

## **Out-of-Hours Dental Services in Nottinghamshire**

### **Background**

With the introduction of the new General Dental Services (GDS) contract and Personal Dental Services (PDS) Agreement in 2006, Primary Care Trusts were responsible for ensuring that appropriate out-of-hours urgent dental service arrangements were in place for residents and visitors to their area. From 1 April 2013, NHS England Area Teams (ATs) are responsible for ensuring that an appropriate out-of-hours service (OoH) is provided in its area.

The General Dental Service (GDS) Regulations (2005) requires the AT to provide an out-of-hours service and/or treatment 'within a reasonable time'. It has been generally accepted that this will require any necessary treatment to be undertaken within 24 – 48 hours and that a verbal response be made within 6 hours.

The term "out-of-hours" does not refer to a fixed universally agreed period, but refers to services provided outside the scheduled opening hours of a particular surgery.

### **Key principles**

#### **Dental emergency classification**

Patients who require emergency care are those requiring immediate attention in order to minimise the risk of serious medical complications or prevent long-term dental complications. Their condition means they are most likely to present in emergency departments with:

- Uncontrollable dental haemorrhage following extractions
- Rapidly increasing swelling around the throat or eye
- Trauma confined to the dental arches

#### **Dental urgent classification**

Patients requiring attention for:

- Severe dental and facial pain not controlled by over-the-counter preparations
- Dental and soft tissue acute infection

#### **Dental non-urgent conditions**

A number of individuals currently access care from OoH services, who are not in pain and present for treatment regarding non-urgent problems. This may include:

- Patients not in pain
- Aesthetic problems (dislodged crowns and bridges)
- Patients with broken dentures
- Patients with hospital referral letters
- Patients requiring permanent restorations
- Non traumatic problems with orthodontic appliances
- Patients who have no significant pathology
- Patients requiring a second opinion
- Patients using EDs as their regular dentist
- Requiring surgical extractions (wisdom teeth) and are not in pain

## **Accessing OoH dental services**

Patients access the OoHs services across the AT in a number of ways:

Contact NHS 111 directly – any area

Contact NHS 111 signposted by their regular dental practice (South Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City)

Contact Single Point of Access (SPA) signposted to by their regular dental practice (North Nottinghamshire) or 111

## **Current service provision**

The Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire AT commissions a number of providers to deliver OoH urgent dental care. This is based on the historical commissioning arrangements that were in place with legacy Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

## **Nottingham Emergency Dental Service (NEDS)**

NEDS was commissioned in 2006 to provide OoH urgent dental care for patients resident in South Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City, however the service does accept patients out of area.

NEDS offers a dental clinician led service with access to advice and treatments and is located at Fanum House, Derby Road, Nottingham, close to the city centre and QMC.

This service operates:

- Monday to Friday between 7pm and 9.15pm to provide OoH triage and treatment. The majority of patients will be given over the phone self-care advice and advised to contact a general dental practice within 24-48 hours.
- Saturday from 2pm to 8.15pm – treatment only no triage
- Sunday 9am to 9pm – treatment only no triage
- Bank Holidays - 12.00 to 8.15pm – treatment only no triage

## **Integrated Dental Unit (IDU)– co located with the Walk in Centre at Seaton House**

The IDU offers a nurse led service with fast and convenient access to advice, information and some treatments in and OoH. It is a 'sit and wait' service; patients are seen in order of attendance unless the need is assessed as urgent.

The service currently operates:

- Monday to Friday 7am to 9pm with treatment slots available 9am to 6pm
- Saturday 9am to 1pm
- Sunday and Bank Holidays – closed

## **Single Point of Access (SPA) – North Nottinghamshire only**

SPA is a single point of contact advice line providing access to a number of health services. SPA manages the In-hours and OoH urgent dental slots offered by general dental practitioners (GDPs) across Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield & Ashfield.

SPA is a non-clinical led call handling service providing access to advice and information. Telephone triage is provided 7 days per week (including Bank Holidays) from 7am to 9pm daily and urgent care

patients are booked directly into appointments at dental practices via a roster system. Capacity varies across the area depending on the day of week

### **Current issues**

Over time there has been a steady increase in demand for In and OoH urgent dental care. There are a number of possible explanations for this.

- Since the introduction of the new General Dental Services contract in 2006 the number of patients regularly attending an NHS dentist in Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire has steadily fallen from 62% of the population to approximately 56.4% with an increasing number choosing to access a dentist only when they feel they have an urgent need.
- The cost of dental care is increasing year on year and some patients are choosing to access cheaper or free alternatives e.g. GPs, emergency departments, urgent care.
- The dental nurse triage service provided by NHSD was not commissioned nationally from 111, therefore patients who have not been triaged are often directed to urgent care services when they don't meet the criteria.
- Less general dental access has been commissioned from primary care providers in the past two years compared with previously and often, in areas where access is limited, patients will then rely on accessing urgent care.
- Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 patient registration ceased to exist and therefore dental practices are not responsible for providing urgent care to all of the patients who attend or have previously attended the practice.

### **Plans to address capacity concerns**

- A working group including AT, CCG, 111 and clinical OoH provider representatives has already been established. This group has developed a short term and long term action plan to develop urgent care dental services going forward.
- A number of changes have been made to the data held by 111 to improve the pathways for patients accessing OoH urgent care.
- The AT has already negotiated with a number of primary care providers, based across the Nottingham City and County area, to increase their In and OoH urgent capacity. Practices are based in Bulwell, Bilborough, Highbury, Arnold, Mansfield, Stapleford and Meadows area.
- Funding has been approved to increase OoH urgent capacity at the IDU, NEDS and SPA. This will help to ease winter pressures on other healthcare providers.
- Funding has been approved to increase access to general dental services in areas of high need and where access is limited. We will use our monthly access survey of all dental practices, Public Health data and data available from 111 to inform this decision.

### **Future recommendations**

Long term it is the intention of the AT to review In and OoH urgent care service provision across the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire area, and commission a service that delivers the best value for money and the highest quality clinical care for its population. This review will take into account the proposals for the new national dental contract which may impact on the ATs responsibility for commissioning OoH dentistry.

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