

Access to local NHS Dental Services

Date: 22nd November 2022

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- Dentistry has been a longstanding area of interest to the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board in recognition that oral health is integral to general health and quality of life.
- In February 2022, the Board held a working group meeting to consider the position surrounding access to local NHS dental services from the perspective of primary, community and secondary care services, including urgent dental care services. This meeting involved representatives from NHS England & NHS Improvement; Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust; Leeds Dental Institute; and Healthwatch Leeds.
- In March 2022, the Board considered the findings of the working group and in doing so, had agreed five recommended actions. However, since reviewing the position in March 2022, further concerns regarding access to orthodontic services for children, which had been subject to re-procurement by NHS England, had been drawn to the attention of the Scrutiny Board by Healthwatch Leeds.
- The Scrutiny Board therefore agreed to revisit the issue of dentistry to understand what progress has been made since March 2022 in terms of access to NHS dental services, including access to orthodontic services for children.
- Moving forward, the Scrutiny Board acknowledges that the responsibility for commissioning dental services is due to transfer from NHS England to respective Integrated Care Boards across England. For Leeds, this means that from April 2023, it is expected that dental services will be commissioned by the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. The Scrutiny Board therefore requested to also be updated on the transitional work being undertaken surrounding the future commissioning of local dental services.

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider and comment on the information presented at today's meeting and to determine what, if any, further scrutiny activity is required on this matter.

What is this report about?

1. In February 2022, the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board held a working group meeting to consider the position surrounding access to local NHS dental services from the perspective of primary, community and secondary care services, including urgent dental care services. In March 2022, the Board considered the findings of the working group and in doing so, had agreed five recommended actions. A copy of the working group summary note, including the agreed recommended actions, is attached as Appendix 1.
2. Further to the work undertaken in February/March 2022, the Scrutiny Board had agreed to consider what progress has been made in terms of accessing NHS dental services, including access to orthodontic services for children.
3. The Scrutiny Board had also expressed an interest to understand the transitional work being undertaken as the future responsibility for commissioning dental services transfers from NHS England to respective Integrated Care Boards across England from April 2023.
4. A briefing note has therefore been provided by NHS England (see Appendix 2) which provides an update on the current key challenges facing dental services; outlines the current dental access position for Leeds and highlights the work taking place to strengthen future service provision, including the transfer of responsibility for commissioning services to the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board.

What impact will this proposal have?

5. In March 2022, the Scrutiny Board had agreed five recommended actions, as referenced in the working group summary note at Appendix 1.
6. Two of the recommended actions were directed to NHS England & NHS Improvement¹. The first related to working with practices to highlight the 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. The second requested that the Scrutiny Board be kept informed of progress surrounding the completion of the local Dental Needs Assessment and subsequent strategy development. Both matters are reflected as part of the appended briefing note by NHS England.
7. Another recommended action referred to the Chair of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board writing to the national NHS England & NHS Improvement Team to highlight local concerns raised in relation to ensuring that nationally hosted NHS websites provide greater clarity on the role of Healthwatch and 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 their own processes and procedures. As part of this letter, it was agreed that the Chair would also highlight local concerns associated with broader national issues within the dental sector in terms of workforce capacity and whether the existing NHS dental contract, which came into force in 2006, remains fit for purpose. A copy of the letter that was sent by the Chair is attached as Appendix 3. The Director for Dentistry, Community Pharmacy and Optometry at NHS England recently wrote to the Chair to set out the steps currently being taken by NHS England to address the issues around dental care access, the availability of information to support patients in finding an appropriate service, and in starting to address workforce pressures. A copy of this letter is also appended for Members information (see Appendix 3a).

¹ NHS Improvement became part of NHS England in July 2022.

8. Having recommended that NHS England & NHS Improvement works with Healthwatch Leeds to find an appropriate individual(s) to represent the dental sector on the citywide Inclusion For All Action Hub, it is confirmed that appropriate representation has been identified.
9. The last remaining recommended action requested that the Director of Public Health explores how the renewed focus and legislative development surrounding water fluoridation schemes could potentially have an impact for Leeds and reports back to Scrutiny in due course. A briefing note on this matter has been provided by the Director of Public Health and is attached for Members' consideration (see Appendix 4).

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

10. While the subject of this report relates to services commissioned and provided by external organisations, the services are provided in the context of Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which sets out the ambition that Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for all ages, where people who are the poorest improve their health the fastest.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

11. Details of the individuals who participated in the Scrutiny Board's working group meeting in February 2022 is set out in the summary note at Appendix 1.
12. With regard to today's meeting, invitations have been extended to representatives from NHS England; West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Public Health, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust; Leeds Dental Institute; Leeds Dental Network; Leeds Dental Committee; and Healthwatch Leeds.

What are the resource implications?

13. Any related resource implications will be reflected as part of the appended information.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

14. There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

What are the legal implications?

15. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board. Access to local NHS Dental Services - Working Group Summary Note (February 2022).
- Appendix 2 - Briefing note by NHS England (November 2022).
- Appendix 3 – Letter from the Chair of the AHAL Scrutiny Board to the Director for Pharmacy, Optometry, Dental and NHS Standard Contracts, NHS England & NHS Improvement (5th April 2022).

- Appendix 3a – Letter from the Director for Dentistry, Community Pharmacy and Optometry, NHS England to the Chair of the AHAL Scrutiny Board (10th November 2022).
- Appendix 4 – Briefing note by the Director of Public Health regarding water fluoridation (November 2022).

Background papers

- None.