

16 January 2015

In Spring 2014 Kent Community Health NHS Trust (KCHT) consulted with patients and staff in relation to changes to its community dental service. Kent County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny committee was informed of the original proposals and subsequently, received a report on the outcome of the consultation in March 2014.

This report provides an update to the committee on the two changes which were implemented in June 2014:

1. To move the specialist gum disease service from Deal to the Trust's dental clinic at Dover Health Centre
2. To move the community dental services provided at Folkestone to more modern and accessible clinics at Ashford, Dover and New Romney.

Moving the specialist gum disease service from Deal to the Trust's dental clinic at Dover Health Centre has improved physical access for people with disabilities. The service is also available five days a week instead of one and patients are benefitting from better parking and public transport links in Dover.

More than 90 per cent of patients who attend this specialist clinic were not local to Deal and it has increased access for people living in Ashford, Shepway and Canterbury.

Moving the community dental services provided at Folkestone to clinics at Ashford, Dover and New Romney has provided patients with access to more modern and spacious facilities including a waiting area and larger disabled access lift.

The service is provided for patients who need special care. The changes have meant that patients can now also receive treatment under sedation where required, at the same clinic where they are assessed, instead of having to be referred on to a different clinic for this element of their care.

Of the patients that attended the Folkestone clinic, 50 per cent of the patients were not local to Folkestone, while 40 per cent of all patients travelled from Ashford to the clinic for their treatment.

Prior to the changes patients were contacted about their nearest clinic but were also advised that they could choose an alternative clinic if they preferred (or if this would mean they could continue to see the same dentist). The number of patients seen from the Deal and Folkestone area has increased from 521 in the six months prior to the changes to 890 in the six months since the changes. This is largely due to patients being seen at clinics where there are larger and more diverse dental teams offering a broader skill mix and the capacity to see more patients.

Patients were provided with information about voluntary patient transport schemes and information on how to reclaim their travel costs if they were eligible. Following the changes the service has not received any complaints. Patient feedback and satisfaction remains high with patients continuing to receive high quality care and treatment.

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