

Update for Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on NHS dental services

Background regarding the commissioning of dental services

NHS England holds contracts with dental care providers on behalf of the NHS, as part of its responsibilities for the commissioning and oversight of all NHS dental services (including general dental services, sedation services, community dental services and secondary care (hospital) dental services). General dental services, sedation services and specialist community dental services are commissioned in line with national regulations, with dental providers commissioned to deliver care and treatment as measured by units of dental activity.

About the services

Special Care Adult and Paediatric dental services (often known as community dental services) include a wide range of services provided for both children and adults unable to attend general dental services due to additional needs, for example those relating to physical or learning disabilities, or where they have a need for enhanced support to receive treatment.

Services are provided to patient groups with a variety of needs, some of the key groups are: adults and children with learning disabilities; those with physical or sensory disabilities; with complex medical problems: where patients need dentistry in their homes; where patients need general anaesthetic; and children in the care of social services or with complex social problems.

Recommissioning of Special Care Adult and Paediatric Dental Services

Contracts to deliver special care adult and paediatric dental services in the South East, including Kent, are due to come to an end in March 2021.

NHS England will shortly be commencing a procurement process to award new contracts to provide these services and are keen to ensure that the views of patients, the public, stakeholders and the profession are taken into account as part of this process to ensure services best meet the needs of patients within available funds.

Engagement and needs assessment

We worked with Public Health England to carry out a dental needs assessment to ascertain where there is the greatest need for these services.

We have also engaged with stakeholders, the public, patients and the dental profession to get their views which we will consider in finalising details of the procurement.

This engagement has included:

- **Workforce survey** – feedback from existing special care dental adult and paediatric dental staff

- **General dental practitioners** – feedback on how general dentists work with special care dental providers including views on any services which might better be provided in a general dental setting instead of by special care dental services
- **Market engagement events** – we held a number of events to engage with the market to ensure the services procured are sustainable and meet the needs of the population
- **Public feedback** – Public Health England worked with the Health and Wellbeing Alliance to gain the views of a wide range of groups representing the public
- **Patient feedback** – we gained the views of patients through an online survey and by providing easy read surveys in waiting rooms of existing special care and paediatric dental providers
- **Stakeholders** – we wrote to local stakeholders to advise them of the proposed procurement and ask for their views

We are in the process of working through this feedback and looking at any changes to make to the planned procurement as a result. **For Kent there are no proposed changes to the locations or service that is currently delivered.**

The **only proposed change is to improve services for patients by asking for appointments to be made available outside of the current weekday daytime hours.**

Timing

It has not been determined whether a formal procurement is required as there is a limited market of providers that are able to deliver this service. If formal procurement is required we are aiming to publish the Invitation to Tender in the winter of 2019 and award contracts in the summer of 2020 with new services in place from April 2021.

Additional Information on general dental services

NHS England is also currently in the process of recommissioning mandatory dental service contracts in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. These are to replace services where contracts have been terminated as well as where we have released funding from under-performing contracts to enable us to commission additional general dental services in the areas of greatest need.

A needs assessment was carried out which identified that Thanet was an area of need and that Margate was the area of greatest need within Thanet; however Thanet became an area of need due to a practice closure at Church Hill in Ramsgate in March 2018. Patients have since accessed care from other practices, either in Ramsgate or neighbouring areas.

We are particularly **keen to have the committee's views on whether to commission a new contract in Ramsgate to replace the March 2018 contract closure at Church Hill or to site the new contract in Margate which has been identified as having a slightly greater need through the needs assessment.**

The draft lot data sheet giving further information on this area is attached for your consideration together with the data that was used to identify the areas of greatest need to commission mandatory dental services across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.