

**NHS England South West (South)**

**report to**

**Plymouth Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Title:</b>	Dental Access for Adults and Children in Plymouth
<b>Date:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> November 2018
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**Purpose:**

This paper is to provide an update to the Plymouth Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the current position regarding access to NHS dental services in Plymouth.

**Recommendation:**

To note the current position regarding access to NHS dental services in Plymouth.

## Background

Historically, access to NHS dental services has been difficult both nationally and locally with parts of the South and South West of England having the greatest challenges. Access to NHS dental services in Plymouth has been difficult with an insufficient number of NHS places available to meet the level of demand from the public for dental services. Following the organisational changes within the NHS in 2013, the responsibility for the commissioning of NHS dental services transferred from Primary Care Trusts to NHS England.

## Current Position

Since the introduction of the present NHS dental contract in April 2006, there had been a steady rise in the number of patients in Plymouth who have been able to access a NHS dentist. However, there has been a downward trend and reduction in numbers accessing an NHS dentist in Plymouth over the past year. The total number of patients accessing NHS dentistry in Plymouth has declined from 137,160 (54.4% of the population) in August 2017 to 132,430 in August 2018 (50.5% of the population). This is a drop of 4,730 patients (3.4%) over the past year. The percentage of the child population of Plymouth accessing a dentist (59.8%) compares favourably when viewed against the access rate for England (58.6%). However the access rate of the adult population of Plymouth (48.2%) is below the access rate for England (50.7%).

The tables below show national, regional and local authority comparative data, broken down into child and adult population.

### Children – National and Regional Data

National and Regional Data	12-month Child Patient Seen Total			Change from previous quarter	Change from previous year	Patient seen as % of Population
	Aug 17	May 18	Aug 18	May 18 - Aug 18	Aug 17 - Aug 18	Aug 18
<b>England</b>	6,830,498	6,898,286	6,911,474	13,188	80,976	58.6%
<b>Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly</b>	198,757	200,291	201,189	898	2,432	61.4%

## Children – Local Data

Devon and Cornwall Data by Council	12-month Child Patient Seen Total			Change from previous quarter	Change from previous year	Patient seen as % of Population
	Aug 17	May 18	Aug 18	May 18 - Aug 18	Aug 17 - Aug 18	Aug 18
<b>Cornwall</b>	62,692	63,922	64,124	202	1,432	60.4%
<b>East Devon</b>	15,036	14,917	15,138	221	102	60.1%
<b>Exeter</b>	15,529	15,778	15,984	206	455	72.8%
<b>Mid Devon</b>	8,863	9,352	9,351	-1	488	56.6%
<b>North Devon</b>	9,986	9,797	9,802	5	-184	53.7%
<b>Plymouth</b>	<b>31,688</b>	<b>31,276</b>	<b>31,242</b>	<b>-34</b>	<b>-446</b>	<b>59.8%</b>
<b>South Hams</b>	11,109	11,533	11,595	62	486	76.0%
<b>Teignbridge</b>	14,625	14,420	14,559	139	-66	60.6%
<b>Torbay</b>	15,548	15,980	16,174	194	626	63.7%
<b>Torridge</b>	7,595	7,588	7,678	90	83	62.1%
<b>West Devon</b>	6,086	5,728	5,542	-186	-544	55.6%

## Adults – National and Regional Data

National and Regional Data	24-month Patient Seen Total			Change from previous quarter	Change from previous year	Patient seen as % of Population
	Aug 17	May 18	Aug 18	May 18 – Aug 18	Aug 17 – Aug 18	Aug 18
<b>England</b>	22,153,618	22,088,565	22,057,045	-31,520	-96,573	50.7%
<b>Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly</b>	741,536	734,488	731,816	-2,672	-9,720	52.1%

Significantly lower than national position

Not significantly different to national position

Significantly higher than national position

## Adults – Local Data

Devon and Cornwall Data by council	24-month Patient Seen Total			Change from previous quarter	Change from previous year	Patient seen as % of Population
	Aug 17	May 18	Aug 18	May 18 – Aug 18	Aug 17 – Aug 18	Aug 18
<b>Cornwall</b>	232,587	230,371	229,762	-609	-2,825	51.2%
<b>East Devon</b>	63,584	62,721	62,595	-126	-989	54.4%
<b>Exeter</b>	59,328	59,987	59,770	-217	442	56.6%
<b>Mid Devon</b>	36,534	36,746	36,520	-226	-14	57.6%
<b>North Devon</b>	34,442	33,421	33,006	-415	-1,436	43.2%
<b>Plymouth</b>	<b>105,472</b>	<b>102,142</b>	<b>101,188</b>	<b>-954</b>	<b>-4,284</b>	<b>48.2%</b>
<b>South Hams</b>	40,707	41,243	41,382	139	675	59.5%
<b>Teignbridge</b>	57,938	58,230	58,399	169	461	55.2%
<b>Torbay</b>	60,575	60,506	60,754	248	179	55.7%
<b>Torrige</b>	31,495	31,632	31,371	-261	-124	57.4%
<b>West Devon</b>	18,874	17,489	17,069	-420	-1,805	38.1%

Significantly lower than national position

Not significantly different to national position

Significantly higher than national position

## GP Patient Survey

As a part of the regular national patient survey undertaken by the NHS (GP Patient Survey), patients are asked to provide information on their experience of getting an appointment with an NHS dentist. For the period January to March 2018, 92.4% of patients surveyed in the NEW Devon CCG area advised they had been successful getting an appointment with a dentist, whilst 62.1% of people who were new to a dental practice advised they had been successful getting an appointment. The table below provides some comparative information from the NHS survey.

Commissioning Region Name	GPPS: Successful in getting an appt	GPPS: Successful in getting an appt when new to a practice	GPPS: % Positive Experience
	Jan-Mar 18	Jan-Mar 18	Jan-Mar 18
England	94.7%	77.2%	85.2%
Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	92.5%	63.3%	85.0%
NHS Kernow	91.3%	57.0%	81.3%
<b>NHS North, East, West Devon</b>	92.4%	62.1%	<b>82.9%</b>
NHS South Devon and Torbay	94.9%	80.3%	85.6%

## Commissioned Dental Activity

There are 24 providers in Plymouth who provide general dental services. In 2017/18, NHS England commissioned 395,598 units of dental activity (UDAs) from these providers. The total number of UDAs actually delivered by providers in 2017/18 was 313,479, which is a short-fall of 82,119 UDAs. In planning, we average 3 UDAs per patient per annum, therefore if this short-fall had been delivered, it is estimated that 27,000 additional patients would have been able to access an NHS dentist in Plymouth.

In 2018/19, 357,075 UDAs have been commissioned in Plymouth. This number does not include a number of non-recurrent reductions which have already been made to contracts this year, totalling 56,911 UDAs. The reductions have been made on the request of the providers, due to the difficulties they are experiencing in recruiting. There are currently an estimated 13 full-time vacancies for dentists in NHS practices across the city. A small number of non-recurrent increases (7,000 UDAs in total) have been made to contracts which have the capacity to deliver additional activity in 2018/19.

In addition to this commissioned activity, there are 6 Foundation Dentists (FDs) working in practices across the city. Each FD delivers approximately 1,785 UDAs per annum, which equates to approximately 600 patients. The Peninsula Dental School also provides one off courses of treatment to patients who do not have an NHS dentist. These patients are allocated by the Dental Helpline team and treated by dental students under supervision.

### National Commissioning Comparison

The tables below show how commissioning in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly compares to the national and regional number of UDAs commissioned in June 2018.

National/Regional/Area Comparison	Dental Activity Commissioned % change Quarterly	Dental Activity Commissioned % change Annual	Commissioned UDAs per 100,000 people
England	-0.14%	-0.44%	159,307
South	-0.16%	-0.35%	147,392
South West	-1.41%	-1.30%	171,694
<b>Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly</b>	<b>-1.26%</b>	<b>-0.21%</b>	<b>170,934</b>

Commissioning Region Name	Units of Dental Activity Commissioned			Change from previous quarter	Change from previous year	Commissioned UDAs per 100,000 people
	Jun 17	Mar 18	Jun 18	Mar 18 – Jun 18	Jun 17 – Jun 18	Jun 18
<b>South West</b>	<b>5,616,442</b>	<b>5,622,915</b>	<b>5,543,686</b>	<b>-79,229</b>	<b>-72,756</b>	<b>171,694</b>
Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset and South Gloucestershire	2,647,819	2,622,802	2,581,432	-41,370	-66,387	172,575
Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	2,968,623	3,000,113	2,962,254	-37,859	-6,369	170,934

- Significantly lower than national position
- Not significantly different to national position
- Significantly higher than national position

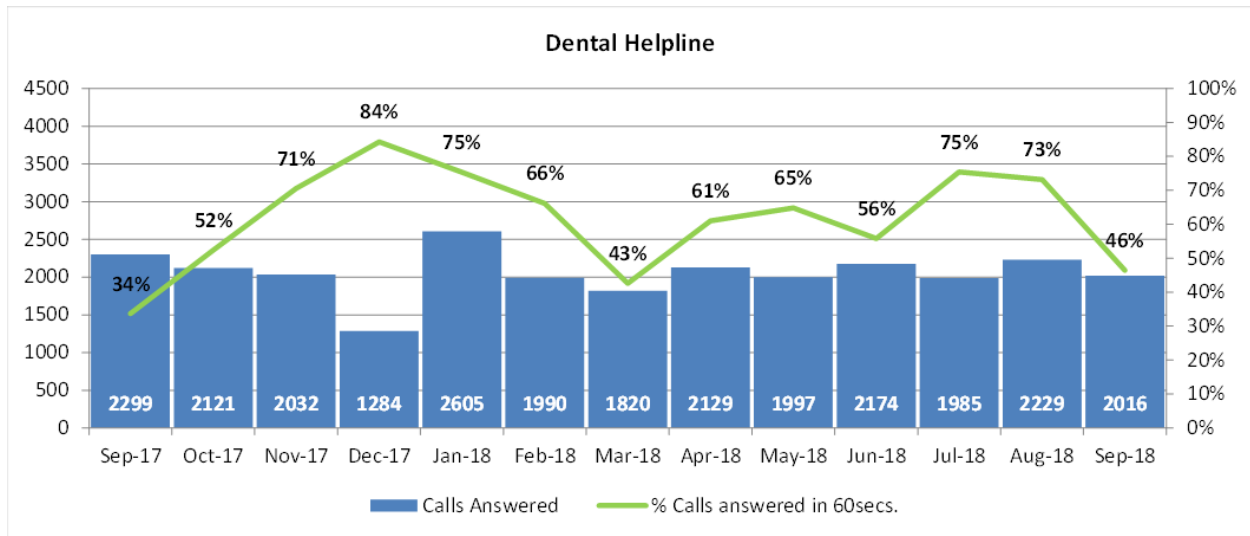
## Dental Waiting List

Access in Cornwall has historically been difficult and a dental helpline was set up to help manage the demand with a waiting list. In 2013, NHS England extended this service, provided by Access Dental, to enable all patients in Devon and Cornwall to be assisted in finding an NHS dentist. When there are no spaces available for immediate access to a routine appointment with a dentist, the helpline team manages the waiting list and work with practices to ensure people on the list are offered a dentist as soon as places are available in their preferred area. The dental helpline is advertised widely in the community.

The table below shows waiting list data for Plymouth for the last 12 months, specifically: the number of patients who have been added to the list; the number allocated to a practice; the average waiting time for those patients allocated to a dentist in that month; and the total number of patients who have been waiting for a dentist.

Month	Patients added	Patients allocated	Total number of patients on the list	Average waiting time for patients allocated during the month (days)
October 2017	652	267	9,492	470
November 2017	623	572	9,561	493
December 2017	371	404	9,523	481
January 2018	717	440	9,795	466
February 2018	767	600	9,598	488
March 2018	550	98	10,067	536
April 2018	641	404	10,231	500
May 2018	684	161	10,813	434
June 2018	614	323	11,115	515
July 2018	669	323	11,188	527
August 2018	633	272	11,638	479
September 2018	629	466	11,828	608
Total	7,550	4,330		

In the 12 months between October 2017 and September 2018, the number of people on the waiting list for a dentist in Plymouth increased from 9,492 to 11,828; an increase of 2,336 people (24.6%). During the same period, the dental helpline has handled over 24,000 calls from patients who were looking for a NHS dentist (across Devon and Cornwall). The table below provides a breakdown of the calls received each month.



Whilst the waiting list for a dentist has increased in all areas of Devon and Cornwall, the area of greatest increase is in Plymouth. The increased number of patients waiting for an NHS dentist demonstrates an increase in demand, with more than 7,550 being added to the list in the last 12 months, whilst only 4,330 patients were allocated to a NHS dentist in the same period.

In 2017 a list cleansing exercise was undertaken to ensure that all of those patients waiting were still valid and that their preferences remained the same. This exercise had a limited impact on the numbers on the waiting list with only a small percentage being removed as they no longer needed to be on the list. This is slightly at odds with the feedback we receive from practices which are allocated a list of patients. They report that a large number of the patients they try and contact have either found another NHS dentist; moved area; do not wish to see an NHS dentist on a regular basis; or cannot be contacted on the details given. In order to improve the conversion rate from waiting list to appointment, the helpline writes to patients in Plymouth to advise them that they have been allocated to a practice and to make contact with that practice within 2 weeks to arrange an appointment.

### **Urgent Dental Care**

The Dental Access Centre in Plymouth, run by Livewell Southwest, provides in-hours appointments for patients with an urgent dental need who do not have access to an NHS dentist. This service is for patients in need of relief from acute dental pain; acute infection; and bleeding or trauma. Access to urgent dental care would normally be expected to be available within 24 hours of making contact with the service. Appointments are provided at the Dental Access Centre or at one of the



dental practices across Plymouth who are contracted to hold daily urgent care appointments for people without a dentist.

The Dental Helpline team manage out-of-hours urgent care appointments for patients in Plymouth who do not have access to a regular dentist. This provides patients with access to telephone advice and information on the management of dental problems on weekday evenings, including signposting for dental emergencies and assistance getting a dental appointment for an urgent condition, and access to urgent dental clinics in Plymouth at weekends and on bank holidays.

Only those cases with a significant dental emergency, such as rapid facial swelling, uncontrolled bleeding or facial trauma, would be expected to be treated at accident and emergency departments.

### **Improving Access for Plymouth**

NHS England is working to achieve improvements in access to dental services by:

- Working with dental providers to ensure existing contracts are delivering to their maximum potential. We review the under and over performance of our dental contracts on a regular basis, and as part of reconciling activity to contract payment, explore with those contractors with the most variance what they are doing to address under performance. We are able to procure new contracts in an area where there is insufficient dental access but need to be able to ensure the workforce can be secured by a new contractor.
- Commissioning additional NHS work from dental practices that have capacity. We review this aspect as part of the above contract review activity and have identified some additional capacity in Plymouth at this current time.
- Practices are working with the Dental Helpline to ensure that as NHS places become available they are made available to those patients who are on the helpline waiting list. The team are able to help individual patients secure the best waiting list for them according to their location and ability to travel, and continuously review where and when places are becoming available and ensure patients are allocated to a practice as quickly as possible when places become available.
- Developing plans to commission dental services to meet those areas of demand within available resources. We have a Local Dental Network and

a number of Managed Clinical Networks for dentistry through which we work with dentists, public health and the dental school to develop referral pathways, and identify initiatives to increase dental capacity in the community. The limiting factor currently is workforce and we are engaging with the national NHS England dental workforce team to look at more innovative ways to attract dental staff to the area and other parts of our geography where it is hard to recruit. We intend to have some firm plans later in the year.

- Working with practices as part of the dental contract reform programme to test an alternative contract model. We have a small number of practices piloting a new prototype contract model as part of the national work looking at contract reform, as it is considered that the current contract disincentives dentists undertaking NHS dental work. The outcome of this work will feed into a national contract review process.

## **Summary**

Access to NHS dentistry in Plymouth has declined over the past 12 months in that the number of patients who have accessed an NHS dentist has fallen by almost 5,000 patients. The demand for services exceeds the available workforce and capacity of practices to take on new patients. NHS places continue to be made available, but there continues to be growing demand which NHS services are not currently able to meet.

Work is underway at a national level to identify solutions to the dental recruitment and retention pressures in NHS dental services, and to understand and address the constraints of the current national NHS dental contract mechanisms. The local NHS England dental commissioning team will work with local partners in the Council and Peninsula Dental School, accessing any additional support available nationally, to address the shortfall in NHS dental services in Plymouth.