

Appendix 1

Report to: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Regarding: Update on the Dental Contract
Date: 20th November 2009
By Cherie Young, Primary Care Commissioner for
Dental and Optometry Services

Purpose

The HOSC requested an update regarding how NHS Brighton and Hove commissions and monitors services provided under the General Dental Services Contract.

Background

The new General Dental Contract was introduced in April 2006, with the aim of improving access to NHS dental services for patients in England. To achieve this the reforms included a new system of contracting with NHS dentists, a new system of dental charges, and an end to registration for patients.

NHS Brighton and Hove is responsible for commissioning services that help prevent diseases of the mouth teeth and gums, and provide appropriate care and treatment where disease occurs to any patient that accesses a service in Brighton and Hove. This is regardless of the PCT in which that patient is resident or the GP practice with which they are registered. In other words, services are commissioned on a 'catchment' rather than 'residence' basis. The main diseases are caries (tooth decay), periodontal disease (gum disease) and oral cancer. The previous report presented to the HOSC which contains further information is attached to this document as appendix 1.

Financial Year 2008/2009 Year End Status

NHS Brighton and Hove dental contractors have shown a year on year improvement in attaining their contracted activity:

2006/2007	84.17%
2007/2008	87.5%
2008/2009	98.5%

Whilst this indicates that activity against the contract is being delivered the PCT is now directing its attention to monitoring its contractors to ensure not only that activity is being delivered but also that is directed to patient needs as well as new

patients.

Vital Signs

When the new dental contract came into effect in April 2006, the number of patients attending the dentist reduced and in March the HOSC asked for information to demonstrate whether the trend of local activity was going up or down. The following table illustrates the quarterly trend of an overall increase in the number of patient accessing NHS dentistry. The latest vital sign for September 2009 is attached as appendix 2

	Unique patients seen (within preceding 24 months)
01 September 2008	144,432
01 December 2008	145,986
01 March 2009	147,656
01 June 2009	147,401
01 September 2009	148,159
	3,727
Increase over 12 month period	2.60%

NHS Brighton and Hove are, through vigorous contract monitoring, maximising the capacity for practices to take on new patients by reviewing rates of recall where it appears that dentally fit patients may be being recalled more frequently than clinically necessary.

NHS Brighton and Hove are participating in a Department of Health Communications pilot that aims to improve access to NHS dentistry. Part of the work will include producing a patient information leaflet containing details of the services available in the city and highlighting that patients should not anticipate routine 6 monthly recalls. Under the NICE recall guidelines a dentist needs to recall each patient according to the patient's clinical needs. Patients with good current and historical oral health can therefore anticipate the recall as infrequently as 24 months whilst patients with identified oral health needs can be recalled within 3 months. The implementation of these guidelines creates capacity within existing practices to see new patients on the NHS. We have set ourselves a target of reducing the percentage of patients re-attending under 9 months from 64% to 59%. The PCT current position in this respect against the Strategic Health Authority can be seen in the Quality Section of the September Vital Sign Report attached at Appendix 2.

Promoting Access to Dentistry

Until September 2008 the Emergency Dental Service (EDS) based in Lewes was the only service provider for Brighton patients without a dentist. This is open from 18:30 – 22:00 Monday to Friday and 9:30 – 13:30 Saturday to Sunday. On average the service sees 88 Brighton and Hove residents each month.

Since September 2008 NHS Brighton and Hove have embarked on a pilot with local practices to supplement the existing EDS provision and promote access to dentistry. The PCT established a dental helpline and have agreed “Access slots” with dentists across the City during normal and extended surgery hours including Saturdays for patients in pain. On average these access slots see 60 Brighton and Hove residents each month. If possible the same practice then takes the patient on as a routine patient. Alternatively the patient would be referred back to the helpline to be informed of accepting dentists.

The helpline covers 4 PCT areas and the following table shows the levels of calls being dealt with in its first year of operation. On average there are over 100 calls a week to the helpline and almost half the volume of call are from patients in Brighton & Hove. On average one third of the calls from the city are for urgent care.

	Number of Calls - September 2008 to August 2009	Percentage of Calls
Hastings and Rother	618	10%
East Sussex Downs and Weald	660	11%
West Sussex	1916	31%
Brighton and Hove	2924	48%
	6118	

Information for Patients and the Public

NHS Brighton and Hove are communicating with local people about NHS dental services not only through their PALS and complaints procedures but also through direct contact at workshops in supermarkets and other public places. The following messages are being conveyed:

- Informing patients what they are entitled to expect and how they can get it

- Tackling misinformation
- Countering inaccurate media messages regarding service availability (in particular that it is difficult to get an NHS dentist) through signposting services and practices accepting patients

We continue to invest time and effort in presenting information in an accessible way using a range of techniques and we are now also working with the Department of Health in a communications pilot to determine effective methods of conveying these matters nationally to the public.

Feedback from Patients and the Public

During the current financial year to date the following issues have been raised by patients to NHS Brighton and Hove using the PALS and Complaints department

PATIENT COMPLAINTS		e.g.
Access and waiting	3	
Building relationships	1	practice attitudes
Information, Communication and co-ordinated care	5	patients charges, NHS v private treatment
Safe, high quality, co-ordinated care	15	clinical issues
No subject listed	7	

Total **31**

PALS ENQUIRIES		Eg
Access and waiting	5	service denied, service not available,
Building relationships	2	behaviour/attitude of practice
Information, Communication and co-ordinated care	83	information provided/ information requested, patients charges, treatment not available on NHS
Safe, high quality, co-ordinated care	18	emergency treatment, treatment available/options, patients charges, request for dentist
No subject listed	11	
Total	119	

Citizens Panel

A series of questions relating to dental services was included in a citizen's panel questionnaire that was distributed in September 2009. A total of 829 responses were received. In terms of awareness about how to access dentistry 64% of respondents said they would use word of mouth from family or friends. Only 21.5% of patients were aware of the dental help line and only 50% of patients were aware that there were dentists in Brighton and Hove taking on new patients.

The information from the Citizens Panel as well as from PALS and complaints indicate that the PCT needs to direct attention towards generating awareness of the availability of dentists as well as information on patients rights and treatment availability. It is anticipated that this will be included in the work being undertaken with the Department of Health in the Communications pilot.

Strategic Direction – Additional Local Investment in NHS Dentistry

Data indicates that in 2008/09 58% of the local patients accessed NHS dentistry in the last 24 months. However there is variation in access rates geographically (as demonstrated by the map in appendix 3). It should be noted that of the 42% of patients not accessing NHS dentistry, a proportion will be accessing private dental care. An IPSOS MORI public satisfaction survey conducted in 2009 showed that of the Brighton and Hove residents not accessing NHS dentistry 58% of these were accessing a private dentist.

The PCT has made additional investment in NHS dentistry in 09/10 on a non-recurrent basis as part of a plan to increase access rates to reach the PCT's Vital Sign target of 62% of the population being able to access NHS dentistry by March 2011. In order to inform its ongoing commissioning arrangements for 2010/11 and beyond the PCT has commissioned a "social marketing" scoping exercise to determine the barriers to accessing NHS dental care and to identify why some residents continue not to access the available services. This exercise will be completed by February 2010 and will inform the PCT's detailed commissioning plans. Additional investment will be targeted to areas of highest need and the PCT is intending to undertake an open and transparent procurement exercise to secure new contracts seeking value for money and quality services for example, greater flexibility in opening hours, greater emphasis on oral health promotion and prevention regimes. The contracting mechanisms for these new contracts will include Key Performance Indicators to ensure that the patient's needs identified in the scoping exercise are fully met.

Summary

The PCT's overall contract performance is improving in terms of dental activity being delivered and the PCT has a high proportion of dentists accepting patients. The new Dental Helpline is proving successful in terms of responding to patient's requests to access dental services, although other feedback from patients and the public demonstrates that there is a need for further work in terms of communication and awareness to ensure all residents that want to are able to access NHS dentistry. Access rates to NHS dentistry differ by geographical area and the PCT's intention to increase investment in NHS dentistry is underpinned by plans to both improve communication and awareness as well as addressing some of the barriers to accessing NHS dental care in Brighton and Hove.