

REPORT TO: Health and Wellbeing Board

DATE: 20th March 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Tom Knight – Head of Primary Care NHS Cheshire and Merseyside

PORTFOLIO: Health and Wellbeing

SUBJECT: Dental Services in Halton

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on dental services in Halton, local dental improvement plan progress and the publication of the national dental recovery plan.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the Board note the report.**

3.0 **Supporting Information**

3.1 Access to NHS dental services is a local, regional, and national issue impacting negatively on patients. Many performers on NHS contracts have switched from providing NHS care to private care resulting in national workforce challenges. This is due to the NHS contract no longer being an attractive option both professionally and financially.

3.2 The NHS contractual payments were agreed in 2006 following a baseline assessment of provision of care over a period of a year. No review has been undertaken and only DDRB uplift annually has been applied (normally around 3%) so effectively given costs of equipment, energy, staff wages etc the contract payments are no longer sustainable for providers and they can only offer a percentage of the UDA value to a performer (13/14£) this is very low if you compare private remuneration and is not attractive to dentists.

3.3 **Dental Improvement Plan 2023**

The NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Dental Improvement Plan 2023/24 was approved in June 2023. Developed to facilitate an increase in access from 2023/24 this led to a number of providers offering urgent care and urgent care plus. In addition a pathway was created for looked after children and vulnerable patients such as those receiving cancer treatment.

3.4 Running in parallel to these initiatives was the requirement for NHS dentists to recover activity to pre COVID levels.

3.5 Based on regularly reported data collected by the Dental Advice and Triage Helpline the demand for urgent care has increased by approximately 40% since COVID with

many patients repeatedly attending. An urgent care appointment is nationally defined as ‘to get a person out of pain’.

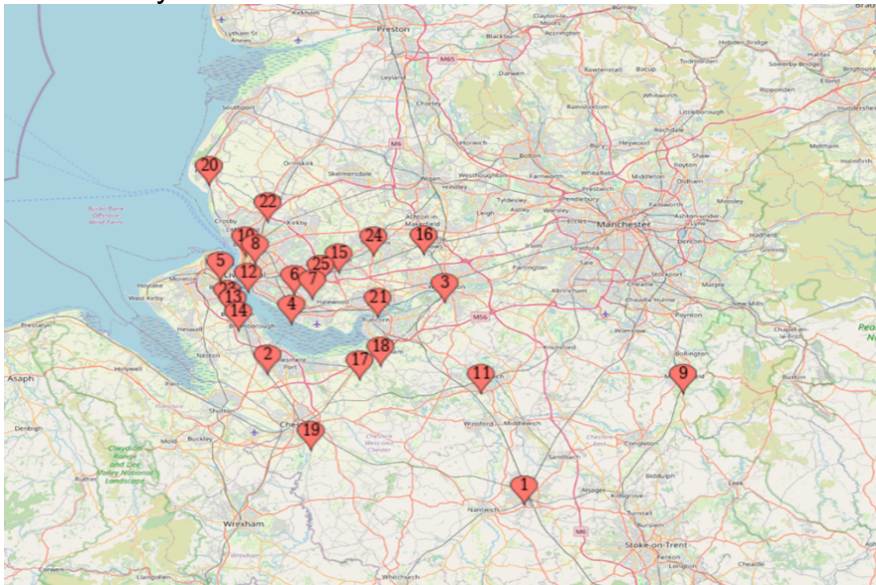
3.6 Working in collaboration the Local Dental Network and Dental Public Health, the dental team created an extension to the urgent care pathway, allowing patients who have attended an urgent care appointment to attend a separately commissioned session where they are offered a full examination and any substantive treatment to get them dentally fit.

3.7 **Urgent Care**

A rapid evaluation of the urgent dental care clinical activity within Cheshire and Merseyside was undertaken in January 2024 by the NHS England North West Dental Public Health Team.

3.8 There is one Urgent Care Dental Centre (UDC) in Halton and there are currently a total of 25 dental practices commissioned in total to deliver Urgent Dental Care activity across Cheshire and Merseyside.

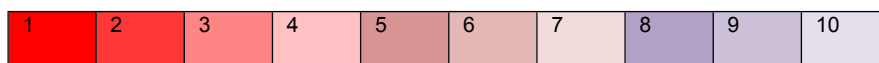
3.9 The map below shows locations of the Urgent Dental Care Centres across Cheshire and Merseyside.



Map no	Dental Practice IMD*	Dental Practice Local Authority
4	1	Liverpool
8	1	Liverpool
10	1	Sefton
15	1	Knowsley
21	1	Halton
24	1	St Helens
3	2	Warrington
5	2	Wirral
7	2	Liverpool
13	2	Wirral
23	2	Wirral
1	3	Cheshire East
12	3	Liverpool
9	4	Cheshire East
25	4	Knowsley
14	5	Wirral
16	6	St Helens

6	7	Liverpool
11	7	Cheshire West and Chester
19	7	Cheshire West and Chester
22	7	Sefton
17	8	Cheshire West and Chester
2	9	Cheshire West and Chester
18	9	Cheshire West and Chester
20	9	Sefton

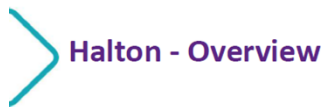
Key Dental Practice Index of Multiple Deprivation Decline 1 = most deprived 10% nationally, 10 = least deprived 10% nationally



- 3.10 Currently, the Advice Triage Dental Helpline refers a maximum of 3 patients per day (Mon-Friday) to each UDC practice for treatment. From September to December 2023, there were 5,993 appointments offered through the C&M Dental Helpline, of which 5,795 (96.7%) were booked. There was a consistent number of bookings across the area over the 4-month period, with between 1369 – 1502 patient appointments booked.
- 3.11 Urgent dental care plus is an access initiative which was established to enable patients who have attended the UDC for urgent dental treatment to return for a full course of NHS treatment. Currently, there are 49 practices who provide definitive courses treatment to patients via the UDC plus programme.
- 3.12 There are 2 Urgent Care Plus practices in Halton allowing for 3 extra sessions per week. Each session is 3.5 hours in duration and dependant on clinical presentation, there is an expectation that between 4-6 patients can be seen per session, per week.
- 3.13 Evaluation of the UDC plus scheme has been taken from September 2023 – December 2023 and overall, there is a consistent number of appointments used within this service, with an increase over time. On average over the 4 months, 986 patients have received treatment through this service, of which 95.1% were deemed by the UDC plus providers to be appropriate for the pathway. More adults (3602, 91.4%) than children (364, 9.2%) were treated. Using this pathway, 2,116 patients have had a full course of dental treatment to restore their dentition within NHS primary dental care.
- 3.14 Overall recommendations from the evaluation report were as follows:
- Ensure helpline is adequately funded and monitored to enable smooth transition of patients through the system.
 - Ensure future funding mechanism for longer term stability of both UDC and UDC plus initiatives.
 - Maintain network approach for providing urgent dental care across Cheshire and Merseyside.
 - Review expanding the referral mechanisms to allow health and social care professionals to refer vulnerable patients with urgent dental needs into the UDC / UDC plus system
 - Review future funding to expand the network for shared care initiatives with patients who have required specialist dental care (e.g., adults with additional needs)

3.15 Primary care performance overview

The following information relates to the provision of primary care dental provision in Halton



Indicator	Halton
Number of practices	13
Contracted UDAs	226,959
UDAs in 2022/23	188,566
Average of 2022/23 achievement pass mark 90%	85%
Average of IMD Decile (1 being most deprived)	2.2
Number of practices in 20% most Deprived	9
Percentage of practices in 20% most deprived areas	69%
Percentage of Children population seen (06/20)	33%
Percentage of Adult population 18-64 seen (06/20)	45%
Percentage of 65years and above population seen (06/20)	46%
Percentage of Children population (06/23)	49%
Percentage of Adult population 18-64 seen (06/23)	51%
Percentage of 65years and above population seen (06/23)	50%

Of all practices in Halton, 69% are situated in a deprived area

Children seen **increased** by 16%
 Adults (under 65) seen **increased** by 6%
 Adults (65 and over) seen **increased** by 4%

3.16 Cheshire and Merseyside Dental Improvement Plan 2024-26

Subject to NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Board approval in March the System Primary Care Committee recently recommended a new ambitious plan.

3.17 Will build upon the current programmes in place and align to the delivery of the national dental recovery plan - Our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry published on 4 February 2024

3.18 The plan will utilise the dental underspend available to the ICB up to the value of £9.985 million. £4.8 million was previously approved in June 2023 so the total investment available will be around £14.85 million.

3.19 In addition we hope to maintain and create workforce development opportunities within existing practices and wider within health and social care. Maximise the opportunity of flexing contracts to take into account the altered contracting mechanisms outlined in the dental recovery plan and previous contract reforms.

3.20 It should also be noted that an oral health improvement programme has also been agreed as part of the funding identified equating to £600k for the next three years.

3.21 The plan will focus on five key pathways

- **Pathway 1** Access to urgent dental care for those in immediate need of support, such as dental pain, or specific medical/statutory requirement
- **Pathway 2** Urgent Care Plus -- Definitive treatment following urgent care, if required/requested
- **Pathway 3** Routine care for patients who require a check up and any follow up care to make sure they are orally fit
- **Pathway 4** Access for children, with additional preventative/treatment needs
- **Pathway 5** Access for “cared for” frail vulnerable adults

- 3.22 Pathways 1 and 2 are already up and running and will continue. The focus of the commissioning team will be establishing Pathway 3 Routine care for patients who do not have a dentist.
- 3.23 To complement our existing plans we are seeking to develop at least 3 Dental Access and Workforce Development Centres across Cheshire and Merseyside in areas of highest need.
- 3.24 We will use the national contracting flexibilities announced recently and are seeking to find creative solutions. We envisage that the centres will be accessed for new patients with no dentist via existing referral routes and want to avoid the unacceptable vision of long queues of patients trying to access a service.
- 3.25 The centres could offer both undergraduate and post graduate workforce opportunities, but we expect to see a skill mix model in operation. Centres could offer a mix of Pathways 1 to 5.
- 3.26 The centres will offer bookable appointments 7 days a week and this would be via NHS 111 or the local dental advice triage helpline.
- 3.27 The focus for commissioners will be on ensuring our most vulnerable populations are able to access NHS dental services as an integral element of the ICB ambitions regarding population health management.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Contributes to the requirement to ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Will assist in creating and maintaining a healthier workforce

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

By improving access to dental treatment the improvement plan will help to create a healthier community and work to promote well-being, a positive experience of life with good health (not simply an absence of disease), and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

No implication on Urban Renewal

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 In light of the COVID-19 pandemic updated local oral health needs assessments have been completed for the 9 Places across Cheshire and Merseyside and will identify the needs of vulnerable groups. The Dental Improvement Plan will be underpinned by the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Joint Forward Plan in terms of improving population health and tackling health inequalities.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 No climate change implications identified at this time.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.