

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**  
Date: **20<sup>th</sup> November 2009**  
By: **Director of Law and Personnel**  
Title of report: **NHS Dentistry in East Sussex**  
Purpose of report: **To consider the latest position on NHS Dentistry in East Sussex**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**HOSC is recommended to:**

- 1. Consider and comment on the update report from NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald and NHS Hastings and Rother**
  - 2. Agree if monitoring is required in relation to NHS dentistry.**
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### **1. Introduction**

1.1 HOSC originally identified dentistry as an issue in October 2003, in advance of the introduction of national reforms to NHS dentistry arrangements from April 2006.

1.2 Following the introduction of the reforms, HOSC received updates on the status of access to NHS dentistry in June, September 2006, November 2007 and November 2008, each time expressing some concerns as to whether there was sufficient access to NHS dentistry in East Sussex, particularly for the most vulnerable, and whether health inequalities were being adequately addressed. HOSC also raised concerns about the number of wheelchair accessible dental practices.

### **2. Access to NHS dentistry**

2.1 HOSC last received an update on access to dentistry in November 2008. Jane Hewitt, Dental & Optometry Services Development Manager, NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald and NHS Hastings and Rother made the following key points:

- Waiting times for Special Care Dental Services have reduced.
- The number of dentists accepting NHS patients has increased since a year ago.
- The PCTs have targets to increase the number of patients. Targets by 2011 for NHS Hastings and Rother is to meet the needs of 67% of the population (up from 61%) and for NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald to meet the needs of 60% of the population (up from 57%)
- Patient satisfaction is high.
- Figures on wheelchair access have been obtained via phonecalls to practices and so the level of access will vary. The PCTs continue to support the improvement of the number of existing practices with DDA compliance.
- The PCTs have found people are unaware of how to access an NHS dentist. As a result, the PCTs are distributing brochures and displaying posters to advertise the dental helpline. Also, the NHS Choices website provides information. The PCTs have also distributed guides to local services and this includes dental information.
- The PCTs have raised the level of systems for clinical governance under the new contract. Support is available for practices via training, tools and financial incentives.

- An Oral Health Needs Assessment has been completed and this provides a baseline assessment of the current position at ward level. It highlights where there needs to be improved provision of NHS dental services.
- The tendering process takes about 6 months from advertisement to establishing the practice operation. Three new practices are due to come on stream in the next few weeks.
- The PCTs are looking to put one new NHS practice in each of the four quadrants of Hastings and Rother. They are also looking for new additional practices in the Eastbourne, Chailey / Newick area, Forest Row and Wadhurst areas. There are already new practices in Hailsham and Crowborough as a result of the tendering process.

2.2 In summary, progress has been made in provision of NHS dentistry and there are plans for further improvements that will be supported by budget increases. Planned improvements include developing speciality services and reviewing emergency dental services.

### **3. Special care dental services**

3.1 The Special Care Dental Service (SCDS) provides care in special clinics for patients with particular needs, for example due to a disability, which cannot be met by mainstream dentistry.

3.2 In November 2007, HOSC was updated on the programme to streamline SCDS services by concentrating activity in fewer clinics. HOSC had previously endorsed a proposal to close clinics in Crowborough and Heathfield and to transfer those patients to enhanced Uckfield and Hailsham clinics (subject to consultation with users and transport issues being resolved). This change had been implemented in May 2007.

3.3 A further proposal to merge Seaford clinic with Peacehaven was to be delayed until Special Care Dental Services were fully staffed. It was expected that, subject to consultation, the Seaford clinic would close in late summer 2008 and the patients transferred to Peacehaven.

3.4 HOSC had previously raised concerns about the waiting times for Special Care Dental Services which the Committee considered to be too long. The streamlining of clinics outlined above was expected to help address this. In November 2007, HOSC was advised that recruitment and sickness problems had meant the number of dentists was not up to establishment and that this had affected the service's ability to reduce waiting times. However, staffing was expected to be up to strength by spring 2008 and waiting times were expected to reduce by summer 2008.

### **4. Current position**

4.1 The attached report from Jane Hewitt, Dental & Optometry Services Development Manager (appendix 1) provides an update on the areas in which HOSC members have expressed a particular interest, notably:

- Location map of NHS dentists in East Sussex and whether they are accepting new NHS patients and have wheelchair access
- Increased awareness on how to access an NHS dentist and a sample of the marketing material being used
- Progress on review of Emergency Dental Services
- Special Care Dental Services report
- Changes in East Sussex as a result of Professor Jimmy Steele's review and impact on NHS Dentistry contract.

4.2 The Committee is asked to identify any areas where it would like further information and to decide what further monitoring is required in relation to NHS dentistry, particularly the timescale.

ANDREW OGDEN  
Director of Law and Personnel

Contact officer: Lisa Schrevel, Scrutiny Lead Officer, Telephone: 01273 481327