



Briefing on Procurement of Community Dental Services in Essex

Background

NHS England is responsible for commissioning primary and secondary care dental services in Essex and this includes Community Dental Services.

Community Dental Services provide dental services to vulnerable people of all ages to ensure that there is access for all patients. It intends to treat patients of any age whose care cannot be met by other local general dental practitioners due to their special needs, whether that is medical, physical or behavioural.

There are four providers of Community Dental Services across the County. The current services are delivered from a number of clinics in each of the localities of Essex. In reviewing the historic contracts it has been identified that there are slight variations in the way that services have been commissioned and delivered.

Current Position

As the current contracts come to an end, NHS England is re-procuring these services to ensure that patients have access to a consistent service across the County of Essex. It is planned to have a single provider with a single point of access to make it easier for patients to access the service. It is proposed that the new provider will be expected to deliver Community Dental Services to those vulnerable dental patients that are not able to access services from a General Dental Practitioner. Services will continue to be provided from various locations in Essex to ensure that accessibility is maintained.

Patients and their carers have been asked for their views on how the service could be improved and these responses have been used to inform the service specification. This has included provision of a bariatric service and simplifying the referral process.

The benefits of this change are:

- There will be a single provider who will manage all of the Community Dental Services across Essex;
- There will be a single point of contact for patients;
- Patients will be offered a choice of time and location for their appointments;
- The service will include dental services for bariatric patients;
- More cost effective use of NHS resources

A procurement panel has been put together and this includes a patient representative who will be part of the decision-making process to identify a new single Provider. It is likely that this representative will be from Healthwatch Essex.

It is intended to commence the new service from 1st October 2016. NHS England will update stakeholders throughout the process.

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