
Heath and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2022

The Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Dental Services

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Summary

In September 2021, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) identified access to dentistry services in West Sussex as a key issue for scrutiny, in light of the pressures resulting from the pandemic.

NHS England (NHSE) South East is responsible for commissioning NHS dental services in Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, and the Isle of Wight. It has provided an update on the current situation, as set out at the Appendix and representatives of NHSE will be at the meeting to assist the Committee's scrutiny of this matter. A report has also been produced by Healthwatch, who are the independent statutory body which acts as the health and social care champion, at Appendix B which sets out concerns from residents on access to dentistry across West Sussex.

Focus for scrutiny

Key areas of focus for scrutiny include:

- 1) What issues were affecting access to dentistry in West Sussex prior to the pandemic and how the pandemic has impacted on this
- 2) The effectiveness of temporary measures introduced in response to the pandemic, and what more permanent solutions are being planned to improve future capacity and access
- 3) How the current backlog in dentistry care in West Sussex will be addressed
- 4) Whether lack of access to NHS dentistry has had an impact on other NHS services in West Sussex (e.g. General Practice, Accident and Emergency)
- 5) Whether there are any specific issues requiring further scrutiny or monitoring
- 6) Whether the issues and concerns raised by Healthwatch (and others) have been adequately addressed

The Chairman will summarise the debate, which will then be shared with NHS England.

1. Background and context

- 1.1 The background and context to this item for scrutiny are set out in the attached report. There are no resource or risk implications directly affecting West Sussex County Council, as this is a report by the NHS, relating to NHS services.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Dental Services, Report by NHS England.

Appendix B: Dentistry Briefing, Report by Healthwatch

Background Papers: None