

Ali Sparke
Director for Pharmacy,
Optometry, Dental and NHS
Standard Contracts
NHS England & NHS
Improvement

Councillor Abigail Marshall-Katung
Chair, Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active
Lifestyles)
3rd Floor (East)
Civic Hall
LEEDS
LS1 1UR

Sent via e-mail only

E-Mail address:
Civic Hall tel:
Our ref:

0113 3788816
AMK/AB

5th April 2022

Dear Mr Sparke,

Re: Access to NHS Dental Services

I am writing on behalf of the Leeds City Council Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board to share with you our findings having recently considered the current position surrounding access to local NHS dental services from the perspective of primary, community and secondary care services, including urgent dental care services.

The Scrutiny Board held a working group meeting on 25th February 2022 and invited representation from NHS England & NHS Improvement; Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust; Leeds Dental Institute; and Healthwatch Leeds. A written summary of the main issues and proposed recommendations arising from the working group's discussion was subsequently presented and formally endorsed by the full Scrutiny Board during our meeting on 15th March 2022. A copy of this summary note is enclosed for your attention.

In accordance with one of the recommended actions set out within this summary note, I would like to draw your particular attention to the issue raised by our local Healthwatch organisation (Healthwatch Leeds) and supported by the Scrutiny Board in terms of NHS England & NHS Improvement ensuring that nationally hosted NHS websites provide greater clarity on the role of Healthwatch and also provide more detailed information and guidance to the public on how to raise a concern or make a complaint regarding dental services in accordance with your own processes and procedures. In light of many of the issues that have been raised by patients with Healthwatch Leeds, the Scrutiny Board had also stressed the general importance of relevant nationally hosted NHS websites and local dental practice patient information providing clear, accessible and up-to-date information and guidance to the public.

While not captured in detail within the working group summary note itself, the Scrutiny Board has asked that I also bring to your attention concerns raised around workforce capacity issues and the suitability of the existing NHS dental contract, particularly as these are reflective of associated challenges nationally within the dental sector.

Linked to this, it is my understanding that the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England & NHS Improvement are continuing to work with stakeholders to look at reforming the NHS dental contract with the aims of improving patient access, reduce health inequalities and make the NHS a more attractive place to work for dentists.

I would be very grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this letter and provide a written response to the issues that have been raised, along with an updated position on the NHS dental contract reform work, which I will then formally share with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board as part of its continued work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Abigail Marshall-Katung', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Councillor Abigail Marshall-Katung
Chair, Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)

Enc: Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board. Access to local NHS Dental Services - Working Group Summary (February 2022).