

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

January 2025

1.Update on Dental Services

- NHS England (NHSE) delegated responsibility for the commissioning of dental services to Integrated Care Board in April 2023. Access to the dental services has been in decline in the last ten years, and the position has deteriorated further following the COVID 19 pandemic when dentistry was completely suspended.
- The challenges associated with access to NHS dentistry are driven by:
 - **National Dental Contract** – the contract has remained unchanged since 2006 and it is deemed not value for money.
 - 44,000 of dental activity with an average value of £1.5 million has been voluntarily handed back to the ICB by Dental practices in Worcestershire since 2023, because of practices choosing to either reduce their NHS commitment or completely ceasing to provide NHS services.
 - Contractual obligations were not delivered by the practices hence legislative changes were implemented in 2023/24, allowing contracted activity to be reduced by unilateral decision from April 2025 in circumstances where the contract has not achieved 96% for 3 consecutive years.
 - **Workforce** – Once a dentist graduates, they need to be trained for 1to2 years to gain an understanding of how NHS dentistry operates. Once dentists have completed their training, many of them opt for private practice over NHS.
 - Practices need to train these graduates (Foundation Training Practices~), and they have reduced over the last 5 years in Worcestershire and there are only eight practices who train in the region!
 - Because of pay rates practices are not being able to retain dentists within the NHS.
 - **Access** – Access to NHS dentistry for the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire is the lowest across the West Midlands.
- **Public Perception of NHS Dental Services**

Responses for the most recent 2024 dental element of the General Practice Patient survey include:

 - Tried to get the NHS dental appointment in the last 6 months 34% (35% nationally).
 - Was successful in getting an NHS dental appointment 73% (76% Nationally)
 - Experience of NHS dental services – good 68% (69% Nationally).
- **Workforce**
 - Shortage of NHS dentists and dental nurses within the region is undermining the ability of high street practices and community providers to fulfil their contracts.
 - Worcestershire is viewed as a lifestyle choice by both the medical and dental professions, however, due to limited training opportunities, the younger generation often tends to favour larger cities.
 - Region has become financially unviable to the dentists due to the large increase in running costs with no proportionate increase in contract value.

National Dental Recovery Plan

On 7th February 2024, the NHS dental recovery plan was published and since then:

- All practices are benefiting from the New Patient Premium, which means that they receive enhanced units of dental activity for each new patient that they treat between March 2024 and March 2025.
- 1 practice has received a Golden Hello funding to help them to recruit a new dentist.
- The ICB has its own Local Dental Recovery plan comprising of:
 - Improving equitable access to dental services
 - Increasing focus on prevention and reducing oral health inequalities
 - Developing the dentist workforce and support retention
 - Strengthening relationships with local providers and communities.

2.UPDATE ON CARE QUALITY COMMISSION INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE NHS TRUST (WELL LED INSPECTION)

- There were 35 “Must Do” actions within the report as well as a range of identified themes including evidence of a closed culture and racism in some areas, risk management process in need of review, wider governance / systems and process concerns, variable compliance with mandatory training as well as service specific requirements.
- In September 2024, the Trust Board undertook a deep dive into the progress made and to agree the next phase of the improvement journey. From January 2025 there will be a new Improvement Board overseeing the work, comprising of Executive Leads and chaired by the CEO. This will report directly to the Trust Board and provide updates to the range of partners and regulators as required.