

Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care – 4 December 2023

Written question from Cllr Andrew Garratt to the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care

The committee's continuing oversight of the dire situation regarding access to NHS dentistry on the Island is welcome. The briefing to the committee comments that "evidence suggests dental access issues here are the most pronounced". My experience talking with residents is that the evidence is more than suggestive.

What advice can be given to residents on how quickly the actions will see them able to get NHS dental treatment that is both physically accessible and available on an ongoing basis so that treatment is not ad hoc?

Response

Deputy Place Director (Isle of Wight) - Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board:

Our first priority is to secure more NHS contracts for dentistry across Hampshire and Isle of Wight as a whole to increase the availability of appointments with dentists under the NHS. To do this, we are looking at ways in which we can make these contracts more appealing for practices.

The Integrated Care Board has recently put forward more than £6 million by the end of the 2024/25 financial year for a number of projects to improve access to dentistry on the NHS across Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

These projects are already underway with others beginning in the next few months. Due to these early stages, it is not possible to calculate the exact additional access that this will provide to the Isle of Wight. Funding will go towards a mobile dental bus that will visit the Island, explore further a centre for dental development to address local workforce issues and help to procure additional units of dental activity both for the island and the mainland.

There are two practices on the island who have agreed to complete temporary activity to see and treat patients not only for urgent care but to provide stabilisation of their dental need. This activity, although temporary, will remain until 31 March 2025 providing some stability of provision whilst another procurement exercise is undertaken.

As well as these two practices who have agreed to do temporary activity, another practice has agreed to undertake additional sessions every other Saturday, additional to their usual contracted hours. These sessions will provide urgent care and stabilisation for patients who require dental treatment prior to undergoing surgery or cancer treatment.

The practice and the 111 helpline have been liaising to ensure all appointments are filled with this priority group and then opened up to book into any remaining slots for any patient who has an urgent dental need.

I hope this goes some way to addressing your concerns while acknowledging the problems that the ICB has encountered within its first year having responsibility for dentistry. We are exploring every avenue to address both the short and longer-term issues as we seek to stabilise and improve NHS dentistry across the Isle of Wight.