

NHS Kent and Medway paper to Medway Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC) on the delegated primary care pharmacy, and dental services from July 2022.

14 March 2024

Report Purpose: To provide an update on the primary care pharmacy, optometry and dental services delegated to the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board from July 2022.

To: Medway Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC)

From: Louise Matthews, Deputy Director Primary Care Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental (POD) Delegated Services and Sukh Singh, Director of Primary and Community (Out of Hospital) Care, NHS Kent, and Medway

1 Introduction

- With effect from 1 July 2022, along with the other 5 Southeast Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) NHS Kent and Medway became one of the first (ICBs) to take on the responsibility for the commissioning of primary care community pharmacy, optometry and dental (POD) services. Across the Southeast a shared hosted model was put in place for 12 months with the NHS England (NHSE) SE POD Team continuing to provide the operational delivery on behalf of the six SE ICBs.
- NHS England delegated its POD commissioning functions to all remaining ICBs on 1 April 2023. Local Authorities remain responsible for commissioning oral health promotion services.
- On 1 July 2023, the NHSE SE Pharmacy & Optometry and Dental Teams transferred over to Frimley ICB who now host the team via a SE Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental Commissioning Hub. The hosting arrangements are administrative and employment arrangements and not a lead commissioner arrangement. The SE Commissioning Hub Team are aligned to the delegated functions and are made up of a combined pharmacy and optometry team and a dental team. The team mostly work on SE region wide basis and not individual systems or ICB footprints.
- To support the changes made through delegated commissioning, the SE ICBs are working together and collaborating on commissioning arrangements where possible. Delegated commissioning allows us to move away from transactional models towards a more collaborative approach to planning and improving services. This means that instead of us focusing on procurement and contract management, commissioner's roles are to work closely with key partners across the system (including pharmacy and dental providers) to understand population needs,

determine key priorities and design, plan, and resource services to meet those needs.

- During the first 18 months of delegation, our work programme has focused on three key activities:
 - Building our understanding of each POD service.
 - Establishing governance arrangements.
 - Assessing need, planning, and arranging services - with consideration of financial obligations and regulatory compliance.
- Kent and Medway currently have 311 community pharmacies, 311 optometry practices and 302 primary care dental contracts (February 2024) of which 200 delivery mandatory dental services.

2 Community Pharmacy

- The traditional role of the community pharmacist as the healthcare professional who dispenses prescriptions written by doctors has changed. In recent years community pharmacists have been developing clinical services in addition to the traditional dispensing role to allow better integration and team working with the rest of the NHS.
- The NHS Community Pharmacy contract for England and Wales was introduced in 2005. The operating model for community pharmacy commissioning and contracting is set out in detail the NHS Pharmacy Manual and appendices. Compliance with the processes set out in the manual helps to ensure adherence with regulations and a consistent national approach.
- The delegation of pharmaceutical and local pharmaceutical services and is governed by the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 (as amended) which cover pharmacy market entry and exit and set out the terms of service under which Pharmaceutical Services are provided.
- Community pharmacy contractors are included on a pharmaceutical list and commit to comply with the terms of service as set out in the regulations; they do not have individual contracts. Compliance is checked via the Community Pharmacy Assurance Framework. Local health and wellbeing boards are responsible for developing and publishing pharmacy needs assessments, the most recent versions for both Kent and Medway were published in October 2022. A Consolidated Pharmaceutical List (national) was published for the first time in December 2022. The list is updated through a quarterly validation exercise coordinated by the NHS England Central Pharmacy Team.

2.1 Types of Pharmacy Provider

| Type of Provider | Scope | Numbers across Kent and Medway |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Community pharmacies | Required to dispense all valid NHS prescriptions for drugs. Can choose which appliances they supply “in the normal course of business.” | 309 pharmacies and 4 distance selling pharmacies |
| Dispensing appliance contractors | Appliance dispensing is like prescription dispensing; it allows a local pharmacy to dispense a select number of products and items to a patient that are required for the management of their condition. These contractors do not dispense prescriptions. Can choose which appliances they supply “in the normal course of business.” | 3 dispensing appliance contractors, 17 in the southeast and 111 nationally |
| Dispensing doctors | Required to dispense all valid NHS prescriptions for drugs, for eligible patients only (patients who are 1.6 kilometres or more from pharmacy premises). Can choose which appliances they supply “in the normal course of business.” | 57 dispensing general practices |

- During 2023/24 there have been 15 community pharmacy closures across Kent and Medway, one of these was a distance selling pharmacy located in Medway.

| Pharmacy Closures Across Kent and Medway 1 April 2023 – 1 February 2024 | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Authority Area | Number | Pharmacy Trading Name |
| Ashford | 1 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) |
| Canterbury | 2 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) |
| Dartford | 2 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) |
| Dover | 0 | |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 2 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) New Romney Pharmacy |
| Gravesham | 0 | |
| Maidstone | 3 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) Boots the Chemists Your Local Boots Pharmacy |

| Medway | 1 | Distance Selling Pharmacy |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Sevenoaks | 1 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) |
| Swale | 0 | |
| Thanet | 2 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) Boots the Chemist |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 0 | |
| Tunbridge Wells | 1 | Lloyds Pharmacy (in Sainsburys) |
| Total | 15 | |

2.2 Essential Services

- Under the contract a community pharmacy will provide the following Essential Services:
 - **The Dispensing Service** – working to a prescription, pharmacists will provide you with your medicines labelled correctly following the directions of a GP or other healthcare provider who can write prescriptions (e.g. nurses, dentists, or pharmacists). The number of prescription items dispensed by community pharmacies in England in 2011-12 was 885 million.
 - **The Repeat Dispensing Service** – this service allows you to collect your regular repeat prescription medicines direct from your local pharmacy for an agreed period of time, without having to go back to your GP. You will need to give your permission to your GP for him/her to share information with your chosen pharmacist. When you need your prescription, instead of requesting it from your GP, you will be able to get your medicines directly from your local pharmacy.
 - **Disposal of Unwanted Medicines** – if you have any medicines that you no longer use, you can take them to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.
 - **Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles** – this service will provide you with advice on keeping healthy; this could be advice on healthy eating, stopping smoking and exercise. You may be able to get leaflets and written information to help you make healthier choices. Your pharmacy will also take part in local health promotion campaigns such as taking care in the sun and understanding the risks of long-term conditions such as diabetes.
 - **Signposting to other Services** – your pharmacy will provide you with contact details for additional help if needed from other healthcare professionals, social services, or voluntary organisations.
 - **Support for Self-Care** – this service helps you to look after and care for yourself and your family. Your pharmacy will provide you with advice on treating minor illnesses, e.g. coughs and colds or long-term conditions such as arthritis or diabetes. This support may include medicines which you can buy over the counter from the pharmacy without a prescription.

2.4 Advanced Services

- There are currently nine Advanced Services within the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF). Community pharmacies can choose to provide any of these services if they meet the requirements set out in the Secretary of State Directions.
 - **Pharmacy First** – The service commenced on 31 January 2024 and incorporates two previous elements of the Community Pharmacy Consultation Service (CPCS) – minor illness consultations and the supply of urgent medicines. The Advanced service involves pharmacists providing advice and NHS-funded treatment, where clinically appropriate, for seven common conditions:
 1. sinusitis
 2. sore throat
 3. infection of the middle ear (acute otitis media)
 4. infected insect bite
 5. impetigo
 6. shingles
 7. uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women.
 - Consultations for these seven clinical pathways can be provided to patients presenting to the pharmacy as well as those referred by NHS 111, general practices and others.
 - In the clinical pathway consultations with a pharmacist, people with symptoms suggestive of the seven conditions will be provided with advice and will be supplied, where clinically necessary, with a prescription-only treatment under a Patient Group Direction (PGD) or in one pathway, an over-the-counter medicine (supplied under a clinical protocol), all at NHS expense.
 - In the future, we hope that independent prescribers will be able to use their skills to complete episodes of care within the service, without the need for a PGD. However, for the time being, all pharmacists providing the service must use the PGDs and clinical protocol.
 - **Flu Vaccination Service** - Community pharmacy has been providing flu vaccinations under a nationally commissioned service since September 2015. Each year from September through to March the NHS runs a seasonal flu vaccination campaign aiming to vaccinate all patients who are at risk of developing more serious complications from the virus. The accessibility of pharmacies, their extended opening hours, and the option to walk in without an appointment have proved popular with patients seeking vaccinations.
 - **The Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS)** started on 24th April 2023, allowing the on-going supply of oral contraception (OC) from community pharmacies that had been initiated in general practice or via a sexual health

clinic. From 1st December 2023, the service includes both initiation and on-going supply of OC.

- **The Hypertension Case Finding Service** - is also described as the NHS Blood Pressure Check Service. From 1st December 2023, the service can be provided by suitably trained and competent pharmacy staff; previously, only pharmacists and pharmacy technicians could provide the service. Where non-registered pharmacy staff provide the service, until clinical IT systems are updated to allow their names to be entered within the clinical record, the name and General Pharmaceutical Council registration number of the responsible pharmacist should be included in the clinical record.
- **The New Medicine Service (NMS)** was the fourth Advanced Service to be added to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF); it commenced on 1st October 2011. The service provides support for people with long-term conditions newly prescribed a medicine to help improve medicines adherence; it is focused on specific patient groups and conditions. From 1st September 2021, the following conditions are covered by the service:
 - Asthma and COPD:
 - Diabetes (Type 2).
 - Hypertension.
 - Hypercholesterolaemia.
 - Osteoporosis.
 - Gout.
 - Glaucoma.
 - Epilepsy.
 - Parkinson's disease.
 - Urinary incontinence/retention.
 - Heart failure.
 - Acute coronary syndromes.
 - Atrial fibrillation.
 - Long term risks of venous thromboembolism/embolism.
 - Stroke / transient ischemic attack; and
 - Coronary heart disease
 - The antiplatelet/anticoagulant therapy eligibility continues, but it is now included in the above list by reference to the underlying condition/reason for prescribing.
- **The Smoking Cessation Service (SCS)** which was commissioned as an Advanced service from 10th March 2022. This service has been designed to enable NHS trusts to undertake a transfer of care on patient discharge, referring patients (where they consent) to a community pharmacy of their choice to continue their smoking cessation treatment, including providing medication and support as required. The ambition is for referral from NHS trusts to community pharmacy to create additional capacity in the smoking cessation

pathway. The service can only be provided by a pharmacist or pharmacy technician.

- **Appliance Use Review (AUR)** - was the second advanced service to be introduced into the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF). AURs can be carried out by a pharmacist or a specialist nurse in the pharmacy or at the patient's home. Alternatively, where clinically appropriate and with the agreement of the patient, AURs can be provided by telephone or video consultation, in circumstances where the conversation cannot be overheard by others (except by someone whom the patient wants to hear the conversation, for example a carer). AURs should improve the patient's knowledge and use of any 'specified appliance' by:
 - establishing the way, the patient uses the appliance and the patient's experience of such use.
 - identifying, discussing, and assisting in the resolution of poor or ineffective use of the appliance by the patient.
 - advising the patient on the safe and appropriate storage of the appliance; and
 - advising the patient on the safe and proper disposal of the appliances that are used or unwanted.
- **Stoma Appliance Customisation (SAC)** - involves the customisation of a quantity of more than one stoma appliance, based on the patient's measurements or a template. The aim of the service is to ensure proper use and comfortable fitting of the stoma appliance and to improve the duration of usage, thereby reducing waste. The stoma appliances that can be customised are listed in Part IXC of the Drug Tariff.
- **The Lateral Flow Device (LFD)** Service supplies tests for patients potentially eligible for COVID-19 treatments and was commissioned as an advanced service from 6th November 2023. LFD tests are no longer available via GOV.UK or via NHS 119. LFD tests still need to be available and easily accessible to people who are potentially eligible for COVID-19 treatments through routine NHS access routes. The objective of this service is to offer eligible at-risk patients access to LFD tests to enable testing at home for COVID-19, following symptoms of infection. A positive LFD test result will be used to inform a clinical assessment to determine whether the patient is suitable for and will benefit from NICE recommended COVID-19 treatments.

2.5 Public Health Projects within Medway Pharmacies. Medway Public Health team have been working closely with local pharmacies for over 15 years and have excellent working relationships across a number of providers, delivering shared objective projects. This includes

- Smoking Cessation community level 2 service. This is in addition to the NHS Long Term Plan advanced service. The programme supports smokers to quit with an 8-10 week course of behavioural support and pharmacotherapy. Training and on-going

support is provided by the Medway Public Health Team. Community Pharmacies also engage by providing pharmacotherapy for interventions delivered in other specialist settings e.g. maternity.

- NHS Health Checks. In 2022/23 the Medway Public Health team worked with the Local Pharmaceutical Council (LPC) and selected pharmacies to run a pilot of NHS Health Check delivery via community pharmacy. The pilot highlighted the pharmacy setting as an important extension of the service with a high number of health checks completed on patients from our most underserved communities. This has progressed to be a business-as-usual service.
- Wider Public Health Campaigns. For the last two years Medway Public Health have run 'Measure Your Pressure,' a month-long campaign encouraging all adults to get their blood pressure checked. The Medway pharmacies have embraced this, linking it in with their hypertension case finding services.

Every year, Medway Public Health run an update event for health care professionals involved in the above services. In February 2024, the event focused on vaping as a quit smoking aid. Thirty-two representatives from pharmacies in Medway attended. During the event, three pharmacies were recognised and awarded for their contribution to public health.

3 Dentistry

- The delegation of dental services and is governed by National Health Service (General Dental Services Contracts) Regulations 2005, The National Health Service (Personal Dental Services Agreements) Regulations 2005, and The National Health Service (Dental Charges) Regulations 2005
- The operating model for dental commissioning and contracting is set out in detail in the Policy Book for Primary Dental Services and appendices. Compliance with the processes set out in the manual helps to ensure adherence with regulations and a consistent national approach.
- General Dental Service Contracts are activity-based contracts in perpetuity - most contracts commenced in April 2006. New market entry is via procurement exercises that comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Provider Selection Regime Regulations 2023 which can be time consuming and can take time for contracts to mobilise.
- Dentists are independent contractors to the NHS, which means dental providers buy the building and equip the surgery, hire all the staff, and pay the running costs including wages, materials, and insurances, to provide an NHS dental service. In many cases these are national or regional providers. Unlike general practice, general dental practices do not have a patient list, patients do not register with and cannot be allocated to an NHS dentist.
- A process of mid-year and year end reviews are undertaken to determine actual delivery compared to planned activity and any funding overpayment is clawed back.

3.1 How NHS dental services are contracted.

- The NHS has contracts with dentists to provide dental services for NHS patients. Patients access these services directly, typically at high-street dental surgeries. Primary care dentists are not NHS employees and act as self-employed providers in a similar way to GPs and community pharmacists. Most dentistry is provided by independent practitioners, some of whom also provide, on a commercial basis, services which the NHS does not provide (i.e. for cosmetic purposes).
- All NHS dental services are open to anyone from any area and people can receive care in any practice willing to offer them an appointment. Patients are not registered with a dentist in the same way as they are with a GP because dental patients are not bound to a catchment area, nor can the ICB allocate a patient to a dentist in the same way they can a GP. The onus is on the patient to find an NHS dentist and they are not restricted by locality. Patients are only aligned to a dental practice for their course of treatment only and NICE guidance recommends an adjustable recall interval for adults ranging from a minimum of three months to a maximum of 24 months between recall appointments (dental check-ups). For children, the recommended recall interval is between 3 and 12 months.

3.2 UDA Rates

- NHS Dental Contracts are activity-based contracts and providers are paid to deliver a set number of units of Dental Activity (UDAs) at a set rate (UDA) rate they do not relate to the number of patients.
- Currently across Kent and Medway the UDA rate ranges from £25.33 to £40.28. For provider located in the Medway area this range is from £30.23 to £39.35. Dentists are currently paid 1 UDA for a band 1 course of treatment, 3 UDAs for a band 2 course of treatment, and 12 UDAs for a band 3 course of treatment. Patient charges are deducted from these values.
- From the 1 October 2023 the government introduced a new minimum UDA rate of £23, only two Kent and Medway providers were operating at a UDA below this level. From 1 April 2024, the national minimum UDA will be uplifted to £28, there are 31 dental practices that will benefit from this UDA uplift they are all outside of the Medway area.

3.3 Paying for Dental Services

- NHS Dentistry is one of the few NHS services where patients have to pay a contribution towards the cost of their care known as the Patient Charge Revenue (PCR). NHS Dentists are funded from a combination of funding from NHS England (with payment made to dental practices via the NHS Business Services Authority) and the PCR. The various treatments people receive from dentists attract different charges based on bands and are also assessed as representing different number of UDAs. There are four bands of charges for all NHS dental treatment. Each band of NHS dental treatment (Band 1, Band 2, Band 3, Urgent band) equates to a certain number of UDAs, which are based on the complexity of treatment.

**Urgent Dental Treatment
£25.80**

This covers urgent care care in a primary care NHS dental practice such as pain relief or a temporary filling.

**Band 1 course of treatment
£25.80**

This covers an examination, diagnosis (including X-rays), advice on how to prevent future problems, a scale and polish if clinically needed, and preventative care such as the application of fluoride varnish or fissure sealant if appropriate.

**Band 2 course of treatment
£70.70**

This covers everything listed in Band 1 above, plus any further treatment such as fillings, root canal work or removal of teeth but not more complex items covered by Band 3.

**Band 3 course of treatment
£306.80**

This covers everything listed in Bands 1 and 2 above, plus crowns, dentures, bridges and other laboratory work. For information about help with dental charges, including how to claim a refund, see our section on help with health costs.

- For further information on NHS dental band charges, please see <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/what-is-included-in-each-nhs-dental-band-charge/>

3.4 Types of Dental Provider

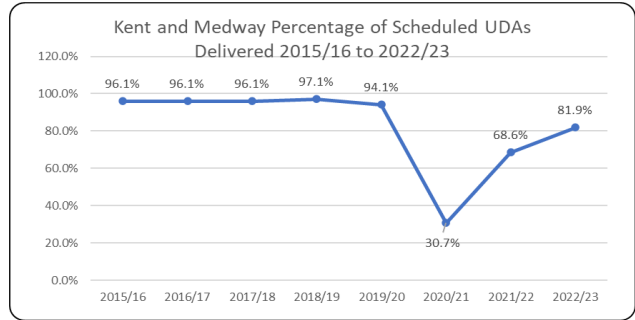
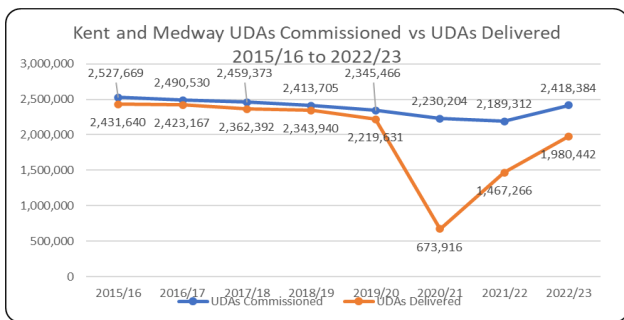
| Type of Provider | Scope | Numbers in Medway |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| General Dental Services Contracts | Providing routine NHS dentistry | 30 |
| Oral surgery | the diagnosis and management of pathology of the mouth and jaws that requires surgical intervention. | 12 |
| Orthodontic | the straightening of misaligned teeth and improving the bite it includes appliances, adjustments, and repairs | 2 |

| Type of Provider | Scope | Numbers in Medway |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unscheduled Dental Care | <p>one or more of the treatments listed in Schedule 4 to the National Health Service (Dental Charges) Regulations 2005 provided to a patient in circumstances where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prompt care and treatment are provided because, in the opinion of the dental practitioner, the person's oral health is likely to deteriorate significantly, or the person is in severe pain by reason of his or her oral condition; and • care and treatment are provided only to the extent that is necessary to prevent that deterioration in oral health or address that severe pain. | 3 |
| Community Dental Services | <p>provide routine dental care for patients with additional needs which mean they find it difficult to visit a high street dentist. This may include those with high anxiety, very young children, those with complex medical histories, dementia and learning disabilities</p> | 2 |

| Type of Provider | Scope | Numbers in Medway |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Sedation Services | <p>conscious sedation a technique in which the use of a drug or drugs produces a state of depression of the central nervous system enabling treatment to be carried out, but during which verbal contact with the patient is maintained throughout the period of sedation. There are a variety of clinical circumstances that may indicate the need for conscious sedation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patients that are anxious or phobic ▪ Patients that have a strong gag reflex making it difficult to accept dental treatment. ▪ Those patients with movement disorders, physical and/or mental disabilities, or who are otherwise unlikely to allow safe completion of treatment. ▪ To enable a particularly unpleasant and complicated procedure to be carried out without distress to the patient. • To avoid the need for general anaesthesia, for example in patients with longstanding dental phobia. | 3 |
| Additional hours | <p>Offered on a sessional basis - urgent access for new 'un-associated' patients that are unable to be seen by a dentist, including specified patient cohorts: clinically vulnerable persons, Looked After Childre, care home residents (who can travel to a practice) and children who require orthodontic extractions before orthodontic treatment can commence</p> | 3 |

3.5 Dental Contract Performance

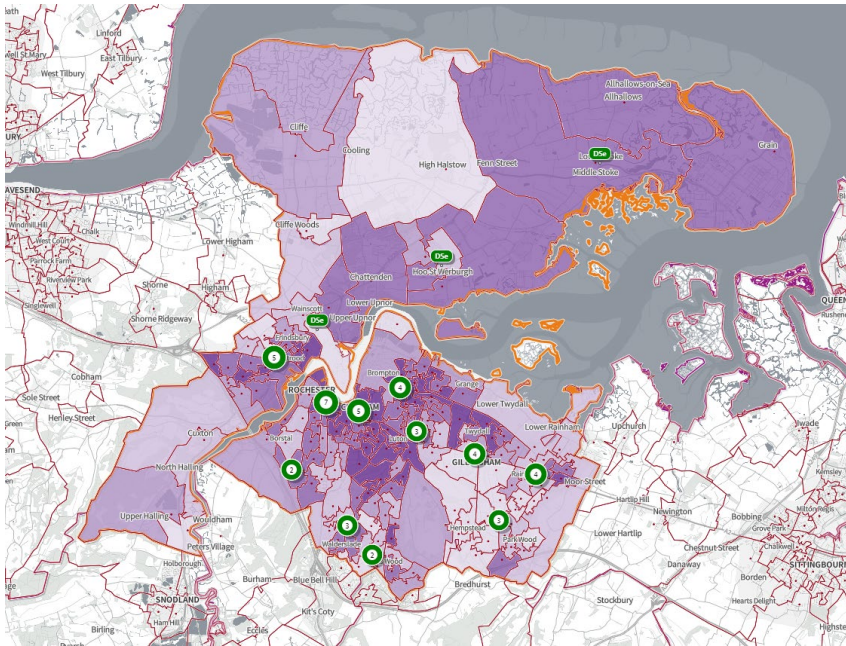
- Historically, across Kent and Medway approximately 2.4 million units of dental activity (UDAs) have been commissioned annually. This is driven by budget availability as opposed to the size of the local population.
- NHS dental contract holders are expected to deliver 96% of their total contracted scheduled UDAs annually. Under-performance by NHS dental providers against their contracted activity reduces dental access.
- In 2020/21, due to covid restrictions in place for dental services this fell to 30.7% and slowly the percentage of total contracted activity is increasing back to pre-pandemic levels. To achieve a 96% delivery in 2023/24, 2,216,624 UDAs need to be delivered.



- Prior to covid the annual delivery of scheduled UDAs was about 96%. Due to covid restrictions this fell to 30.7% in 2020/21 and the percentage is slowly increasing back to pre-pandemic levels. This trend was mirrored at a regional and national level. To achieve a 96% delivery in 2023/24 2,216,624 UDAs, need to be delivered.

3.6 Dental Service Provision

- Dental providers in Medway are identified on the map below by green boxes labelled "DSe" (Dental Service) to indicate one provider, or a green circle with a number in the centre what shows how many providers are within that location. The purple shading reflects deprivation levels for the area with the deeper shades indicating higher levels of deprivation.



- There are 30 NHS Mandatory Dental Service (MDS) contracts across Medway (February 2024), some contracts cover multiple sites for a total of 377,859 UDAs (31 March 2024).

3.7 NHS Dental Contract Terminations

- Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen an increase in NHSE dental contract terminations and reductions in contracted activity. In 2022/23, 87,222 UDAs were handed back through contracts terminated by providers, none of these contract hand backs were in Medway. By 31 March 2024, a further 27,116 UDAs will have been handed back through contract terminations with 23,392 UDAs coming from the Medway area (Strood 12,160 UDAs, Gillingham 6,019 UDAs, and Chatham 5213 UDAs).

3.8 Current issues impacting upon access to NHS dental services.

- Kent and Medway ICB have undertaken both provider and patient surveys to better understand the current issues impacting on the delivery of POD services locally.
- Working with the Kent Local Dental Committee, we undertook a survey of dental practitioners between August and September 2023. We received 79 responses to the Smart Survey questionnaire. Three quarters of responses were received from Dentists and the remaining quarter from dental care professionals such as nurses and therapists. 27% of respondents were dental contract holders (providers), 57% were dental professionals delivering an NHS dental contract (performers) and 16% were both a dental contract holder and dental contract professional delivering an NHS dental contract.
 - Two thirds of dental contract holders had considered handing back their NHS dental contract over the previous 12 months. Half of dental contract holders were still considering handing back their contract in the coming 12 months.

Reasons given included financial reasons, too much bureaucracy/paperwork, workforce recruitment and workforce retention issues.

- Three quarters of dental contract performers had considered stopping delivery of NHS dentistry over the previous 12 months and 50% of dental contract performers are highly likely or likely to stop delivering NHS dentary over the coming 12 months.
- Over two-thirds of practitioners said their work had been impacted by a shortage of dental staff and two-thirds of vacancies had remained vacant for 122 months or more. When asked which roles they currently had vacancies for 41% said dentists, 18% said dental nurses, 17% said dental receptionists, 12% said dental therapist and 10% said dental hygienists.

3.9 Actions taken by NHS Kent and Medway to enhance dental access.

- **Geographically targeted re-procurement:** Between January and March 2023, a full procurement exercise was undertaken to commission 89,300 more UDAs. Six contracts were awarded across Kent and Medway in the following local authority areas - Canterbury 3500 UDAs, Dartford 21000 UDAs, Dover 21000 UDAs, Sevenoaks 15,500 UDAs, Swale 7000 UDAs and Tonbridge and Malling 21,000. Five out of the six contracts mobilised with UDAs offered on a pro rata basis. The Sevenoaks contract award was rescinded and offered to the second placed bidder.
- **Rapid Commissioning of Permanent UDAs in areas of highest need:** We have developed a new approach to enable existing dental practices to permanently increase the number of UDAs they provide. We have calculated the number of UDA per head of population per locality. This pilot sought to 'level up' the number of UDAs per head of population in areas with the largest gaps in dental access based upon their Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranking.
- Based on this analysis Canterbury was targeted in phase one and the additional capacity mobilised by the end of February 2024. The planning for the main phase of this initiative is underway with to be rolled out in March/April 2024 with a focus on Medway 14,000 UDAs, Maidstone 7000 UDAs, and Swale 7000 UDAs.
- **Commissioning additional temporary UDAs:** We have contacted all existing dental providers holding an NHS dental contract to determine whether they have capacity to provide additional temporary UDAs to offset the time it takes to undertake a procurement exercise. In 2022/23 we commissioned 20,980 temporary UDAs across Kent and Medway, and in 2023/24 we commissioned 9376 temporary UDAs, 5,000 of which were in Medway.
- **Additional Hours Scheme:** We have contacted all existing dental providers holding an NHS dental contract to determine whether they have capacity to provide additional hours. The scheme is aimed at increasing access for new

patients but also includes clinically vulnerable people, for example, those requiring dental treatment before undertaking cardiac surgery, cancer patients, care home residents and Looked After Children. In 2024/25 the scheme will be expanded to include expectant and nursing mothers and armed forces families. There are currently thirteen dental practices in Kent and Medway which currently have the capacity and workforce to offer additional sessions (the highest take up in the Southeast) and three of these are in the Medway area:

- The Post Office Practice, Sandra Court, High Street, Lower Stoke, Rochester, Kent, ME3 9RA.
- Wigmore Dental Practice, 198 Fairview Avenue, Gillingham, ME8 0PX
- Franklin House Practice, Franklin House, 15 Franklin Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 4DF

3.10 NHS Dental Contract Reform

- The national dental contract has remained largely unchanged since its introduction in 2006. Several new dental system reforms were announced on the 19 July 2022, this first phase of dental system reform sought to:
 - Introduce enhanced UDAs to support higher needs patients, recognising the range of different treatment options currently remunerated under Band 2.
 - Improve monitoring of and adherence to personalised recall intervals.
 - Establish a new minimum indicative UDA value.
 - Address misunderstandings around use of skill mix in NHS dental care, whilst removing some of the administrative barriers preventing dental care professionals from operating within their full scope of practice.
 - Take steps to maximise access from existing NHS resources, including through funding practices to deliver up to 10% more activity in year, where affordable and,
 - Improve information for patients by requiring more regular updating of practice information through their nhs.uk profile and the NHS111 Directory of Services.
- On 7 February 2024, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the dental recovery plan “Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry”. Although, nationally a £200 million investment fund is supporting the dental recovery plan only minimal new investment has been signalled and the expectation is that ICBs ensure dental budgets are ringfenced for 2024/25 to meet these commitments and improve dental access more broadly.
- The plan sets out several approaches to improve dental access and is supported by number of local authorities led prevention initiatives.
- Medway Public Health co developed an Oral Health Promotion Strategy in 2022, with a wide variety of partners. The strategy group agreed on three long

term priorities: encouraging fluoride application through regular toothbrushing routines by working with partners and social media channels, reducing free sugars in diets of service users by working with stakeholders to implement in the community, and supporting action to increase access to dentistry and attendance by those underserved communities

- The Oral Health Strategy group meet on a quarterly basis, and deliver a wide variety of actions. These include:

The delivery of 11 oral health training sessions and training 83 staff members from children's services and care home settings.

Training on nutrition and oral health for all Holiday Activities and Food providers to ensure that they educated service users about dental hygiene and make changes to food and snack that aligned with oral health messages.

Developing a partnership between Home Start and Morrisons to increase the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables available to their families, improving the diets of a targeted group.

The Medway Healthy Early Years award has embedded oral health into their training. This includes healthy snacks being integral for settings in order to gain a bronze award status.

22 schools are taking part in 'The Food For Life' whole school food programme where they incorporate the core elements of healthy snacks and food knowledge within the criteria for all award levels.

The A Better Medway Healthy Workplaces pledges for healthy eating are a part of the core criteria. The team have also recently added a pledge to allow staff to attend a dentist (and other health) appointment.

Implementation of a healthy vending pilot at Medway leisure centres to improve the nutritional value and reduce the sugar content of snacks bought at vending machines in council venues.

Bump Club supports expectant mothers above a healthy weight, has oral health messaging built into the programme content.

Medway Council services deliver health education sessions for female sex workers and/or homeless groups. The sessions labelled 'Ladies Night' included oral health education and resources, due to the health needs of this group.

Medway Council have refreshed the oral health pages on the council website. Medway.gov.uk/oralhealth was launched last month and includes a communications plan that is pushing social media traffic towards the site and reinforcing key messages such as regular tooth brushing and healthy eating.

Medway Community Healthcare have been running a Medway Smiles passport that is issued to parents at the Health Visitor new birth visit. They are

reviewing this offer as they feel a new birth visit may not be the best opportunity to discuss oral health with a new parent. They are aiming to switch to a letter from the 'Tooth Fairy' at the four-month stage, encouraging positive oral health messages. They are also refreshing their own website, which will include updated oral health web pages and resources.

The Public Health team offer resources and activities at all public engagement events. Input includes the importance of brushing and flossing, how to choose the right toothpaste, eating a healthy diet for your teeth, importance of brushing and flossing and offers free give away toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Public Health actively work with the Oral Health team at Brompton Barracks to promote good oral health and signposting to local service to military personnel and their families.

- NHS Led Initiatives

- 1) New National Minimum £28 UDA rate

- This announcement introduces a new national minimum UDA rate of £28 from 1 April 2024 for all dental providers.
- The ICB has 31 dental practices that currently receive a UDA rate below £28 and is expected to cover this financial uplift from within existing dental budgets.

- 2) New Patient Premium (NPP)

- The ICB has received an additional allocation of £199,000 for 2023/24 to support the role out of the NPP.
- This will be claimable for new patients who have not accessed NHS dentistry treatment over the last 2 years and will run for a 13-month period from 1 March 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- The NPP will be transacted as a Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) credit on completion of a course of treatment (£15 for a band 1 dental treatment, and £50 for band 2 and 3 treatments).
- The issuing of UDA credits is likely to mean that providers will deliver their contracted UDA activity more quickly and may require providers to "pace" their activity over the course of their financial year.
- As new patients will attract the NPP providers are likely to push existing patient recall intervals in line with NICE guidelines (up to 24 months for adults and up to 12 months for children). This may generate patient queries and complaints.
- The ICB will need to reach an early decision on whether to pay for overperformance of up to 10% contracted activity (allowable under the contract) during 2024/25. It has been signalled that NHS England will work with ICBs over the course of 2024 to 2025 to

identify opportunities to support contractors to deliver additional capacity beyond their existing contractual requirements (up to 110%).

3) Mobile Dental Vans

- The launch of a new dental van service to take dentists and surgeries to the most isolated under-served rural and coastal communities nationally where there are no dental practices.
- No identified areas are in Kent and Medway or the Southeast

4) 'Golden Hello' for Dentists

- Targeted funding to encourage dentists to work in areas which have historically been difficult to recruit to
- Offer of a £20,000 support package over a three-year period (payable instalments of £10K year 1, £5K year 2 and £5K year 3) requiring a commitment from the dentist to stay in that area delivering NHS work for at least 3 years.
- Its estimated this will support for 240 dentists nationally during the first year. It is unclear how this element of the plan will be funded, and further detail is awaited.

5) Streamlining and tackling bureaucracy, with a wider set of workforce reforms

- Reaffirms commitments to increase workforce capacity as set out in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan,
- as part of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, build a pipeline of new dentists for the future by expanding dental undergraduate training places by 40% to more than 1,100 per year by 2031 to 2032, with an initial 24% increase to 1,000 places by 2028 to 2029.
- consultation this spring on 'tie-ins' to NHS for dentist graduates.
- increase the number of dental therapists and other dental care professionals, through a 40% increase to more than 500 training places per year by 2031 to 2032.
- Promote therapist led models of care.
- make it easier for NHS practices to recruit overseas dentists who meet the UK's highest regulatory standards.
- consultation during 2024 with the dental profession on reforming the contract with any changes phased in from 2025 onwards.

- Implement regulations to allow ICBs to rebase contracts where providers consistently underperform over three consecutive non-covid years enabling commissioners to reinvest in services.

Conclusion

This report provides an update on delegated pharmacy and dental services which NHS Kent and Medway has taken on delegated commissioning responsibilities since July 2022.

We recognise further work is needed to continue to address the challenges in accessing NHS dental services and we are committed to working with our key stakeholders and system patterns to make best use of our existing provision and bring forward innovative solutions.