



REPORT TO: MORAY INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD CLINICAL AND CARE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ON 31 AUGUST 2023

SUBJECT: NHS DENTAL PROVISION IN MORAY

BY: DENTAL CLINICAL LEAD, MORAY PUBLIC DENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1. To inform the Committee about the current status of NHS dental provision in Moray.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. It is recommended that the Committee considers and notes the current challenges facing NHS dentistry in Moray and nationally.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Across the UK, NHS dental access has been adversely affected, due largely to recruitment challenges and consequences of the pandemic. The deferred graduation of dental students in 2021, Britain leaving the EU, delays to the Overseas Registration Exam and changing workforce patterns have all impacted on recruitment.

3.2. There is a chronic NHS dental access problem in Moray; this has been ongoing since 2020. Currently, there are no General Dental Service (GDS) (local independent NHS)) dental practices in Moray accepting new adult patients for NHS registration.

3.3. A small but increasing percentage of the Moray population are unable to access an NHS dentist for routine and preventative care – young children and new residents are particularly affected. In addition, 3000 Moray residents were deregistered from a local NHS practice in August 2022.

3.4. There has been considerable financial uncertainty for General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) during and following the pandemic. SG are currently revising the Statement of Dental Remuneration (SDR) and fees package, to be implemented from 1 November 2023. This SDR reform will impact on the attractiveness of NHS provision for GDS GDPs - independent contractors aligned to NHSG Primary Care Contracts.

4. KEY MATTERS RELEVANT TO RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1. Scottish Dental Access Initiative (SDAI) Grants and Recruitment and Retention Allowances were approved for Moray in 2021, to encourage new dentists and/or practices into the area. No applications have been received.
- 4.2. Urgent dental care provision in Moray remains comprehensive for all – supported by Moray Public Dental Service (PDS (salaried NHSG service)). An initiative to improve signposting for urgent dental care, both for patients and HSCM colleagues, will be progressed further.
- 4.3. Moray PDS continue to register patients with priority group or additional support needs, and in 2021 activated contingency plans to temporarily support NHS dental access in Moray.
- 4.4. Moray PDS are offering single courses of treatment to unregistered patients with the highest dental need. Suitable patients are identified through their initial urgent presentation or via current dental public health programmes.
- 4.5. Increased delivery of urgent and routine care to unregistered patients is impacting on Moray PDS core services. The PDS were unable to further increase capacity during 2022 due to an inability to recruit new dentists – eight attempts at recruitment were unsuccessful. Some prioritisation of patient care may be required in the short-term to ensure ongoing care arrangements across Moray for all.
- 4.6. The recent SG parliamentary Recovery of NHS dental services inquiry acknowledged that “NHS dental services have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels” and “recommends that the Scottish Government provide costings for – and consults on – different service model options.” It is unclear how this will impact on the 31 October deadline for SDR reform.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)) and Moray Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan “Partners in Care 2022 – 2032”

Availability of services is key to enable people to build resilience and maximise the health and wellbeing potential, one of the core themes of MIJB strategic plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

In line with Scottish Government guidance and requirements.

(c) Financial implications

To mitigate the current issues, increased funding is required to support Moray PDS to recruit, expand capacity and extend the reach of current dental public health and oral health improvement initiatives. No funding has currently been identified by SG.

(d) Risk Implications and Mitigation

Risks: Inadequate access to routine NHS dental care for Moray population:

- Unsatisfactory patient outcomes
- Increase in complaints and adverse media coverage.

There is a risk of burnout and retention problems if Moray PDS continue to mitigate the current NHS dental access issues unsupported.

If GDPs are discontent with the revised SDR and funding package, there is a risk that more GDPs convert to a private model, exacerbating the current NHS dental access issue.

The following patient specific measures have been put in place to reduce harm:

- Signposting of unregistered patients to practices accepting new NHS patients. Information on practice availability posted on NHS Grampian public website and reviewed regularly.
- Information on arrangements for accessing urgent and emergency treatment have been made available on NHS Grampian public website.
- Opportunities for single courses of care are offered to unregistered patients by the Public Dental Service.
- Oral Health Improvement programmes including nursery and primary school Childsmile programmes were fully remobilised and the reach of community engagement programmes has been extended.

(e) Staffing Implications

Recruitment opportunities available but lack of dentists across Scotland seeking NHS roles.

Good retention of staff is crucial - ensure team feel supported, valued and empowered to initiate positive change.

(f) Property

None directly arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Dental health inequalities are widening due to the effects of the pandemic and current dental access issues. The requirement to travel further to access NHS care, or the option to pay privately to access local care sooner, is disadvantaging those in lower socio-economic groups.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

Patients are having to travel further distances, including across HSCP borders, to access NHS dental care.

(i) Directions

None arising directly from this report.

(j) Consultations

Consultations have been undertaken with the following staff who are in agreement with the content of this report where it relates to their area of responsibility:

- Jonathan Iloya, NHSG Director of Dentistry
- Amro Alkado, NHSG Dental Practice Adviser
- HSCM Clinical and Care Governance Group

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. NHS dentistry is facing an unprecedented set of challenges and remote and rural areas are being disproportionately affected by recruitment issues. Significant reform is required to rebalance the GDS system and improve access to NHS care.

6.2. The SDR reform scheduled for implementation from 1 November 2023 could influence availability of NHS dental care in either direction. Moray PDS, as the only salaried dental service within HSCM, will plan for both scenarios but are restricted in their ability to mitigate access problems due to funding restrictions and recruitment challenges.

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References: [Recovery of NHS dental services inquiry | Scottish Parliament Website](#)