

Report to: The Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board (February 2025)

Dental Services Update

Executive Summary

NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (WY ICB) has been responsible for the commissioning and contracting of NHS dental services since April 2023. Approximately two years on, this report sets out a current update on dental services in Leeds, providing a focus on services and the local and national direction for the future of NHS dentistry.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In April 2023, WY ICB took on delegated responsibility from NHS England for the commissioning and contracting of all NHS dental services. WY ICB have agreed to deliver their dental commissioning responsibilities via a shared hub arrangement, hosted by Humber and North Yorkshire ICB and also covering South Yorkshire.

Dental services commissioned include:

- Primary Care (generally high street dentistry), accessed by patients directly. Primary care commissioned dental activity is based Units of Dental Activity (UDAs).
- Community Dental Services – primary and specialist dental care for patients who cannot be managed by a primary care practice and who have additional health and/or social care needs. By referral only.
- Intermediate Minor Oral Surgery – by referral from a dentist.
- Orthodontics – by referral from a dentist.
- Urgent care - available via primary care practices directly or NHS111. Urgent Care is for conditions clinically assessed as requiring treatment within 2 and 24 hours. This does not include emergency care, which is for dispositions which require a clinical assessment within 2 hours and which can only be provided by the A&E pathway.
- Secondary care – specialist services by referral only.

- 1.2 While WY ICB has the remit for commissioning dental services, Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities for oral health improvement, including commissioning evidence based oral health improvement programmes to meet the needs of the local population.

- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to update members on the current local and national position for dental services and oral health improvement.

2. NHS Dental Services – improving local access

- 2.1 Both nationally and locally, access to NHS dentistry is a challenge with issues identified relating to the national contract itself, workforce gaps, and procurement restrictions, making it difficult to secure new dental provision. It is important to note that dental contracting takes place within the national context and challenges are

well-embedded, meaning that WY ICB has many issues to overcome in its aim to improve dental services.

2.2 Improving access remains an absolute priority for the ICB and since assuming delegated responsibility for the commissioning and contracting of dental services in April 2023, WY ICB has been working hard to improve dental services for those living in the area. We are building positive relationships with the profession and local dental practices to continue to improve services.

2.3 In Leeds, in 2024/25, the ICB has so far:

- Increased the number of staff in the dental team so that they can work effectively to support local dental providers to secure and stabilise dental services.
- Developed positive relationships with our Local Dental Committees (LDCs) to seek their input into future developments.
- Invested non-recurrent funding in various initiatives aimed at improving access and reducing waiting lists, including increasing urgent access appointments and increasing orthodontic appointments.
 - Urgent appointments – 15 practices in Leeds are offering approximately 24,848 patient appointments throughout the year.
 - Orthodontic practices – 5 site in Leeds. 2 of which sit in GDS contract
 - Homeless Sessions – 2 per week in Leeds
 - Asylum and Refugee Sessions – 2 per week in Leeds
 - Domiciliary Sessions – 3 sessions per week in Leeds
 - Child 0-17 Sessions – 2 per week in Leeds
 - Safe Discharge for Cancer and bisphosphonate patients.

2.4 In addition to the above investments into improving dental access, the ICB has also committed to continuing with its approach to 'flexible commissioning' which enables dental practices to work differently and to prioritise access for the most vulnerable. Through offering community outreach sessions and dedicated clinical appointments, 'flexible commissioning' practices are able to focus on both prevention and treatment. There are currently 18 flexible commissioning practices in Leeds. WY ICB has recently sought expressions of interest from dental practices with the aim of refreshing and extending the flexible scheme to other practices across the region. 28 practices in Leeds have applied to start in 2025/26.

2.5 The ICB has also invited practices to deliver up to 10% additional activity, beyond their usual contract terms. This incentive encourages practices to work above and beyond contracted levels, with the assurance that the ICB will pay for this increase in activity. 22 practices across Leeds have applied and are currently working toward over-delivery. The results will be known in 2025/26.

2.6 Finally, the ICB has been working hard in planning to transform the delivery of Community Dental Services. Community Dental Services (CDS) provide dental care for adults and children with additional needs and those from other vulnerable groups whose needs cannot be met by the general dental services.

- 2.7 Leeds Community Dental Service provide the Community Dental Services (CDS) within the Leeds locality. The aim of the CDS is to improve the oral health and reduce the oral health inequalities of people in Yorkshire and the Humber who have a physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, medical, psychological and/or emotional or social impairment or disability, or more often a combination of these through:
- Providing high quality consultant-led paediatric and special care dentistry to children and adults; this will include children with more complex dental needs.
 - Providing high quality dental care to people from vulnerable groups whose needs may not be accommodated in NHS general dental services.
- 2.8 Services are currently provided from multiple sites around Leeds including Adel Beck, Seacroft, Yeadon and Middleton Community Health Centre.
- 2.9 A service review of Yorkshire and Humber CDS commenced in February 2022, which set out key recommendations to inform discussions relating to future service design, including commissioning intentions for paediatric GA services and other pathway approaches.
- 2.10 In West Yorkshire the four current Community Dental Services as well as Clarendon Paediatric Service will move to working under a lead provider model as from April 2025. Leeds, currently provided by Leeds Community Dental Service will form part of the collaboration Bradford Community Dental Service will host all current providers by subcontracted arrangements allowing for innovation, integration and sharing of resources across the whole of West Yorkshire. This fully staffed consultant led service will serve the population of Leeds and surrounding areas within West Yorkshire.

3. Understanding Oral Health Needs Across Yorkshire and Humber

- 3.1 Given the current challenges, and the need to prioritise urgent dental care where it is most needed, further work has taken place to review and assess the oral health needs of the Yorkshire and Humber population. This report provides an update on the headline information from this recent work, including details of hospital dental extractions in children aged from 0-19 which is a predictor of decay in later life and can help to support future planning of dental services.
- 3.2 An Oral Health Needs Assessment (Y&tH) has been completed in May 2022. The purpose of this work is to help understand the oral health inequalities across Y&tH and the evidence base. This will inform the principles that will underpin strategy and work programme development, address inequalities and meet population need and demand. In summary, headline information includes:
- 3.3 In 2019, 26% of 5-year-olds in Leeds had experience of tooth decay (one or more decayed, missing or filled teeth), which was higher than the national average (23.4%), and slightly lower than the Y&tH average (28.7%). (Ref: 2019 National Dental Epidemiology Survey of 5-year-old school children).

4. Common areas of key interest

4.1 The present position on Adults and Childhood dentistry regarding appointments and availability

The latest data regarding dental activity delivery rate shows that practices in West Yorkshire on average are delivering 86.2% of contracted activity, compared to an England average of 83.3%. This is lower than we would like and we're working hard with practices to improve access and delivery of dental appointments.

4.2 **Waiting list positions for dental appointments**

Patients often think that they are registered with a dental practice in the same way that they are registered with a GP, however, this is not the case. GP practices contracts are based on patient lists, but dental practices are contracted to delivery activity. Practices are obliged to only deliver a course of treatment to an individual, not ongoing regular care however many practices do tend to see patients regularly.

This means that any waiting lists for primary care dentistry are managed at local practice level, and there is no central waiting list for dental care, and no data available to report on this.

www.nhs.uk is the digital platform, which supports patients to navigate the healthcare system. Dental practices are asked to keep their profile page up to date. Any new contracts, or contract variations, NHS England agrees with providers, across Yorkshire and the Humber, includes this as a compulsory deliverable. NHS England does not keep records of practices who are accepting new patients.

4.3 **Current position of regular attendance at dentists**

We track data on the proportion of adults who have seen an NHS dentist in the last 24 months and the proportion of children who have seen an NHS data in the last 12 months in West Yorkshire. For the whole ICB, the most recent data shows adult access rates of 43.3% and children access rates of 59.7%. West Yorkshire is in the best quintile for England across both of these rates, and recent trend is that these rates are increasing.

Adult patients seen in the last 24 months and child patients seen in the last 12 months by an NHS dentist as a percentage of the population for Leeds up to 30th June 2023 for Leeds was 41.9% and 59.1%, (England 43% and 55.8%)¹

4.4 **An update on the surgical situation for extractions (Children)**

Data² between 2022-2023 relating to Hospital tooth extractions in 0 to 19 year olds in England revealed:

- Tooth decay was still the most common reason for hospital admission in children aged between 5 and 9 years
- There has been a 17% increase in the number of episodes of decay-related tooth extractions in hospital for 0 to 19 year olds compared to the previous financial year of 2021 to 2022. This increase is likely to reflect a continuing recovery of hospital services following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There were variations in decay-related tooth extraction episode rates across the regions with the highest rates occurring in Yorkshire and the Humber (405 per 100,000 population of 0 to 19 year olds), compared with England (236 per 100,000 population of 0 to 19 year olds)
- For Leeds hospital decay-related tooth extraction episode rates between 2022-2023 were 165.2 per 100,000 population of 0-19 year olds

¹ From NHS Digital data

² Please note: from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-tooth-extractions-in-hospital-methods-and-data-quality/data-quality-and-disclosure-control-for-hospital-based-tooth-extraction-data>
Data quality statement:

No assumptions can be made about the method of anaesthesia provided for these procedures, but it is likely that the majority of episodes involved general anaesthetic. It is possible that different clinical coding protocols are applied in some sites and this could explain some of the variation in different geographical areas.

Leeds ranks 33 out of 317 local authorities on the proportion of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally ³ Deprivation is strongly correlated with experience of dental disease for both children and adults.

The prevalence of chronic conditions (CVD, diabetes) is higher than the national rates. These conditions share common risk factors (tobacco, and sugar and alcohol consumption) with oral diseases⁴.

5. National incentives and programmes

5.1 The local initiatives described above are delivered by WY ICB in order to meet the local needs and priorities of those living in the area. In addition, there are also a range of national initiatives focused on improving access to NHS dentistry. Largely introduced by the previous Conservative government, these national schemes which have been implemented across West Yorkshire include:

- Enhanced rate of pay to see new patients. The new patient premium aims to encourage dental practices to see patients who have not been to a dentist in the past 2 years. Nationally, this programme is being evaluated to determine the impact of the scheme and we are awaiting data.
- Increase to the minimum tariff for units of dental activity (UDA) to £28 in the 2024/25 financial year. Already the average UDA tariff in Yorkshire in Humber is £34.31
- The "Golden Hello" recruitment incentives
- Maintaining the ring-fence on dental budgets so that funding for dental services remains in place and focused on improving dental access.

5.2 Since these national changes were introduced, the Labour Government is now in place. They are continuing with the previous plans and have set new priorities to focus on:

- Urgent Access appointments with 700,000 new slots expected nationally
- Prevention schemes such as supervised toothbrushing
- Full dental contract reform.

5.3 To support our plans for improving access to dental services WY ICB is also offering workforce initiatives and pilots aimed at recruiting and retaining dentists in the area. Similar to other healthcare professions, dental services face a number of recruitment challenges. Recent data from NHS dental workforce data 2024 revealed for West Yorkshire ICB reveals that there are 1052 general dentists of which 72% are working as full-time equivalents within the NHS.⁵

5.4 As part of national government guidance, WY ICB has approved 13 applications for 'golden hello' recruitment incentive schemes, of which 5 are based in Leeds. These practices were selected based on eligibility criteria as per the national guidance and a local process panel review, considering hard to recruit areas, areas of high deprivation and areas of low dental access for the population.

5.5 The ICB dental team works closely with regional NHS England colleagues. Data on impact, such as those seen through the new patient premium and golden hellos are being developed nationally and will be shared through the group for further learning, sharing and implementation as appropriate.

³ Leeds Observatory Population - UTLA | Leeds | Report Builder for ArcGIS.

⁴ Public Health Profiles, OHID March 2023 Public health profiles - OHID (phe.org.uk)

⁵ Up to date NHS dental workforce data is available here <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/dental-workforce/>

5.6 In addition to commissioning NHS dental services, both the ICB and local authorities play a role in public health initiatives for oral health and wider population health priorities.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Overall, NHS dental services remains a complex and challenging area however, WY ICB, in partnership with local authority colleagues and dental providers, is working to bring about improvements. A revised focus on improving access to dental treatment through an increase in appointments, combined with a focus on workforce initiatives and preventative programmes via local schools will help to bring about positive changes.

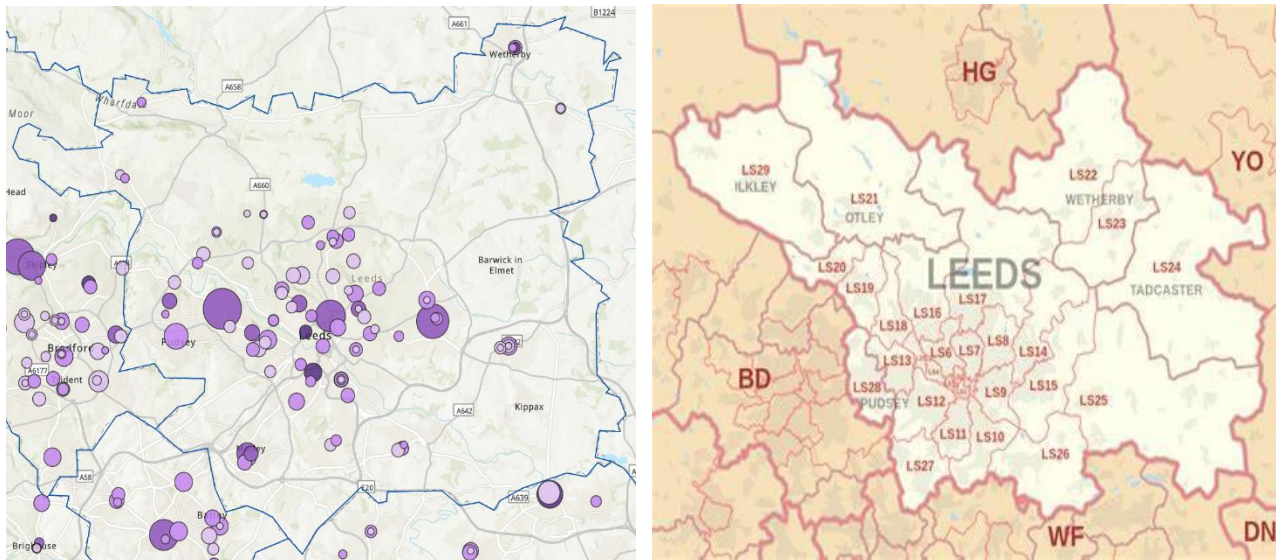
6.2 Data set out in Appendix shows the impact of some of this work, with access for children and adults across West Yorkshire being better than the England average.

6.3 Together, working in partnership with local authorities and our dental providers, West Yorkshire ICB is positive that they can continue to invest in dental services and to improve access to dental treatment for its residents.

Alyson Corns
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Appendix: Data

a) Distribution of dental contracts across Leeds West Yorkshire Based on data from SCW Geospatial services



Postcodes	Number of providers
LS1	1
LS2	1
LS3	1
LS4	0
LS5	0
LS6	5
LS7	8
LS8	7
LS9	5
LS10	5
LS11	4
LS12	12
LS13	4
LS14	2
LS16	5
LS17	7
LS18	4
LS19	1
LS20	2
LS21	3
LS22	3
LS23	1
LS24	0
LS25	5
LS26	3
LS27	4
LS28	2
LS29	6

b) Units of dental activity (UDA) per capita

Based on data [Leeds-Single-Years-of-age-2001-2023.xls](#)

Population	UDAs	UDAs per capita
811950	1191303	1.47

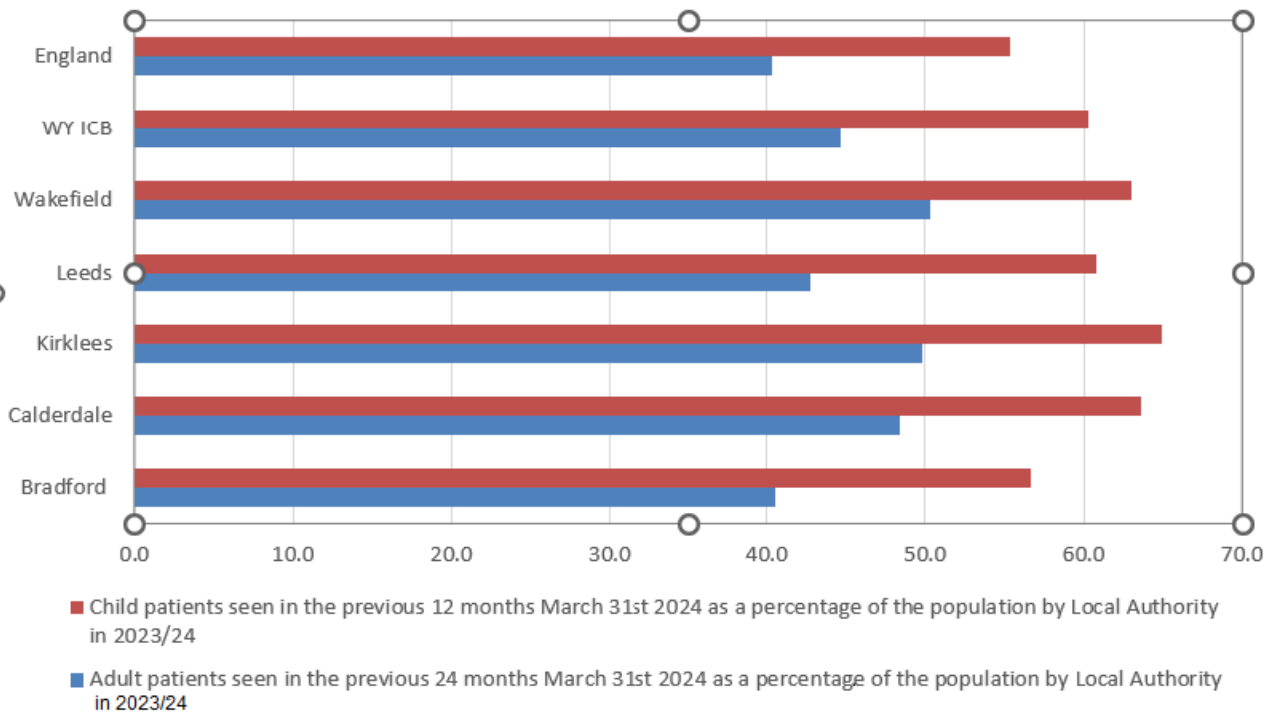
Please note that UDAs do not equate to numbers of patients and instead are linked to the type of dental treatment provided, based on the NHS Bands:

Band	UDA value	Example of treatment
1	1	Examination, assessment and advice; scale and polish
2	3 - 7	Fillings or tooth extractions
3	12	Bridges, crowns, dentures

Unlike other medical services, such as GP practices, dental services are not commissioned for every resident as there are a number of people who choose to receive private dental treatment. In 2020, across the England, 0.77 UDAs per capita were commissioned.

Access rates for adult patients seen in the previous 24 months and child patients seen by an NHS dentist within the previous 12 months by end March 2024 by local authority area, West Yorkshire ICB and England

Adult patients seen in the previous 24 months and child patients seen by an NHS dentist within the previous 12 months by end March 2024 by local authority area, West Yorkshire ICB and England



Access rates for adult patients seen in the previous 24 months and child patients seen by an NHS dentist within the previous 12 months by end March 2024 by local authority area, West Yorkshire ICB and England

Access rates for children seen by an NHS dentist in the previous 12 months by end March 2024 relating to Leeds are higher than that for England and West Yorkshire ICB (WY ICB).

Access rates for both adults and children, for the time period above in West Yorkshire ICB are above England averages.