

South West Dental Reform Programme

1. Introduction

Transforming dental services has been identified as a priority for the South West Direct Commissioning Senior Leadership Team, NHS England and NHS Improvement.

NHS England and NHS Improvement South West has initiated a Dental Reform programme with partners to improve the numbers of patients accessing NHS dental services in the region, address the numbers reporting delays in accessing general dental services and working with dental staff and partners, the programme aims to improve oral health across the South West.

2. Phase One

The South West Dental Reform Programme will support NHS England and NHS Improvement to scope the 'current state of dental services in the region'. The programme will establish the baseline position under each of the key strategic headings below and scope proposals for each strategic ambition.

NHS England and NHS Improvement South West published an independent Oral Health Needs Assessment for dental services across the region in February 2021.

The anticipated timescale of the first phase of the project is twelve months, to include definition of the case for change and to develop a reform strategy.

It will include a number of regional workshops and activities to bring together dental teams, stakeholders, gather views, share findings, develop a transformation strategy and produce a report to shape future phases.

3. Dental Reform Programme Delivery Group

Progress will be reported to the South West Dental Reform Programme Delivery Group, a fora established by NHS England and NHS Improvement South West. The role of the Dental Reform Programme Delivery Group is to oversee the effective transformation of South West dental services including programme oversight, reporting in to the Primary and Community Care Delivery Group; Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and agree a region wide approach that can be shared nationally with NHS dental policy leads.

Members include; NHS England and NHS Improvement South West commissioners, Chair of the Local Dental Network, Dental School representatives, Public Health England and Health Education England representatives, patient representatives and Integrated Care System representatives.

4. Dental Reform Strategic Aim and Ambitions

Aim

To develop a South West Dental Reform strategy that aligns with the Long Term Plan aspirations to improve oral health in the region. The strategy will include short, medium and long-term objectives on; dental access; population oral health improvement; workforce development; review and improve existing services and develop some new service models

Strategic planning and commissioning objectives

- a. to explore flexible commissioning arrangements through recovery to strengthen dental provision and improve access for South West residents to primary, intermediate and secondary and tertiary dental care including enhanced services
- b. to strengthen relationships with the seven South West systems and their Primary Care Networks (PCNs), identifying a dental priority to address for each system to ensure dental services are a key part of primary care prevention and service delivery

Access

- c. To increase access to dentistry including findings from the oral health assessment, advice and education for South West residents to improve overall oral health
- d. To increase access for those with health inequalities, targeting the 10% of the population who are vulnerable or live in areas of greatest need in each system, including within secure settings.

Training and education

- To embed education and training within dental commissioning contracts to enable dental registrants to work to the full scope of their role.
- To develop a programme of flexible and extended training opportunities across dental care in the region to help retain those trained in the South West in the next five years to improve access and treatment outcomes for the population.

Workforce

- To contribute to, working with HEE, a workforce plan for the South West that improves recruitment and retention of General Dental Practitioners and DCPs by 10%. To identify and focus on specific 'hotspots' in the region to create a sustainable workforce that incorporates flexible working models.
- To work with partners to develop a sustainable dental workforce database for the South West

Digital

- To maximise the benefits for patients and practitioners through digitalisation of dentistry in the South West. We will scope an investment programme and support implementation to improve patient experience by 10% and staff satisfaction in the first year of any pilot programmes.

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