practices, particularly if all the dentists want to work at the same time. Several dental practices have needed to secure additional adjacent premises to accommodate their dentists in the hope of retaining them.

Even at the point that a dentist initially qualifies, there is no requirement for them to work within the NHS and the private option is available to them. Many NHS dentists have reduced their NHS commitment or left the NHS completely to work as entirely private dentists.

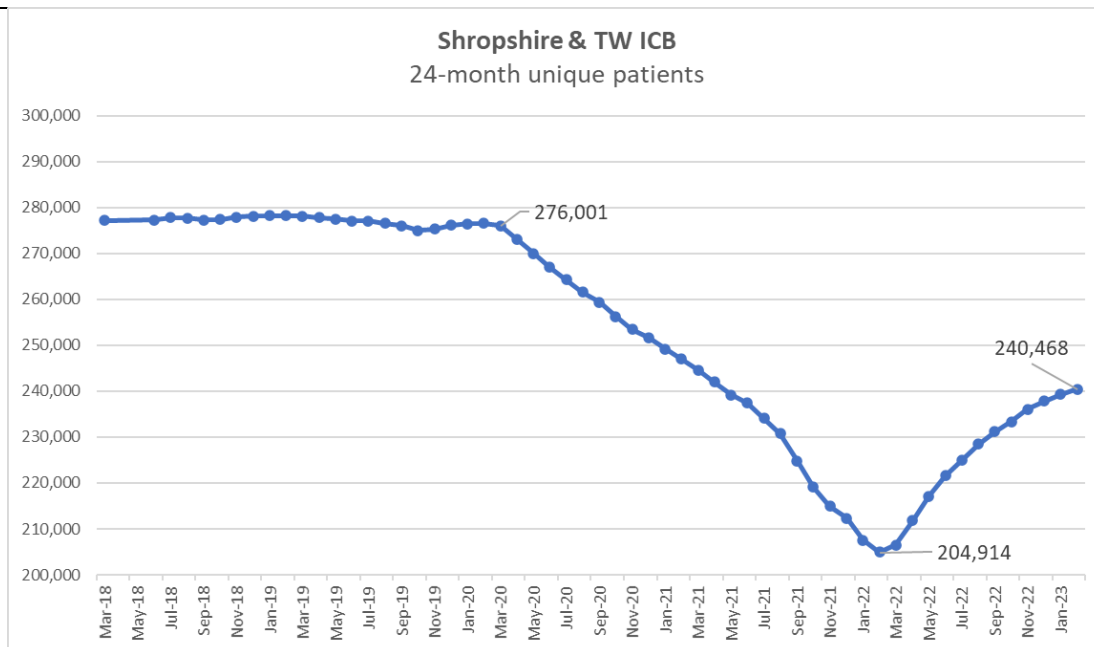
As some NHS dental practices have lost significant numbers of NHS dentists and some having failed to recruit replacement NHS dentists, some have decided to completely terminate their NHS dental contracts or reduce their contractual level of activity. Upon termination or rebase, NHS England – Midlands actively acts to locally disperse the surrendered activity to try and maintain historic access levels. To date all activity surrendered across Shropshire has been successfully dispersed to alternative local NHS dental practices.

Since January 2022, two dental contracts in Shropshire have terminated their NHS dental contract; these were in Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth and equated to 3,950 UDAs. A further three NHS dental practice in Shropshire have rebased their NHS dental contracts; these are in Shrewsbury, Market Drayton and Ellesmere and equate to 12,964 UDAs. The practices in Market Drayton and Ellesmere are recent rebases and the dispersal of this activity, equating to 2,964 UDAs is currently ongoing.

There is currently no requirement for dental practices that do not deliver their contractual activity target to rebase their contract, although all year end under delivery is financially recovered. In some cases, this results in dental activity being historically locked into contracts and therefore not available for local dispersal. As part of the national Contract Reform work, from 2024/25 NHS commissioners will be able to unilaterally rebase dental contracts in line with historic delivery if the dental practice has failed to deliver their contractual target for three consecutive years. This will finally enable NHS commissioners to move undelivered activity to practices that are able to deliver NHS dental services and where there are no available providers, NHS commissioners will be able to procure new dental practices as it has recently done in Oswestry. This flexibility from 2024/25 will hopefully enable NHS commissioners to increase local NHS dental access.

### **Current Position.**

The chart below sets out the position for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB in terms of actual patients based on 24-month unique access. Immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic 276,001 unique patients accessed NHS dentistry during the preceding 24-month period, the number of patients fell to 204,914 at the lowest point during February 2022 and thereafter has increased month on month to 240,468 patients as at February 2023.



<p><b>Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal</b> (NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)</p>		
<p><b>Financial implications</b> (Any financial implications of note)</p>		
<p><b>Climate Change Appraisal as applicable</b></p>		
<p><b>Where else has the paper been presented?</b></p>	System Partnership Boards	
	Voluntary Sector	
	Other	
<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>		
<p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Portfolio holders can be found <a href="#">here</a> or your organisational lead e.g., Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead</b></p>		
<p><b>Appendices</b> (Please include as appropriate)</p>		