

Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care – 28th January 2010

Report of the Director of Community Engagement and Primary Care

NHS Dental Services in Dudley

Purpose of Report

To provide a brief for members of the OSC regarding dental services in Dudley and the actions being undertaken to improve dental access for this region.

Background

Summary of Changes Since The New Dental Contract

- New dental contracts came into effect in April 2006 and are based on Units of Dental Activity (UDA) and Units of Orthodontic Activity (UOA) provided in return for an annual contract value.
- Previously dentists received payment based on a “fee-per-service” provided for a registered patient list, and dentists were also paid for the number of patients that were registered at their practice.
- Contract values for the new contract are based on a “reference period” which reflected the services that were provided by dentists during 2005/06.
- The purpose of the new contract was to allow local commissioning by PCTs to meet the oral health needs of the local population. Also, to simplify payment mechanisms for patients and to improve patient care by placing a greater emphasis on disease prevention ensuring that dentists follow the recall intervals based upon NICE guidelines therefore allowing more patient access to dental services.
- The effect of the new contract is that patients are no longer “registered” with a dentist although their perception is that this is still the case. As a result of the new dental contract, many practices have now increased the time spent on private dental services.
- In some areas across the country access to NHS dental services is a problem, however this is not the case for Dudley – as confirmed in the recent MORI poll which clearly indicates that the public in Dudley are satisfied with NHS dental access (see graph 1).

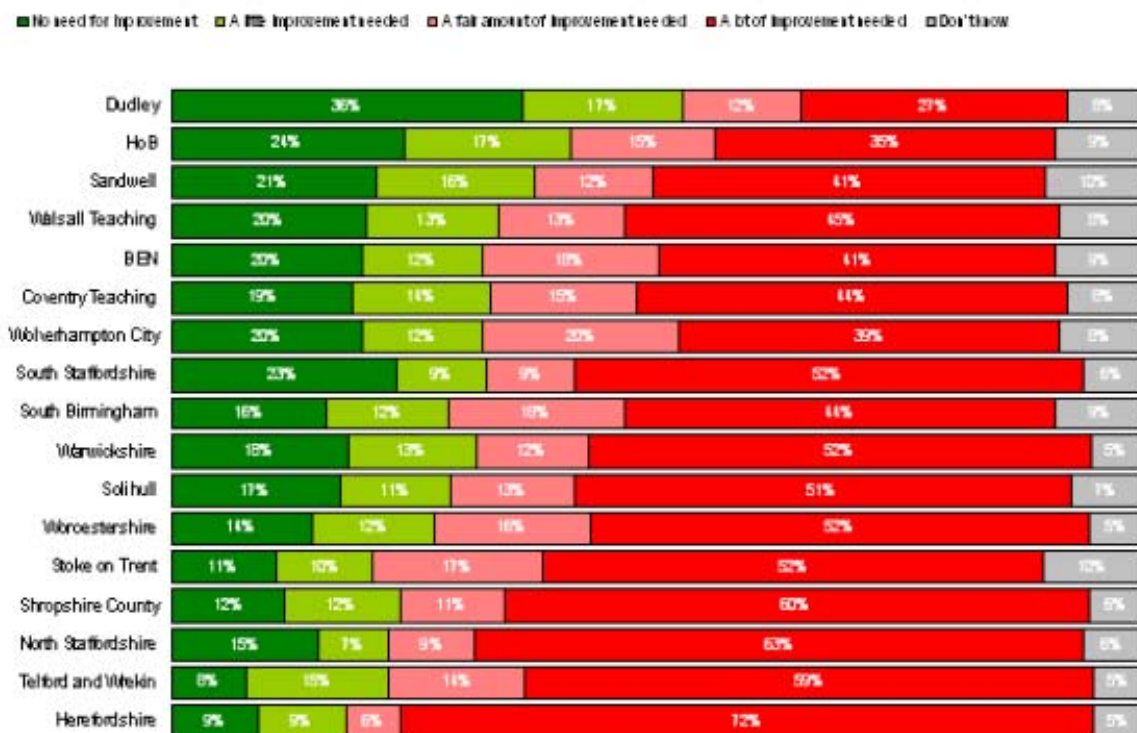
Dental Access

- A survey undertaken by MORI in 2006 across the West Midlands showed that 70% of respondents felt that access to NHS dentistry needed a fair amount, or a considerable amount of improvement. The 2008 MORI telephone survey highlights again public concern about the ease of access to an NHS dentist and the extent of improvement needed.
- In a list of 20 priorities for improvement, ease of access to an NHS dentist was ranked as the second highest priority behind cleanliness of hospitals. Although the relative importance of priorities varied between PCTs, dentistry featured in the top four priorities of the public in every PCT in the West Midlands. In Dudley there appeared to be less concern over access but it was still in the top 4 and 39% of respondents felt that access to dental care needed a fair amount or a lot of improvement.

Table 1. Relative importance to the public of improving access to NHS Dentistry

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Herefordshire	BEN	Sandwell	Dudley
North Staffs	Coventry	S. Birm.	HoB
Telford	Shropshire	Stoke	W'ton
Warwickshire	Solihull	Walsall	
Worcestershire	S.Staffs		

Graph 1: Extent of improvement perceived to be needed in access to NHS dentistry, by PCT



Source : MORI Annual survey for 2008 for NHS West Midlands

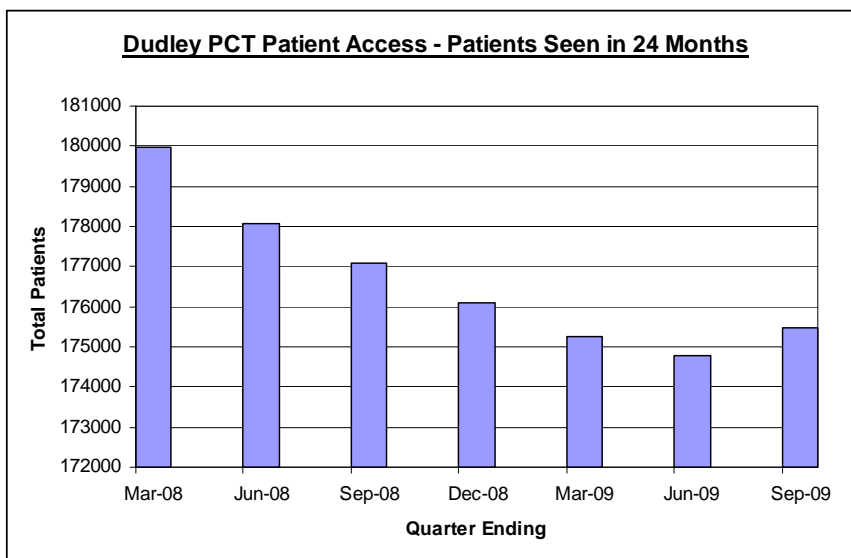
- The PCT has a responsibility to find a dentist for patients who experience problems in finding this service however as no practices in the borough have a restricted patient list this only appears to be required when patients move into the area and a list of all available NHS dentists is provided to them for them to make their own choice.

Actions taken to improve local access to NHS Dentistry

Access to dental care is measured as the numbers of patients who have seen an NHS Dentist in the last 24 months. The bench mark was set when the new contract came into force in 2006. In Dudley 186,345 people had seen a dentist in the last 24 months (61% of the population compared to 55.8% nationally). Nationally there has been a decline in the numbers of people accessing services to 52% and 58% in Dudley.

The decrease in numbers attending since March 2008 can be seen in the graph below. As can be seen the numbers are now increasing as a consequence of additional commissioning by the PCT and this is projected to increase to the 2006 levels.

Graph 2: Numbers of patients who have seen an NHS Dentist in the last 18 months.



Actions taken to increase access to NHS Dentistry:

- At the beginning of 2009, the PCT commissioned additional UDA activity for a period of 3 months to the end of the financial year 2008/09 on a temporary basis
- Following the successful uptake of this additional activity the PCT commissioned further activity from 1st September 2009 till the end of this financial year (2009/10) with the focus being placed on new patients
- Monthly data is being collected from each of the practices who signed up for this activity and is being monitored along with patient access levels recorded for the quarterly Vital Signs reports
- By the end of this financial year we are anticipating that this will enable local dentists to have treated an additional 9,700 patients which will increase the access levels back to the 2006 bench mark. However, this will take some time to reflect in the Vital Sign access figures as these are based on a 24 month period

- The PCT are also potentially looking at increasing contracts with regards to UDA activity in order to maintain the new patient levels.

Community Dental Services (CDS)

- The CDS for Dudley operates from 7 clinics within the Dudley area.
- These clinics provide dental care for vulnerable groups and their locations are across the Borough and do include some of the more deprived areas however due to the nature of this service these clinics only operate on a sessional basis to cater for the needs of the patients within that particular location.
- General Dental Practitioners also use this service to refer nervous/ anxious patients or those patients who have disabilities/learning difficulties if they are unable to treat them within their normal practice environment.

Communication and Patient Engagement

Social Marketing

- As the indicator for children access to dental services has slightly dropped, Dudley Comms team have undertaken a Social Marketing exercise in some of the more deprived areas of the borough and the outcome of this has resulted in the following actions:-
 - Targeting children – birthday cards to be sent to all children turning 3 years of age. The first cards will be sent out on January 1st 2010.
 - Advertising Dental Services – dental adverts will be displayed on all GP surgery LDC screens. This will help to attract patients who have not attended a dentist for over 2 years with the focus being placed on oral health

Health care forum

- In May 2009, NHS Dudley's Healthcare Forum held a session on Dentistry which included workshops and a Q&A session. The following topics were discussed at length in small groups:
 - Community Dentistry
 - Social Marketing
 - The Patient Offer

A question and answer session was held as a larger group with topics discussed ranging from dental charges to waiting times for orthodontic treatment. A number of NHS staff were involved in this session and suggestions from members of the group have been incorporated into wider work around dentistry.

Finance

Annual uplift

An annual uplift of 3% on the previous years' budget was given for 2009/10, however the recommended contract uplift was only 0.21% and therefore there is still approximately £300K still available within this year's financial budget.

Spot Purchasing

Spot purchasing for 2008/09 approx £300K was commissioned with existing providers on a temporary basis.

A further exercise costing approx £677k has been undertaken from September 2009 to the end of this financial year (2009/10), however the focus for this activity is for new

patients only and only 80% of this money has been provided currently to the contractors participating in this exercise.

Defibrillators

47 Defibrillators have been ordered for dental practices who do not currently have this equipment. This exercise was also carried out by a couple of neighbouring PCTs and has proved to have a positive effect on dentists. This was an approximate cost of £50K.

Budget was used from the dental underspend from previous years and therefore there is still some monies available to commission further activities due to the total uplift not being given to contractors.

Law

The NHS is now bound by European Procurement Regulations and as a consequence we are now in the process of including additional activity to all local dentists who wish to increase their current levels of activity on a permanent basis for 2010/11 within the constraints of the regulations.

Equality Impact

With the funding that the PCT will have available to them in 2010/11 the intention is to commission additional NHS dental services in areas of deprivation where access is historically poor.

Recommendation

- Note contents of report

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List of Background Papers