

NHS dental services in Devon

Stakeholder briefing

October 2024

Introduction

In the South West, NHS Devon is working in partnership with the NHS South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub (CCH), local dental and oral healthcare professionals and other Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to develop its South West Dental Recovery Plan. The plan sets out to address the issues facing the sector and improve access to dental services for local people.

NHS Devon is reviewing its plans in light of the published national [Dental Recovery Plan on 7 February 2024](#). Local plans will continue to be aligned to national priorities, and ensure the needs of local communities are being prioritised.

There are several measures in place across the region to increase dental access for patients. These include:

- Commissioning additional urgent dental care appointments that people can access by calling NHS111 with an urgent dental need
- Commissioning ‘stabilisation sessions’ across Devon
- Commissioning additional children’s orthodontic capacity in Devon
- An oral health improvement initiative called First Dental Steps with local authorities
- Supervised toothbrushing programmes are running in schools in areas of deprivation across the South West and NHS Devon is working with the Local Authorities across Devon to invest in further schemes

Key priorities for 2024/25

<p>Review and implement a new average unit of dental activity (UDA) value and rebase contracts to achievable levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to NHS dentistry by implementing measures to support dental services such as increased UDA rates and targeting inequality groups. • To increase the recruitment and retention of the South West dental workforce. • To rebase UDA activity to achievable levels to support financial sustainability
<p>Commission further urgent care and stabilisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned an addition 2,619 stabilisation sessions from 1 July 2024 – 31 March 2025 (10,476 – 15,714 appointments) over 19 locations in Devon. • Commissioned an additional 5,600 urgent care slots per year from 1 July 2024 • Commission longer term contracts for stabilisation, which is open to wider market. Market engagement events commenced in June 2024

<p>Commission access for vulnerable groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new providers are delivering dental services to Children Looked After in Devon. • Commissioning Cancer Friendly practices to provide support to patients who require dental support prior to and during Oncology treatment. • Commission additional dental access for asylum seekers and homeless populations.
<p>Procurement of lost activity (UDA and UOA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional 10,094 unit of orthodontic activity (UOAs) (480 children) non-recurrently commissioned for 2024/25 • Barnstaple Orthodontic procurement is a key priority for 2024/25 and the procurement exercise is currently being developed. The NHS is recommissioning NHS orthodontic services in North Devon and Torridge, where services previously ceased in these areas following the provider exiting the market earlier this year. • Working with NHS England to undertake Rapid Procurement for Dental Access (linked to priority 1)

Oral health schemes

NHS Devon has committed £900k per annum, for 3 years, (total £2.7m) to provide support to further cohorts of children for supervised toothbrushing, fluoride varnish and [Open Wide Step Inside](#), with a new fluoride varnish scheme due to go live in September 2025.

Open wide step inside

Year 2 children in 24 primary schools across Torbay have been part of an oral health scheme, known as Open Wide and Step Inside, where the Dental Outreach Team go into schools to deliver 45-minute oral health education lessons.

The outreach team is run by the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise (PDSE), which delivers programmes across Devon and Cornwall.

The lesson includes a 15-minute animated film and an interactive session teaching important messages around oral health.

Each child receives a goody bag containing a toothbrush, toothpaste, two-minute timer and a sticker and each class also receives a resource story book for the school library so good habits can continue long after the lesson ends.

Supervised toothbrushing

Programmes are currently underway to give children time and supervision to brush their own teeth at nursery and reception class in some areas, making brushing part of children's everyday routine and helping to protect their teeth from decay.

Dental professionals visit some nurseries and schools to apply fluoride varnish to children's teeth, with parents' consent.

Supervised toothbrushing schemes are already running in the NHS Devon area.

The roll out will be targeted to areas where children are at increased risk of developing tooth decay, such as in areas of high deprivation.

Providers of the service will work together with colleagues involved in oral health promotion across the region to ensure the successful roll out and reach of this service, including working with the local authority to identify schools in the most deprived areas, before linking with these schools to introduce the project and engage with the school staff and the parents.

NHS Devon is working with the Local Authorities across Devon to invest in further cohorts of children for both supervised toothbrushing and fluoride varnish programmes for 2024/25.

Children accessing early years and school settings are encouraged to participate in daily supervised toothbrushing with family fluoride toothpaste. Additional supervised toothbrushing cohorts will go live by December 2024.

100% of schools in Torbay have signed up for Supervised Toothbrushing. The position of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay schools is outlined below.

Area	Eligible schools	Brushing	Declined
Plymouth	82	70 (85.4%)	11
Torbay	37	37 (100%)	0
Devon	209	159 (76.1%)	35
Total	328	266 (81%)	46

First dental steps programme

NHS Devon is supporting an oral health improvement initiative called First Dental Steps, where health visitors and midwives are trained to give oral health care advice to families with children under two and have oral health care packs (toothbrushes and toothpaste) to give to families in need. This work is being undertaken in partnership with local authorities.

A continuation of the programme in 2024/25 has been agreed and is being extended to other areas in the South West.

The First Dental Steps programme is an oral health improvement intervention, embedded in the Healthy Child Programme. It incorporates public health and NICE recommendations into a multi-stranded oral health initiative and builds on the learning from a recent pilot delivered across six South West sites.

In the short-term it is anticipated that the intervention has the potential to support the promotion of preventive dental care for children aged 0-2 years. The universal element of the programme has the potential to impact upon 163,000 children (aged 0-2 years old) across the South West, with a targeted offer to approximately 4,000 vulnerable children.

In the longer term it is expected that implementation will support the realisation of the following benefits:

- An increase in dental access and attendance for children aged 0-2 years;
- A reduction in the prevalence and severity of dental caries, alongside a reduction in oral health inequalities in young children;
- A reduction in hospital-based tooth extractions for children due to dental decay.

Health visitors and community nurses have received training in oral health promotion, so they can support families with young children in providing evidence-based advice, alongside

toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste packs. Children at high risk of decay are identified and referred directly to community dental teams for further help where needed.

This programme is already running in Torbay and Plymouth.

Children in care

Following an expressions of interest process, we have awarded two providers with the Children Looked After dental service.

This service is a specialised dental care initiative designed to provide high-quality, clinically effective dental care for children and adolescents (aged 0-18, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) who are new to the care system or who haven't seen a dentist in over 24 months. The service covers children under the care of one of the Local Authorities (LAs) or those placed within the Devon ICB by other Local Authorities to ensure that the health sector meets its statutory responsibilities.

Two providers, located in Ilfracombe and Plymouth, are commissioned to deliver this service. These sessions operate on a sessional basis:

- **Provider 1:** Offers 6 sessions per month and began service on August 15, 2024.
- **Provider 2:** Provides 1 session per week, with services starting on September 1, 2024.

Both contracts are initially set to run until March 31, 2025 while we agree our longer term commissioning arrangements.

Patients with cancer

NHS Devon will be running an expression of interest process for the commissioning of cancer-friendly dental practices in Quarter 3 of 2024/25.

This will provide additional access to patients who require dental support prior to and during oncology treatment.

Stabilisation and urgent care

Stabilisation sessions are for patients who seek urgent care and who are identified during the appointment as having several additional dental issues that need addressing imminently. Patients can access stabilisation dental care by calling 111.

Stabilisation deals with the provision of a definitive course of treatment for patients without access to an NHS dentists who may have a urgent care need, or are in need of dental intervention to prevent their condition worsening and requiring urgent treatment.

Stabilisation should stabilise the dental issue over a course of treatment that, in the clinical judgement of the dentist, should prevent the person from needing to access urgent care within the following 12 months.

NHS Devon is currently looking at stabilisation procurement for 2025/2026. This is currently in the early stages and further information will be available in the coming months.

Recruitment incentives

NHS England published guidance earlier this year [for dentists who are interested in securing 'golden hello' funding](#) to support their recruitment efforts.

The scheme is designed to encourage relocation to areas that have historically struggled to recruit, attract new workforce to the NHS, and retain those who might have otherwise moved into private practice. A 'golden hello' of £20,000 is offered per dentist for up to 240 dentists, with payments phased over three years.

Since the last update in July 2024, NHS Devon has invested £276,500 in 17 posts across Devon.

Market engagement

Prior Information Notification (PIN) for Orthodontic Services in North Devon and Torridge were published on the national procurement sites on 18 October 2024 and will close on 6 November 2024.

Providers have been invited to return a market engagement questionnaire, which aims to provide robust intelligence from the market to support procurement of orthodontics in this area.

Access

Emergency dental access	Routine dentist access
<p>In clinical hours contact the Devon helpline operated by Access Dental - 03330 063 300.</p> <p>Patients will be referred to the closest emergency provider or allocated an appointment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Torbay - 01803 217777• Plymouth - 01752 4234664• Exeter and rest of Devon - 03330 063 300	<p>Contact Devon and Cornwall dental helpline on 03330 063 300.</p> <p>The team can help individual patients secure the best care for them according to their location and ability to travel, and continuously review where and when places are becoming available and ensure patients are allocated to a practice as quickly as possible when places become available.</p>

Registration with an NHS dentist

Patients are not registered with a dental practice in the same way as they are with a general practice, although some dental practices might see patients on a regular basis. Instead, dental practices are contracted to deliver activity and are obliged to only deliver a course of treatment to an individual, irrelevant of where they live, and not to deliver ongoing regular care.

There is no geographical restriction on which practice a patient may attend, allowing patients the choice of where they would like to receive a course of treatment, as long as the practice is accepting new patients.

Dental practices are independent businesses, often providing a combination of NHS and private dentistry. Practices providing NHS treatment are listed on the [NHS website](#) and they update this list themselves. Neither NHS England or commissioners hold information on practices who are currently accepting new patients, and practices can close their lists at any time if they are full.

Complaints and patient communications

On 1 April 2023 responsibility for commissioning NHS dentistry was delegated to ICBs across England. The seven ICBs in the South West are supported by the NHS South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub (CCH) to commission NHS dentistry in their area.

To complain about primary care services in Devon – including dentistry – contact NHS Devon for advice and signposting.

In the first instance, NHS Devon will recommend that concerns or complaints are raised directly with the healthcare provider in question. This is the organisation from which you received the service for instance, a dental surgery. However, if that's not possible, they will discuss with you what happens next.

- Telephone – 0300 123 1672
- Email – d-icb.patientexperience@nhs.net
- Post – Patient experience team, NHS Devon, Aperture House, Pynes Hill,

There is a page on the [One Devon website](#) dedicated to local information about NHS dental services, which is regularly updated with key information and signposting.

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