

All Midlands Stakeholders

June 2020

Dear Stakeholder,

Re: An update on the restarting of NHS dental services in the Midlands

From 8 June NHS Dental Services have been allowed to reopen, provided the appropriate measures are in place to ensure the safety of staff and patients. This followed their closure for face-to-face consultations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most Midlands practices continued to provide virtual and/or telephone consultations and prescriptions during the closure and, to meet the continuing need for urgent dental care, 88 Urgent Dental Care Centres across the Midlands were also opened to treat patients with the most urgent needs. Dental staff not only stepped forward to run these centres but also to support the NHS front line in other areas, for which we are very grateful.

Access to and support from these urgent dental care centres will remain available as we work with general dental services to get back up and running. These centres also provide access for people who may not have a regular dentist and who may find it difficult to find one at this time.

There must be a gradual approach to the resumption of dental treatments to ensure the safety of all. Dental services cannot return to the way they were before the pandemic and will look very different from before. Measures must be in place to ensure the social distancing of patients. New enhanced infection control measures also include the requirement for each surgery to be left for an hour between patients prior to deep cleaning. All practice staff need to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and to be trained in the use of this, which will take time. There should be no additional charges for NHS patients over and above the payments that are normally required.

The advice remains to minimise face to face care as much as possible and in particular to minimise the number of aerosol-generating procedures. Aerosol-generating procedures are anything involving the use of drills or suction and include simple procedures such as a scale and polish, previously provided as part of a routine check-up. Where these procedures cannot be avoided enhanced PPE is required and other strict safety measures need to be put in place.

Hospital and Community dental services face similar constraints in re-establishing their services and we know that, unfortunately there are some patients that have been waiting longer for procedures than we would like.

NHS England and Improvement Midlands is working with general dental practices to ensure that they can reopen and provide a range of services to as many patients as possible; as they adapt to provide services in way that provides appropriate dental care with the necessary precautions in place to minimise the infection risk from Covid-19.

The public should continue to contact their local dental surgery for advice on dental care and treatment. Some procedures previously thought of as routine (such as scale and polish) may



not be available at this time and patients may be referred to a different surgery for some procedures. It is unlikely that most practices will be in a position at this stage to offer routine checks up except to the most vulnerable patients.

Anyone who feels unwell or has any Covid -19 symptoms, should not visit their surgery even if they have a confirmed appointment.

General Dental Services in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

As at the 26th June, information has been received from 68 of the 83 NHS dental practices in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. 66 of these have confirmed that they were open for non AGP procedures in June and a further 2 plan to reopen in July.

23 providers plan to be open for AGP procedures in June and a further 40 in July.

There are currently 9 Urgent Dental Care Centres across the local area providing urgent care for those patients who do not have access to a regular dentist or whose dentist is not yet offering the full range of services.

If you have any further questions or require further information about dental services in this area please contact:

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Could you also please copy your request to our generic dental inbox england.dental-westmidlands@nhs.net