


<h1 style="margin: 0;">NHS Highland</h1>	
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Meeting: HHSCC meeting

Meeting date: 28th June 2023

Title: Update on Dental Services

Responsible Executive/Non-Executive: Dr Peters/Medical Director

Report Author: John Lyon/Director of Dentistry and Clinical Dental Director (Public Dental Services)

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Awareness

This report relates to a:

- Emerging issue

This report will align to the following NHS Scotland quality ambition(s):

Safe, Effective and Person Centred

This report relates to the following Strategic Outcome(s)

Start Well	Thrive Well	Stay Well	Anchor Well
Grow Well	Listen Well	Nurture Well	Plan Well
Care Well	Live Well	Respond Well	Treat Well
Journey Well	Age Well	End Well	Value Well
Perform well	Progress well		

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

Deterioration in access to Primary Care Dental Services
 Increasing concerns about the sustainability of Primary Care Dental Services
 Ongoing national reform of Primary Care Dental Services.

To note the current situation and actions being taken to mitigate, current reduced access to Primary Care Dental Services.

2.2 Background

There have been long-standing challenges in providing NHS Dental Services, many of which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are a very limited number of Dental Practices accepting new patients for NHS dental registration. Some Dental Practices continue to face challenges providing routine dental care for registered patients. The main reason for current dental access issues, relate to limited recruitment to Dentist posts and poor retention of Dentists, willing to provide NHS dental care.

NHS (GDS) (Scotland) regulations 2010 apply to provision of General Dental Services. NHS Boards are not required to provide a full dental service to their population. However, NHS Boards are required to keep a list of Dentists providing NHS services in the Health Board area and publish this list. Health Boards do provide Urgent Dental Care, via the Health Board Public Dental Service, for unregistered patients.

2.3 Assessment

Currently, only one Dental Practice, in the HHSCP area is accepting new patients for dental registration.

3 Dental Practices have closed permanently recently (Kyle, Lochcarron and Ullapool). The Kyle Dental Practice agreed to transfer approximately 4000 registered patients to the Portree Dental Practice.

Recent Dental Practices that have informed NHHSH that patients will be de-registered; 1500 in Ullapool, 600 patients in Dingwall, limited numbers of patient de-registered weekly at the Kingsmills Dental Practice (Inverness).

Some Dental Practices continue to re-profile their business model, on a planned basis, to reduce NHS commitment.

Approximately 50% of Dental Practices have reduced NHS registrations/activity compared to pre-Covid levels.

There are concerns that new patients cannot access routine NHS dental care and registered dental patients may have limited access to routine care.

Oral Health Inequalities may become more pronounced. Most Dental Practices offer patients access to private dental care options, therefore patients may opt to access private dental care.

For many years levels of Oral Health in Highland and across Scotland have improved significantly, measured by the National Dental Inspection Programme. It is likely that reduction in access to NHS Dental Services currently, will result in significant deterioration of oral health of the population.

There is ongoing Scottish Government Reform of Dental Services, although definitive detail on payment reform is awaited, following SG negotiation with the British Dental Association. There is risk of further delays in the reform process, or limited acceptance of reform by GDPs, accelerating de-stabilisation of NHS dental services. SG has confirmed their intention to implement payment reform from the beginning of November 2023. Payment reform is the first part of the planned reform of Primary Care Dental Services.

The Scottish Parliament Covid-19 Recovery Committee is currently carrying out a short enquiry into NHS Dental Services in Scotland. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre has provided an Update on NHS Dental Services in Scotland- see link at Appendix 1.

2.4 Proposed level of Assurance

This report proposes the following level of assurance:

Substantial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comment on the level of assurance

To improve the level of assurance relies on many factors some out with the direct control of NHSH including recruitment and retention of NHS Dentists, including reducing barriers for non-UK trained dentists to register with the UK General Dental Council and successful implementation of the current reform process.

3 Impact Analysis

3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

As access to General Dental Services is limited. NHS Highland Public Dental Service (PDS) colleagues are increasing commitment to provide Emergency Dental Services (EDS) for unregistered patients, which is impacting delivery of routine dental care for priority patient groups and waiting times for patients referred for specialist dental services.

3.2 Workforce

Impact on PDS staff of providing access for increasing numbers of unregistered patients is negatively impacting on staff morale. Recruitment to PDS Dentist posts is poor, many Posts advertised have received no suitable applicants and have been re-advertised numerous times. The PDS are recruiting to Dental Therapist posts, where Dentist posts remain unfilled, to maintain dental services, albeit limited by the Dental Therapist Scope of Practice.

3.3 Financial

Vacancies within the PDS workforce will increase underspend on PDS budget, which may result in future decreased direct allocation of PDS funding from SG.

3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

A Scottish Dental Access Initiative Grant has been awarded to Fyrish Dental Practice, Alness. The Practice plans to register an additional 1500 NHS patients. NHSH is currently reviewing a further SDAI application for Inverness, to expand an existing Dental Practice.

NHSH Dental Helplines and PDS Emergency Dental Services resilience to cope with increased activity is under regular review by Dental Managers.

3.5 Data Protection

N/A

3.6 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

An impact assessment has not been completed yet, awaiting confirmation of upcoming payment reform process to inform this assessment.

3.7 Other impacts

N/A

3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

Engagement with NHSH Area Dental Committee.

3.9 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

NHS Dental Clinical Governance and Risk Management Group.

4 Recommendation

- **Awareness** – For Members’ information only.

4.1 List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix No 1- <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2023/06/06/nhs-dental-services-in-scotland-braced-for-change/>