



North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK)

A Report on their findings on Dentistry in North East Lincolnshire

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Introduction

Following the election of the LINK Governing Body members four sub groups were established, including Health Commissioning and Primary Health Care led by Eileen Blanchard. Ongoing dentistry concerns still remained from the work that had been undertaken by the now disbanded Patient and Public Forum and raised at the LINK launch on the "have your say" board.

Information provided by the public regarding dentistry on the "have your say" board were:

- three comments were about shortage of dentists and the need for more dentists in this area
- two comments were that dentist or dentist assistants were rude and judgemental
- one comment was that the dentist 'did not discuss treatment - only the cheapest option'

Due to the issues raised North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) decided to undertake a survey on dentistry within the area.

Government policy

An independent review led by Professor Jimmy Steele published in June 2009 states that oral health should be for life. The executive summary states that in 2009 the NHS is still dealing with, and paying for, the consequences of disease that has developed more than 50 years ago. It states that "the NHS still needs to deal with this burden of the past and manage the demands of the present, but keep a very clear focus on the future so that the NHS can minimise the risk, discomfort and costs for future generations".

Local policy

Within North East Lincolnshire the Care Trust Plus (CTP) is responsible for providing dentistry services and state that it is their priority to maintain progress with delivery of the local dental plan. They state that in their opinion the contracts for April 2009 have been very positive, resulting in the commissioning of additional units of Dental Activity (UDA's) however it is important to recognise that preventative work does not award UDA's.

Dentistry provision is measured as part of the CTP Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) indicator No 59. As of May 2009 when the information was last updated it states:

“At the end of December 2008, North East Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus had a higher percentage (56.3%) of adults who had accessed NHS dentistry in the previous 24 months than the England (49.0%). For children, fewer in North East Lincolnshire (65.8%) had accessed an NHS dentist in the previous 24 months than the England (69.2%). In total, North East Lincolnshire (58.4%) performed better than the England (53.4%) averages”.

“North East Lincolnshire PCT (65.8%) ranked 2nd lowest in terms of access of the 14 PCTs in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, suggesting that considerable work needs to be done to improve this”.

Current Position

Within North East Lincolnshire the CTP have in place 19 dental contracts that are made up of two General Dental Services (GDS), 15 Personal Dental Services (PDS), one Primary Care Orthodontic Services and one Community Dental Services (CDS). The population of North East Lincolnshire is currently over 160,000. The CTP also commission an Emergency Dental Service (EDS) and two minor oral surgery agreements.

A dental helpline has been established to help and advise local residents. Patients can be added to a waiting list and introduced to a dental practice, patients can also be signposted to other appropriate services, e.g. community dental or the emergency dental service.

As of July 9th 2009 there were 249 people on the CTP dental waiting list, of these 53 were children. This figure changes frequently and can fluctuate up and down rapidly, going down to none in October, up to 130 in November 2009, and increased to 751 people (of these 195 children) as of January 11th 2010.

The telephone number for the dental helpline is **01472 625220**.

As stated above, the CTP has commissioned an emergency dental service for patients. A telephone appointment call system is provided by the EDS call handlers and the service operates on a day to day basis. This is an extremely busy service and it is a first come first served basis. Patients can ring the emergency dental help line each morning from 9.30am. The service is available 7 days a week and is an appointment only service, not walk in.

As it is an emergency service, they are only able to provide limited treatment including temporary fillings, dental extractions and prescriptions for antibiotics.

The telephone number for the Emergency Dental Service is: **0845 120085**.

Methodology

North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) chose to use Community Engagement methods as endorsed by the North East Lincolnshire Strategic Partnership by consulting with the public through a short questionnaire and involving by user comments and complaints.

Recommendations from the report completed by LINK member Mario Munoz following the launch identified that:

Members of the Link themselves should lead on this investigation by:

- developing a questionnaire
- doing short interviewing with people whilst waiting for treatment (eg hospitals, doctors or dentist surgery)
- doing shorts interviews with NHS staff including doctors, dentists and other administrative staff such as receptionist

The research undertaken would seek to establish:

- how many people who want a dentist are without a dentist in N.E.Lincs
- how easy is to find a dentist
- how long do people have to wait to get a dentist
- how do people feel about the quality of care that they receive from their dentist (if they have one)

Also, as a group, the Link should respond to the current review of Dentistry services.

Both patients and staff, where able, should be interviewed in order to get a balanced perspective. This can then lead to recommendations to the Trust to improve quality of services.

The report states that perhaps for the next event we should be clearer about the questions that the LINK would like the public to give comments on as this type of event provide excellent opportunity for researching opinions of the public.

As an outcome a very short questionnaire was developed which would identify if people had a dentist, did not have a dentist, if they were on a waiting list and how long they had been waiting if they were. The questionnaire was widely distributed and results were collected from 1 July to 31 July 2009.

Surveys were sent to two schools who kindly agreed to participate, a primary school with children under 11, Springfield Primary School and Hereford Technology School for children 11 – 16.

The survey was taken out and about in general locations and different geographical areas were targeted to try to get a true representation of the local population.

Questionnaire Results

Q1 Do you have a NHS Dentist?

	Yes	No	Private	Dentures	Total
Hereford Technology School	262	59	1	-	322
Springfield Primary School	162	35	-	-	197
General public	317	158	36	2	513
Location - Sainsbury's	18	5	-	-	23
Location - West Marsh	29	16	3	-	48
Survey Monkey	49	21	9	-	79
NEL LINK website survey	14	10	-	-	24
Total	851	304	49	2	1206

Q2 If no, are you on a waiting list?

	Yes	No	Total
Hereford Technology School	37	20	57
General	11	120	131
Sainsbury's	1	4	5
West Marsh	0	16	16
Survey Monkey	3	22	25
NEL LINK website survey	0	14	14
Total	52	196	248

Q3 If yes, how long have you been waiting to see a NHS Dentist?

Time	Number
0 months	3
A very short time	1
3 months	2
4 months:	3
6 months:	1
8 months:	3
10 months:	1
11 months:	2
12 months	5
24 months:	6 - one respondent went to Louth
2 years +	1
36 months	1
6 years:	2
? months:	1
ages	1
14 years:	1

Comments included:

- no wait regular visits (1)
- Was waiting for 4 years prior to finding this one, 2 years ago (1)
- Emergencies only (1)

Individual case studies

1. A couple were registered with an NHS Dentists but the Dentist was removed from practice. They secured a private Dentist at Louth, but then this Dentist left leaving them with no Dentist. They could not find a Dentist, either privately or NHS. (Customer at Sainsbury's - CTP waiting list number supplied)

2. A LINK member spoke to a person who gets on the number 16 bus and she said because the Stagecoach Company missed two buses out she missed a Dental appointment. Because of this she had only two more missed appointments to go this year and she would be struck off the books but was not charged a fee. She had to go Private because she was waiting 5years for a NHS Dentist.

3. "I have parents who have bad teeth due to methadone treatment and this is no joke they are pulling their own teeth out as they are waiting for appointments it is disgusting that drug users and vulnerable parents and children cannot access dental treatment this is 2009 not 1930 please make contact with me for further information if required" (no contact details were supplied)
4. "I registered with the CTP dental waiting list and was told that it would be 2 months before I would be allocated to a Dentist. After 4 months I had not heard anything so I rang the Dental waiting list to see what was happening. They told me that I had been allocated on the day I rang the waiting list helpline to Osbourne Street surgery. When I contacted the surgery I was told I was on their waiting list so I have ended up on 2 waiting lists and not seen a dentist within 2 months as I was led to believe I would."

Discussion

It is clear from the results of the survey of 1206 people in North East Lincolnshire that there are a proportion of people who do not have an NHS dentist and wish to access one.

- From the survey results 304/1206 (25.2%) people do not have a NHS dentist and of those 304 people, 196 (64.5%) are not on the dental waiting list.
- From the 304 people who do not have an NHS dentist 94 (30.9%) of these are known to be children.

Unfortunately North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) did not have the time or resources to complete all the recommendations that were produced from the initial report. Care received from Dentists would be another large piece of work which may be considered at a later date if future further concerns are raised within the community.

Recommendations

Although the Care Trust Plus is currently taking part in an awareness raising campaign advertising the CTP local helpline telephone number, it is apparent from the LINK survey that this is not yet having an effect on people finding an NHS Dentist.

The Care Trust Plus to increase their awareness raising programme of the Dental waiting list.

Residents of North East Lincolnshire do not necessarily know where the Dental practices within the area are located. Doctors surgeries are identified in the annual publication and North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) recommends that dental surgeries be included too.

All dental practice locations to be included in the annual publication "Your guide to Local health and Adult Social Care Services"

During the survey concerns were raised by members of the public and professionals regarding access to dentistry by drug and alcohol users. It is known that a mobile unit does visit Harbour Place once a week. (Harbour Place Day Centre (HPDC) is a specialist day care centre, supporting the needs of some of the hardest to reach and socially excluded individuals in our community. The client group comprises of the homeless, the lonely, substance misusers, those with mental health/dual diagnosis illness, young people/care leavers (16 plus), older people, single parents, ex-offenders, the unemployed, the disabled and those who have long-term health conditions)

Following discussions with the CTP it was identified that this mobile unit is not utilised to it's full capacity due to a lack of dentists who can man the unit.

The CTP to seek to utilise the mobile unit to its full capacity and to provide more access to dental treatment to drug and alcohol users ensuring there is equality of service within North East Lincolnshire.

Concerns have been raised regarding the Dental waiting list and the amount of time that patients are told they will have to wait and then to the actual time they see a Dentist.

The CTP to review their dental waiting list process to ensure that patients are not moved from one waiting list to another and to consider another working model, for example Tameside and Glossop.

The CTP to ensure that if a patient is allocated to a Dentist and removed from the waiting list that patient is offered an appointment with the Dentist they have been allocated to within 2 weeks.

After Dental emergency treatment, although patients are signposted to register for a NHS dentist, it is recognised that patients often do not bother when their pain is sorted out.

Patients who attend the Dental emergency treatment service to be automatically put on the NHS Dental Waiting list.

It has been identified that there are children within the area that do not have an NHS Dentist. This is concerning as if children are encouraged from an early age to take care of their oral health this will prevent future problems later in life.

North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) recommends that more educational work is done in schools and through Sure Start to get children used to the idea of Dentists at an early age and the importance of oral health.

Conclusion

North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) recognises that historically there is a group of people who only access Dentistry when they require it due to pain. Dental hygiene and prevention is very important to minimise people needing treatment and a culture change is needed to inform and educate people in the importance of taking responsibility of their oral hygiene.

The education of children in the importance of oral hygiene will play a large part in preventary measures and as recommended by Professor Jimmy Steele "keep a very clear focus on the future so that the NHS can minimise the risk, discomfort and costs for future generations".

Locally, North East Lincolnshire Local Involvement Network (LINK) recognises the difficulties the Care Trust Plus has, however if dental education is started at an early age and continues through out school years, change can happen.

It is also recognised that there are a large proportion of people who do realise the importance of oral hygiene and do want to be able to access NHS Dentistry regularly. The CTP recognises from the work done for the JSNA that 'considerable work needs to be done to improve access' to Dentistry for patients who do wish to access dentists on a regular basis, and has assured NEL LINK of their plans to address this through extended opening hours of dentists rather than a Darzi style service. NEL LINK is keen to remain involved in this process.

Special Thanks to:

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Lynne Clarke, Head of Primary Care Commissioning at the CTP

All LINK members and interested parties who kindly distributed the survey

Mario Munoz, LINK member for writing the report from the "have your say board"

Resources:

NHS Dental Services in England – An independent review led by Professor Jimmy Steele – June 2009

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for North East Lincolnshire