

REPORT TO: Halton Health Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 26th September 2023
REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Adults
PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing
SUBJECT: Commissioning of Primary Care Dental Services
WARD(S): Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on the commissioning of primary care dental services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

i) **That the report be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has the delegated responsibility for the commissioning of dental services including primary, community and secondary care. Access to dental services is a local, regional and national issue impacting negatively on patients.

3.2 Throughout the COVID pandemic expected annual contracted activity was reduced nationally to support providers with the impact of the pandemic, there was also a process for exceptional circumstances in place for absences and further issues relating to COVID.

3.3 Post pandemic the restoration and recovery of primary care dental provision is part of the NHS Operational Plan for 2023/24 with the expectation being that activity will return to pre pandemic levels.

3.4 Practices continue to recover supported by commissioners alongside a small number of national contract changes allowing some flexibilities focussed on improving access and increasing activity.

3.5 Dental Provision in Halton

- 3.5.1
- 13 Practices
 - Two Urgent Care Plus providers offering urgent dental care for patients that do not have a regular dentist with a follow up appointment for definitive care following the urgent care intervention
 - Urgent Care Plus provision in Halton allows for 3 extra sessions per week.

Each session is 3.5 hours in duration and dependant on clinical presentation, there is an expectation that between 4-6 patients can be seen per session, per week.

- Commissioners are aiming to develop a primary care dental dashboard that will allow performance monitoring information to be obtained at Place Level as well as aggregated up across the ICB.
- Overall activity in Cheshire and Merseyside is increasing in line with regional and national trends. As previously discussed with the Board commissioners are still aware that access to routine care in an NHS setting remains very challenging.
- End of year activity for 2022/23 will be made available to commissioners in the next couple of months as defined by the national contract monitoring process and timescales.
- Commissioners are keen to investigate further with contractors the use of the wider dental team known as Dental Care Professionals. This is important as greater use of Dental Therapists or Dental Nurses where appropriate can free up Dental Performer time and support access for new patients.
- Additionally, commissioners will be monitoring adherence to NICE guidance regarding the appropriateness and timeliness of recalling patients. This is important as we support practices to increase the number of new patients that they can see whilst working within the constraints of a national contract.

3.6 **Development of Dental Improvement Plan**

3.6.1 The Dental Improvement Plan signals NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's commitment and ambition to ensure that access is improved for both routine, urgent and dental care for our most vulnerable populations and communities impacted by the COVID pandemic.

3.6.2 The plan is being submitted to the ICB System Primary Care Board on 22 June 2023 for approval and identifies the following key strategic aims:

- Recovering dental activity, improving delivery of units of dental activity (UDAs) towards pre-pandemic levels and in line with Operational Plan trajectories.
- Focussing on access for inclusion health and deprived populations and make sure they are prioritised
- Delivering the ambition that no patient will wait longer than the nationally defined period for an urgent appointment at a General Dental Practice.
- Support greater workforce resilience and development in conjunction with NHSE colleagues (formerly HEE) and other partners.

- 3.6.3 To deliver these aims as previously reported to the Board several initiatives are proposed and some have commenced already.
- 3.6.4 An important part of the plan is to develop access sessions for new patients across 60 practices in the ICB.
- 3.6.5 Commissioners are seeking to add an additional 30,000 appointments across Cheshire and Merseyside and will link with local authorities to identify suitable organisations who work with vulnerable populations e.g. Homeless population and Asylum seekers.
- 3.6.6 In addition to this a number of Foundation Dentists will be working across Cheshire and Merseyside later this year. It is envisaged that this will have a positive impact on access.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 N/A

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 N/A

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

This report relates specifically to the delivery of health outcomes in Halton.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 It has been previously reported that several risks exist that could impact on the recovery of dental services:
- Workforce – recruitment and retention
 - Lack of national contract flexibilities and pace of reform
 - Commercial viability and attractiveness of the NHS contract based on Units of Dental Activity.

- The presenting oral health of patients post pandemic
- A national dental improvement plan could be published but commissioners are not aware of timescales and action needs to be taken now to improve access to dental care across the ICB and in Halton.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Commissioning intentions are driven by ensuring they contribute to tackling health inequalities in outcomes, experiences and access and improving population health and healthcare.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.