

Report to: East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Date of meeting: 15 December 2022

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Primary Care Access update

Purpose: To provide an update on access to Primary Care services in East Sussex, including GP appointments and surgeries, NHS Dentistry and the Next Steps on integrating Primary Care improvement strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note the report outlining the updated position regarding access to Primary Care in East Sussex, including access to GPs and NHS Dentistry; and
 - 2) consider whether to include any further items on Primary Care services in the Committee's future work programme.
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1. Background

1.1. The Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has included a number of items in its work programme to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health services in East Sussex. One of the concerns which has been brought to the attention of HOSC members is the issue of access to primary care services such as GP practices and the ability to get an appointment with a GP.

1.2. During the pandemic, the way in which primary care services are provided changed rapidly in response to Covid restrictions and the need for social distancing to prevent the spread of the disease. Many new and innovative ways of working were introduced in response to the challenges faced by GP practices in maintaining services.

1.3. The Committee received a report on access to GP appointments and surgeries at the meeting held on 30 June 2022. This report also contained information on the eHubs pilot and the Next Steps on integrating Primary Care improvement strategy. At the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 29 September 2022, the issue of difficulties in accessing NHS Dentistry services was also raised and referred to HOSC for its consideration. There has been widespread reporting in the media that people are finding it hard to get NHS dental treatment and this has been raised as an issue in East Sussex by Healthwatch as part of their ongoing work.

1.4. This report aims to provide an update of the current situation in regard to GP services, access to GP appointments, and access to NHS Dentistry in East Sussex. It also provides an update on the eHubs pilot and other work to improve access to primary care in East Sussex.

2. Supporting Information

2.1. NHS Sussex has delegated powers relating to the commissioning of GP practices in East Sussex. NHS England has responsibility for the commissioning of all dental services including specialist, community and out of hours dental services. However, NHS England's commissioning policy is to move towards more place based, clinically led commissioning and is sharing or delegating commissioning of primary medical care services, including dentistry, to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). In the case of East Sussex, the delegated commissioning of dentistry has been transferred from NHS England to NHS Sussex from 1 July 2022. NHS Sussex has provided a report covering a number of topics relating to access to these primary care services. The report is attached as **appendix 1**.

2.2. Representatives from Healthwatch will also attend the meeting to outline their work and findings on access to NHS Dentistry. Healthwatch has provided an overview report for the Committee on their work on this subject, which is contained in **appendix 2**.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The HOSC is recommended to note the report and consider whether to include any further work, or reports, on the subject of access to primary care services in the Committee's future work programme.

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