

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

Date of meeting: 6 March 2025

By: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Access to NHS Dentistry Services

Purpose: To provide an outline of progress being made to improve access to NHS Dentistry services in East Sussex

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note the report; and
 - 2) consider whether to request a further update report.
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1. Background

1.1 The Committee has previously been made aware and has considered the difficulties in accessing NHS dentistry services in East Sussex. 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.

1.2 NHS Sussex were one of the first Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to take on commissioning responsibility for community dental services. At its meeting on 15 December 2022 HOSC considered a report that gave an overview of dental commissioning and access to dentistry, as part of a more general update on primary care services from NHS Sussex.

1.3 HOSC received another report from NHS Sussex at its 3 October 2024 meeting, setting out the actions NHS Sussex had taken to make full use of available resources to enhance routine and urgent dental care access for people across Sussex, and the resultant additional capacity created in East Sussex. HOSC agreed to receive a further report at this meeting to receive an update from NHS Sussex on continued improvement activity. NHS Sussex were also awaiting further national guidance on the Government's priority areas for improvement.

1.4 This report provides an overview of developments across East Sussex since October 2024 to support patients to access NHS dentistry and includes details of the NHS Planning and Operating Guidance 2025/26.

2. Supporting information

2.1. Enhancing access to dental services is a national and local priority. The NHS Planning and Operating Guidance 2024/25 includes a national objective to increase dental activity by implementing the national plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry, improving units of dental activity (UDA) towards pre-pandemic levels. The [NHS Planning and Operational Guidance 2025/26](#) includes a national priority to improve access to urgent dental care, providing 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments.

2.2. NHS Sussex has produced a report for the HOSC attached as **Appendix 1**. The report covers:

- The National Dental Rescue Plan
- How dental providers are delivering contracted activity in East Sussex
- NHS dental contract handbacks
- Actions by NHS Sussex to enhance dental access in east Sussex
- Other improvement activities

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report and agree whether it would like to schedule a further update report on its work programme.

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