



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2023

REPORT TITLE:	PRIMARY CARE DENTISTRY UPDATE NHS CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CARE AND HEALTH NHS CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide an update on the commissioning of primary care dental services.

The Dental Improvement Plan 2023/25 signals NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) commitment and ambition to ensure that access is improved for both routine, urgent, and dental care for our most vulnerable populations and communities impacted by the COVID pandemic.

The plan was submitted and approved to the ICB System Primary Care Board on 22 June 2023. The Plan identified the following key strategic aims:

- Recovering dental activity, improving delivery of units of dental activity (UDAs) towards pre-pandemic levels and in line with Operational Plan trajectories.
- Focussing on access for vulnerable and deprived populations and make sure they are prioritised.
- Delivering the ambition that no patient will wait longer than the nationally defined period for an urgent appointment at a General Dental Practice.
- Support greater workforce resilience and development in conjunction with NHSE colleagues (formerly HEE) and other partners.

To deliver these aims as previously reported to the ICB Board several initiatives are proposed and some have commenced already.

An important part of the plan is to develop access sessions for new patients across 60 practices in the ICB.

Commissioners are seeking to add an additional 30,000 appointments across Cheshire and Merseyside and will link with local authorities to identify suitable organisations who work with vulnerable populations e.g., Homeless population and Asylum seekers.

In addition to this a number of Foundation Dentists will be working across Cheshire and Merseyside later this year. It is envisaged that this will have a positive impact on access.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is asked to note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Dental access remains an ongoing issue for residents of Wirral and the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB has recently approved a Dental Improvement Plan focussing on dental access including urgent dental care, routine care and vulnerable groups. The recovery and restoration forms part of the NHS Operational Plan for 2023/24.
- 1.2 Practices continue to recover supported by commissioners alongside a small number of national contract changes allowing some flexibilities focussed on improving access and increasing activity.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB considered the option of doing nothing and waiting for the publication of a national dental improvement plan. This was deemed to not be in the interest of the population of Cheshire and Merseyside.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has the delegated responsibility for the commissioning of dental services including primary, community and secondary care.
- 3.2 Access to dental services is a local, regional, and national issue impacting negatively on patients. Throughout the COVID pandemic expected annual contracted activity was reduced nationally to support providers with the impact of the pandemic, there was also a process for exceptional circumstances in place for absences and further issues relating to COVID.
- 3.3 Post pandemic the restoration and recovery of primary care dental provision is part of the NHS Operational Plan for 2023/24 with the expectation being that activity will return to pre pandemic levels. Practices continue to recover supported by commissioners alongside a small number of national contract changes allowing some flexibilities focussed on improving access and increasing activity.
- 3.4 There are 35 Primary Care contracts in Wirral and there are currently 7 Urgent Care Plus providers offering urgent dental care for patients that do not have a regular dentist with a follow up appt for definitive care following the urgent care intervention.
- 3.5 Urgent Care Plus provision in Wirral currently allows for up to 9 extra sessions per week. Each session is 3.5 hours in duration and dependant on clinical presentation, there is an expectation that between 3-9 patients can be seen per session, per week. This provision forms a key part of the improvement plan.
- 3.6 Commissioners are aiming to develop a primary care dental dashboard that will allow performance monitoring information to be obtained at Place Level as well as aggregated up across the ICB.

- 3.7 Overall activity in Cheshire and Merseyside is increasing in line with regional and national trends. As previously discussed with the ICB Board commissioners are still aware that access to routine care in an NHS setting remains very challenging.
- 3.8 End of year activity for 2022/23 will be made available to commissioners in the next couple of months as defined by the national contract monitoring process and timescales.
- 3.9 Commissioners are keen to investigate further with contractors the use of the wider dental team known as Dental Care Professionals. This is important as greater use of Dental Therapists or Dental Nurses where appropriate can free up Dental Performer time and support access for new patients.
- 3.10 Additionally, commissioners will be monitoring adherence to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance regarding the appropriateness and timeliness of recalling patients. This is important as we support practices to increase the number of new patients that they can see whilst working within the constraints of a national contract.
- 3.7 A national dental improvement plan may be published imminently but commissioners are not aware of timescales and action needs to be taken now to improve access to dental care across the ICB and in Wirral.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising out of this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications directly arising out of this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 It is recognised that several risks exist that could impact on the recovery of dental services:
- Workforce – recruitment and retention
 - Lack of national contract flexibilities and pace of reform
 - Commercial viability and attractiveness of the NHS contract based on Units of Dental Activity.
 - The presenting oral health of patients post pandemic.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Dental commissioners will continue to work with key stakeholders such as Healthwatch, the Local Dental Professional Network and Local Dental Committee.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic updated local oral health needs assessments have been completed for the 9 Places across Cheshire and Merseyside and will identify the needs of vulnerable groups. The Dental Improvement Plan is underpinned by the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Joint Forward Plan in terms of improving population health and tackling health inequalities.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Environmental implications directly arising out of this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Community Wealth implications directly arising out of this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Dental Improvement Plan 2023-2025 Slides

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in accordance with Section (g)(vi) of its Terms of Reference: maintain an overview of health service delivery against national and local targets, particularly those that improve the public's health.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date