

Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission Meeting on 16 Nov 2022

Item 6 - PANEL DISCUSSION on Provision of NHS Dentistry in Hackney

Briefing note compiled with information from NHSE London and from the East London and City Local Dentistry Committee

Context: General Dental Practitioners are the main providers of Primary Dental Care through a General Dental Services (GDS) NHS contract with 86 dentists working in 34 practices across City and Hackney (see NHSEL note and spreadsheet for the data).

The Clinical Lead for City and Hackney for NHS NEL and our Cabinet Member for Health have drawn our attention to the point that NHS work is paid on a 2006 contract which is based on 2003/4 treatment levels. Also that dentists do not have catchment areas like GPs, so population specific data does not appear to be collected.

We understand that NHS work is paid per unit of dental activity (UDA) e.g. check up and cleanse = 1UDA, doing up to 3 fillings = 3UDA, fixing a root canal = 7UDA and payments for these have not kept up with the cost of providing the treatment. BDA advice to members appears to be to encourage members to do more private work to make up the shortfall.

We note that Dental practices pay business rates at roughly the same percentage level as they have NHS patients on their books - so if you are 40% NHS on your list you get about 40% reduction on business rates.

We've learned that successive Public Health Reports have indicated that the oral health of local children is poor with a high dental caries rate. Many of these children do not attend dental practices and therefore the disease remains untreated. A recent Adult Dental Health Survey for East London reported periodontal disease to be the most prevalent condition requiring treatment with the majority needing more treatment than just a scale and polish and over 80% in total requiring some form of periodontal treatment.

Last month the Government introduced a new proposal to address waiting list difficulties however the profession reacted negatively on grounds that the proposal contained no additional investment. Over 44 million NHS dental appointments have been lost since lockdown in England alone, which equates to more than a year's worth of care in pre-COVID times. Due to its chronic deprivation the impact on City and Hackney is far higher.

1.) Note from Jeremy Wallman, Head of Primary Care Commissioning; Dentistry, Optometry and Pharmacy, NHS England – London Region

City & Hackney detail as follows:

29 GDS Contracts including 1 additional Orthodontic service and 1 Sedation practice

2 x Orthodontics

1 x Minor Oral Surgery

1 x Endodontic

Attaching a spreadsheet for reference with the above details.

Additionally Paediatric and Special Care Services are delivered by Kent Community Health NHS Trust from St Leonards Hospital and Acute (Hospital) Dental Services are provided by Homerton Hospital.

2) Note from East London and City Local Dentistry Committee

NHS Dentistry in Hackney - the local context:

- **86** dentists working in **34** practices across City and Hackney
- All of them have NHS and private patients
- Nationally 90% of dentists are not taking new adult patients and LDC estimate only 3 or 4 in C and H are
- NHS work is paid on a 2006 contract which is based on 2003/4 treatment levels!
- The British Dental Association (BDA) described the recent changes as "tinkering around the edges"
- Dentists do not have catchment areas like GPs so population specific (e.g. City and Hackney residents who are registered with a dentist) data is not collected!
- NHS work is paid per unit of dental activity (UDA) e.g. check up and cleanse = 1UDA, doing up to 3 fillings = 3UDA, fixing a root canal = 7UDA and payments for these have not kept up with the cost of providing the treatment so the most recent BDA advice to members is "take on more private patients and do less NHS work"
- Practices pay business rates at roughly the same percentage level as they have NHS patients on their books - so if you are 40% NHS on your list you get about 40% reduction on business rates
- In City and Hackney most NHS patients leave it until they are in pain to visit a dentist so the level of preventative work is low
- There is a huge shortage of dentists, dental nurses and hygienists, especially since Brexit

The responsibility for the commissioning of NHS work sits with NHS England, but it is planned that this will be devolved to NEL ICS in the next 6 months. One of the key challenges is that the commissioning has up to now been based on outdated data and a poorly upgraded general contract.

Key priorities for the future include the need for earlier preventative work and oral hygiene education, especially with children and this needs to be prioritised in the NEL ICS Strategy work and by the City and Hackney Health and Care Board in their priority planning.

A small part of our Public Health budget is dedicated to a targeted programme of work with children in communities with particularly poor dental health but it is nowhere near universal.