

Cllr Jane MacBean
Chairman
Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee
Buckinghamshire Council
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14th June 2021

Dear Cllr MacBean,

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee – Dental Services

Thank you for your letter of 3rd June 2021 with questions relating to the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee meeting held on 4th March 2021.

This response is from me on behalf of NHS England and NHS Improvement and Satnam Moonga from the Buckinghamshire Local Dental Committee.

In response to the questions you raised:

1. Discrepancy in UDA prices

The Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) pricing system was introduced with the nGDS contract in 2006. The UDA price for each contract was set nationally using 2004-05 as a reference year. The activity for that year identified a casemix for each of the practices and those who carried out proportionately more complex treatments received a higher UDA price. Another key consideration was whether practices provided NHS services for adults and children or just children. Those who provided services for adults and children tended to have a higher UDA price as they provided a wider range of treatments. Since 2006, these prices have been subject to annual inflationary uplifts. Practices are required to deliver a UDA 'target' in terms of numbers of treatments provided each year. This target is designed to support patient access to NHS care.

Since 2006, new practices have been commissioned via procurement processes. The NHS will take account of UDA pricing in the Region and local area when identifying a price range within which practices should bid for contracts.

NHS dental contracts still operate under the UDA system. Since 2010, the NHS has been piloting alternative contract models, but these remain at the development stage. We understand that this is now subject to a more focussed review nationally as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. UDAs as part of the consideration of when practice is sold

The UDA price will be part of the consideration when a practice is sold as will the value of any private work carried out by the practice. All NHS practices deliver a mix of NHS and private services with some achieving a greater proportion of their income from NHS work and vice-versa. This balance will contribute to the value of the practice when someone is looking to take on the provision of services. These are matters between the dental practitioners and do not involve NHS England and NHS Improvement.

3. Access to emergency dental treatments for those in prisons and youth detention centres

NHS dental services are provided to these facilities. This includes the provision of routine and urgent care. During the period March – June 2020 all dental services were closed for face to face treatments. If patients needed face to face treatment in that time they could be referred to Urgent Dental Care hubs. There were two urgent care hubs in Buckinghamshire, and they continue to operate if required. Dental practices began to re-open in June. They do have limited capacity at the moment due to the need to follow the required safety arrangements, but this does include dental services provided to prisons and youth detention centres.

4. Care Home pilots

The care home pilots discussed were run several years ago, locally in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. They did indicate benefits in terms of providing advice, training and support to patients and staff in care homes. The extent to which treatment could be provided was very limited due to the safety requirements for providing treatment in a non-dental setting. There was also an issue about the financial viability to roll out on wider basis. Since then, the Care Quality Commission has produced a report on oral health in care homes ('Smiling Matters'; June 2019). Some of the key recommendations are now being implemented including:

- *Information about Dentistry close to where patients live should be produced*

Information about access to NHS Dental services is available on the website [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) This is a system for finding the most local dental practices to a person's home address. Patients can attend any dental practice they wish (they are not 'registered' with dental practices). If people working or living care homes wish to find out more information about practices, they can contact them to see how they may be able to support them. Information can also be achieved from NHS England on ENGLAND.southeastdental@nhs.net

- *Reinforce training and support for care home workers*

If residents are able to leave their homes, then they are entitled to the full range of NHS services at a local NHS dental practice. If for periods of time or at all times, residents are not able to leave the care home then the Community Dental Service (CDS) can provide treatment through its domiciliary service if they have an urgent need. Treatment from this service may be more limited than can be provided in a dental practice. There are practical challenges for High Street Dentists in terms of providing treatment in care homes due to the regulatory requirements around providing safe treatment, but also due to the fact they are not contracted to provide the service. Since 2006, NHS Dentists have had site specific contracts for them to deliver services from their dental practices.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) 'Smiling Matters' report emphasized the important role a number of agencies have in maintaining the oral health of care home residents; particularly the

care homes themselves as well as dental service providers. The maintenance of good oral health is crucial for residents in terms of maintaining their physical health, mental health and wellbeing. Much of the support required from dental practices does not relate to technical treatment, but to supporting care homes in providing oral health support to their patients. In response to the 'Smiling Matters' report, Public Health England and other stakeholders have produced a toolkit to support care homes and commissioners to implement the NICE guideline (NG48): 'Oral health for adults in care homes'. The toolkit also contains useful links for care home staff, residents, their families, and friends to support good oral health and reduce oral health inequalities. The toolkit can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-oral-health-in-care-homes-toolkit>

Health Education England (HEE) has also commenced an Oral Health Improvement Apprenticeship course through which it will train members of the dental team to provide support to care homes.

There are further discussions at national level about enabling the dental contract to provide more targeted support for more vulnerable groups of patients such as older patients and children with poorer oral health.

5. Information on local websites

Patients can achieve information about NHS dental services via practice websites or via nhs.uk. During the pandemic the Buckinghamshire Healthwatch made a number of recommendations about how the information on the practice websites can be improved. These recommendations have been communicated to the practices.

We are also reviewing the information held on the nhs.uk website to see if it can provide more detailed information to patients. This is particularly an issue during the recovery from the pandemic as NHS 111 directs patients to their most local practices. The information held on nhs.uk is part of a national database, but we are investigating whether improvements can be made to ensure patients have the most up to date and accurate information about NHS services.

In contractual terms, dental practices are required to provide certain information within their leaflets. This is being reviewed nationally to see if the same requirements should be made of their websites.

6. Services for people with mental health issues and learning disabilities

Patients with mental health issues and learning disabilities should be able to attend primary care dental services to meet their treatment needs. If their needs are such that they need to be treated by specialist services, they can be referred to the Buckingham Community Dental Service provided by the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. The link to the provider's website is below:

<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/services/community-services/community-dental/buckinghamshire-priority-dental-service>

7. PPE

Arrangements for access to PPE have been co-ordinated nationally with dental practices able to access PPE. The practices are able to access some PPE where there is availability, which is limited to nationally set levels depending on volume of NHS activity. These arrangements will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugh O'Keeffe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hugh O'Keeffe
Senior Commissioning Manager
NHS England and NHS Improvement (South-East)