

Finding an NHS dentist in Peterborough and Wisbech

Impact Report

September 2019

Purpose

1. This report gives an overview of responses received and impacts seen as a result of the recommendations made by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in our report 'Finding an NHS dentist in Peterborough and Fenland' published on 31 January 2019.ⁱ

Key issues

2. As reported to the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board meeting in March 2019 this report contained a number of recommendations for improving access to NHS dentistry.
3. Since publication both the Cambridgeshire and the Peterborough Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees have requested and considered reports from NHS England providing details of the actions being taken in response to our report.^{ii iii}
4. As a result of our report NHS England have increased funding for the Dental Access Centres for 6 months leading up to a review of the services.
5. We are very pleased to see plans for new initiatives to improve child oral health. See sections 16 and 17.
6. Our report has had significant impact in raising the profile of the issue. Following publication there has been a significant amount of media interest regarding our findings. Our Information and Signposting Team continue to hear further experiences around dental issues from people in Peterborough and Fenland and feed this back to commissioners at NHS England.

Action required by the Board

7. The Board is asked to:
 - Note the report.

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Report Findings

8. We visited the Dental Access Centres in Peterborough and Wisbech to hear about people's experiences of trying to find NHS dental care and their reasons for visiting the Dental Access Centres. This was in response to people contacting us to report difficulties in finding an NHS high street dentist who was able to treat them, particularly in an emergency. Visits were carried out using our statutory powers to Enter and View. During our visits we also spoke to members of staff working at the Dental Access Centres.

9. Our visits to the Dental Access Centres led to the following key findings:
 - Due to the lack of routine and urgent dental appointments in Peterborough and Wisbech NHS dental practices, people are turning to the Dental access centres for help.
 - The number of people being turned away without treatment from the Dental Access Centres is substantial and rising.
 - People do not know that formally registering with an NHS dental practice is no longer a possibility since April 2006.
 - People appreciate the high quality of care and the caring nature of staff at the Dental Access Centres.
 - There are not enough NHS dentists or dental nurses regionally and there are significant problems with recruitment.
 - Poor transport links make it hard for people to access dental health care in the Fenland area.

10. With regard to the wider provision of dental healthcare for children in Peterborough in Peterborough and Fenland we found that:
 - Children have no priority for either routine or emergency appointments, unless they have additional needs and disabilities.
 - There is not enough preventative oral health education.
 - The number of children having multiple tooth extractions is increasing.

Responses to our recommendations to NHS England

11. NHS England have supplied a written response to our report which was presented at the July meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee. In their report they have responded to our key findings, also to the 4 recommendations we made to them.

12. Recommendation 1: Continue to work with partners and gather public views in regard of the proposed changes to both urgent and routine dental care

Response

NHS England and NHS Improvement is committed to working with Public Health, other colleagues and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of access to primary dental care across the geography and the factors that may affect this. As such the Dental Strategy Group was formed to take this work forward. This includes the identification of service gaps, changes in demand for services and identification of new builds/population changes and the implications for planning primary dental care services. Health profiles and areas/pockets of deprivation across the East of England will be considered.

13. Recommendation 2: Review the need for dental services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and commission activity in line with demand.

Response

NHS England and NHS Improvement Dental Strategy Group is currently reviewing dental access in areas where there are known issues. The review will inform commissioning intentions, with the view that activity will be commissioned in line with need.

As part of the work programme the urgent and oral health stabilisation pilot is being set up and discussions are underway with the provider of the Dental Access Centres with regard to the next two years, commencing 1 October 2019. Data collection during the pilot will further inform commissioning intentions.

14. Recommendation 3: Ensure that information about dentists on the NHS website is up to date and accurate.

Response

The responsibility for maintaining the information regarding dental practices on the NHS website lies with dental providers. There is not currently a contractual obligation, however as part of contract reviews encourage practices to keep their profile updated.

15. Recommendation 4: Direct dentists to take steps to increase dental care for children.

Response

Access rates for children in Peterborough City Council area are higher than average at 59.6%, with rates in the Cambridge City Council area being slightly below average at 57%. The England rate is 58.6%.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently reviewing how a national initiative which has been developed by the Chief Dental Officer to improve the uptake of children as a first check-up outlined in 'Delivering Better Oral Health' will be implemented by the Autumn. The initiative is intended to promote an increase in children's attendances at the dental practices.

The overall aim is to increase the attendance by younger children (by their third birthday) and in the longer term to improve oral health and decrease the number of extractions in children. This will require the support and sign-up to the initiative by general dental practices along with the co-operation of Local Authorities (through existing oral health schemes).

Response to our recommendation regarding child oral health

16. We made a recommendation to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Health Teams and Public Health England.
17. Recommendation 5: Commission an oral health campaign across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough targeting children and families.

Response

NHS England responded to this recommendation in their report (paragraph 3).

The Chief Dental Officer England has instigated an initiative, 'Starting Well' aimed at dental access and preventative care for young children and the Local Dental Networks have been working with the profession to encourage them to see children (under the age of 2) under this scheme.

An extract included from the PHE Public Health Outcomes Framework was provided showing that there is a wider health inequity in children's dental health around Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This is likely to be associated with levels of deprivation. Cambridgeshire has the lowest percentage of 5 year old children free from dental decay in the East of England region at 87.1% where Peterborough is second lowest in the region at 67.6%.

In Peterborough an oral health project to address the poor outcomes in Peterborough has started and is ongoing. Health visitors provide families with a toothbrushing pack at the 12 month Health Visitor Check.

Dental health promotion work forms part of the Community Dental Service contract. A procurement has been undertaken during 2018/19 for community dental services in East Anglia. Dental promotion initiatives are part of the new contracts and are linked with local authority initiatives.

Response to our recommendation regarding the Dental Access Centres

18. We received a written response from Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust regarding our recommendation to them:
19. Recommendation 6: Review accessibility of information in both Dental Access Centres.

Response

We are enlarging our portfolio of Easy Read documents. The online referral form for the new Special Care Dentistry Service starting on 1 October 2019 asks specific questions regarding the patient's communication needs. We already ask patients what their needs are and ensure we can meet them, eg. hearing loops are available in all locations.

20. Recommendation 7: Review availability of interpreting and translation services and maximise use of NHS England's newly commissioned service.

Response

Teams are aware of the interpreting/translation provider and are using according to patient's needs. We use this service to translate letters to vulnerable patients as well as telephone interpreting and face to face.

Summary

21. It is pleasing to have confirmation that NHS England are reviewing their approach to commissioning dentistry and trialling new forms of contracts. Concerns persist however that there is a general shortage of workforce in Fenland and Peterborough that makes this an entrenched problem.
22. Improved information to local people and the extended contract for the Dental Access Centres will go some way in mitigating some of the impacts of the shortage.
23. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will continue to gather experiences and feed these back to commissioners, as well as observing where information can be improved. It is pleasing to see that both Overview and Scrutiny Committees have this firmly on their agenda and will be calling NHS England back in future to update them on the progress made.

ⁱ http://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/sites/default/files/dentist_report_low.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/documents/s39397/6.%20NHS%20Dental%20Report%20in%20Response%20to%20Healthwatch%20Report%20-%20HSC%20-%20190709.pdf>

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https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/CCC_live/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=qYdi23h%2bUEuKEEhTmmNXsM9c28KBwGwPDqEktvZtrfKzfejJDAPDA%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNIh225F5QMaQWctPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSffXsDGW9IXnlg%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJff55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5oIA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA%3d