

## Dentistry and the Impact of Covid 19

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The attached report (Item 4b) provides the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with an update from NHS England and NHS Improvement on dentistry, including dental provision in Barnsley; the impact of Covid 19; and the key challenges faced.
- 1.2 In addition, a position statement has been provided by Healthwatch Barnsley (Item 4c) to demonstrate what they are hearing from Barnsley residents, the work they have done and the next steps they plan to take to help improve services for residents across the borough.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 NHS England (Yorkshire and the Humber) is currently responsible for the commissioning and contracting of all NHS dental services across South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw (SY&B).
- 2.2 Commissioned dental activity is based on Courses of Treatment (CoT) ranging from a basic clinical examination to more complex courses of treatment requiring laboratory work.
- 2.3 Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) are the value given to a CoT. Their essential purpose is to measure practice activity and from that to ensure that the correct amount of patients' charges is collected. Depending on the complexity of the treatment, each CoT represents a given number of UDAs based on patients' charges regulations, which are divided into four main headings:-
- Band 1 – clinical examination, radiographs, scaling and polishing, preventive dental work, such as oral health advice – 1 UDA
  - Band 1 (urgent) – treatment including examination, radiographs, dressings, recementing crowns, up to two extractions, one filling – 1.2 UDAs
  - Band 2 – simple treatment, for example fillings, including root canal therapy, extractions, surgical procedures and denture additions – 3 UDAs
  - Band 3 – complex treatment, which includes a laboratory element, such as bridgework, crowns, and dentures – 12 UDAs
- 2.3 NHS England commissions a total of 487,492 Units of Dental Activity across the 29 dental practices in Barnsley. A number of additional services are commissioned by NHS England for Barnsley residents including orthodontics, hospital services (provided by Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT), community dental services (provided by Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust) and urgent care; accessed via NHS111.
- 2.4 As a result of Covid-19, from March 2020 a number of changes were introduced to manage services due to the proximity between a dental professional and a patient's airway and the relatively high proportion of aerosol generating procedures (the use of a high-speed drill) undertaken.
- 2.5 Dentists were asked to stop routine treatment and provide remote consultations and triage, and an urgent dental care system was established.
- 2.6 Since 8 June 2020, dental practices have been able to re-open, however, to ensure the safety of clinicians and patients, stringent infection prevention and control measures were introduced by the Chief Dental Officer and Public Health England, which has impacted upon the level of service that can be delivered by dentists.

### 3.0 Current Position

3.1 The focus of NHS England's dental commissioning team is to support providers to resume services. From October 2021, the minimum contractual expectation is that practices deliver 65% of their contracted appointments meaning there is a significant backlog of unmet need, delayed and suspended treatments.

3.2 All primary care providers are open and providing services. Practices have been asked to prioritise those patients with an urgent or emergency dental need. Therefore, patients requiring routine dental care such as check-ups and scale and polish will inevitably experience longer waiting times.

3.3 The latest advice on accessing urgent dental care is:-



3.4 Rotherham Community Dental Service and orthodontic services continue to provide face-to-face treatments.

3.5 Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT) dental specialties (paediatrics, oral surgery, orthodontics, oral medicine, oral microbiology and maxillofacial and restorative) continue to provide care. The Trust have reported that services have recommenced and that they are accepting new referrals which are clinically triaged, and a prioritisation model is in place.

3.6 Over 70% of the calls received by Healthwatch Barnsley about dental services relate to residents being unable to access routine dental appointments.

3.7 During October 2021, Healthwatch Barnsley contacted 28 dental surgeries in Barnsley to ask if they were accepting new NHS patients and they found that:-

- only 2 could offer an appointment for a routine dental check on the NHS, and both had a 6-8 week wait time
- many of the surgeries said they were accepting NHS patients, but the waiting time was anything from 6 months to 2 years
- 16 of the dental surgeries Healthwatch contacted said they are not currently taking on NHS patients and are not currently operating a waiting list
- 6 of the surgeries said they would see a child (under the age of 16) for a routine check-up within 6-8 weeks

### 4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

4.1 NHS England face several challenges, including:-

- The inheritance of 'legacy' arrangements from Primary Care Trusts meaning there is inconsistent and inequitable access to dental services

- Lack of flexibility for either the commissioner or the provider within the primary care national contract rolled out in 2006
- Restrictive procurement rules

4.2 Healthwatch Barnsley have shared their intelligence with Healthwatch England and will continue to collect intelligence about local NHS dental services.

4.3 As well as concerns for the future of dentistry, Healthwatch Barnsley have expressed concerns around health inequalities; oral hygiene; and links to overall body health and mental health.

## 5.0 Invited Witnesses

The following witnesses have been invited to answer questions from members of the committee:-

- Debbie Stovin, Dental Commissioning Manager – Yorkshire and the Humber, NHS England and NHS Improvement North East and Yorkshire
- Deborah Pattinson, Dental Commissioning Lead – Yorkshire & the Humber, NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Michael Speakman, Secretary, Barnsley Local Dental Committee
- Margaret Naylor, Chair of the Local Dental Network South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw

## 6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:-

- What do you consider to be your greatest achievement this year?
- What has been done to support providers to resume services as quickly as possible?
- What do you consider to be the greatest barrier to achieving the priorities for this year and how do you plan to overcome them?
- What measures need to be taken to prioritise and improve access to urgent dental care?
- Do dental surgeries work together and with their customers so that those requiring urgent care can be seen by another surgery? Is this option communicated to the public and how effective are communication methods?
- Are all local dental practices currently achieving the minimum expectation of 65% of contracted appointments? How do you know?
- What did access to dental services look like before the pandemic – what were the challenges locally?
- When do you expect routine appointments to go back to pre-pandemic activity levels?
- Given that routine appointments cannot be carried out frequently, what self-care/dental hygiene messages are being promoted?
- What do you expect the longer-term impact to be on the dental health of residents if routine appointments cannot be carried out as frequently as they were? What are the wider implications?
- What support is currently offered to residents living in care/residential homes?
- How are you reducing inequalities in access to dental care?
- Do you have the resources needed to clear the backlog that has been created by the Covid-19 pandemic?

- What further support do dental surgeries need and what is being done to support employee wellbeing?
- What can members do to support dentistry in Barnsley?

## 7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

Item 4b (attached) – Dentistry – A Report by NHS England and NHS Improvement

Item 4c (attached) – Dentistry in Barnsley – A Position Statement from Healthwatch Barnsley

Standard Operating Procedure - Transition to Recovery – Document of the Office of Chief Dental Officer England:-

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/06/C1287-Standard-Operating-Procedure\\_Transition-to-Recovery-A-phased-transition-for-dental-practices-towards-the-1.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/06/C1287-Standard-Operating-Procedure_Transition-to-Recovery-A-phased-transition-for-dental-practices-towards-the-1.pdf)

## 8.0 Glossary

8.1	BHNFT	Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
	COT	Course of Treatment
	CDS	Community Dental Services
	OSC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
	SYB	South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw
	UDA	Units of Dental Activity

## 9.0 Officer Contact

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