

Dental update for the Bracknell Forest Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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1.0 Introduction

The following report provides an update on the Dental services in Frimley with a focus on the Dental providers in the Bracknell Forest area in the Frimley footprint.

The report includes an update from the National priorities, current performance in Frimley and in Bracknell Forest, plans and future schemes.

2.0 National context regarding Dental Recovery

Recovery of access to NHS dental services is a key target within the 2024/2025 NHS priorities and operational planning guidance.

In February 2024 the Dental Recovery Plan was published which committed to expanding access so that everyone who needs to see a dentist will be able to offer a significant incentive to dentists. ICB dental budgets have been ringfenced to support the achievement of this aim. Plus, supporting and developing the whole dental workforce, increasing workforce capacity as committed to in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

The new government have placed a particular emphasis on improving access to urgent dental care committing that an additional 700,000 appointments will be available nationally. Each ICB is being asked to contribute towards achieving this commitment with plans which have been submitted at a regional level.

3.0 Access to Frimley ICB NHS dental services; current performance

In April 2020 Frimley dentists saw 390,012 patients. By January 2022 this had dropped by 141,206 to 207,276 patients. At September 2024 attendances had increased to 437,140, now above the pre-pandemic monthly attendance figure.

Access issues continue to improve steadily with the results of the national patient survey (January–March 2024) showing:

- ✓ 83% of patients who tried to get a dental appointment in last 3 months were successful compared to those who tried in the last 2 years when only 78% were successful

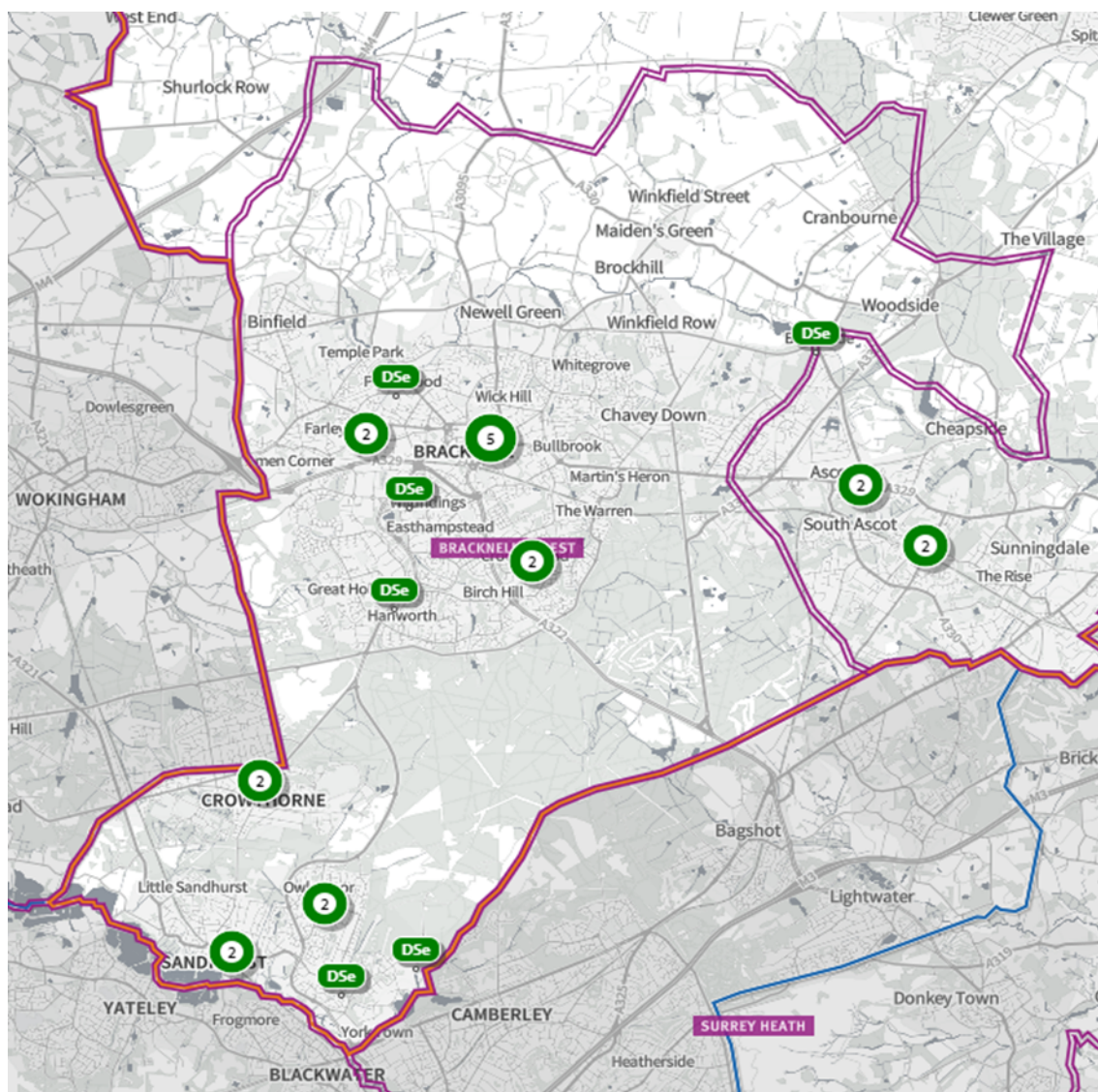
- ✓ 87% of patients were able to see a dentist that they had been to previously

4.0 Dental Providers in Bracknell Forest

There are 15 'high street' GDS dental providers located in Bracknell Forest, with a total 2024/25 annual contracted Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) Target of 178,958.

There is also one orthodontic provider with a total annual contracted Unit of Orthodontic Activity (UOA) of 10,712.

Map of Dental providers in Bracknell Forest



5.0 Contractor Performance

In 2023/24, the general dental providers in Bracknell Forest delivered 95% of their contracted UDA Activity target (175,802 UDAs), and Orthodontic providers delivered 100.1% of UOA activity targets in 2023/24.

The contracted mid-year performance target for all providers is 30%. Mid-year for all in Frimley in 2024/25 in both UDAs and UOAs, are above the performance target at 46.23% and 50.99% respectively.

6.0 Frimley's plans improve access to NHS dentistry in 2024/25

The following schemes were approved by Frimley ICB in November 2024:

Additional Hours Scheme

This scheme increases additional commissioned UDAs via the relatively new route “flexible commissioning” has been used to purchase additional urgent access sessions for patients who do not have a regular dentist. Under this scheme both the immediate needs and the full course of treatment to rectify the issue have been commissioned.

This scheme supports the reduction in accident and emergency department attendances either through self-presentations, 111 redirections or the dental support line redirections.

The mid-year performance has indicated a continual increase in activity and subject to an overspend. The overspend has been approved, and equates to an additional 577 sessions or 4,617 patients.

Bracknell Forest have one Additional Hours contracted provider, contracted to deliver over 2000 appointments both in and out of hours.

Patients in Bracknell Forest can also access any of the additional hours providers across the Frimley footprint.

Annual over-performance

Annually, ICBs are able to authorise an additional 10% of commissioned UDAs from contractors that provide both Tier 1 and Tier 2 services without triggering a procurement process. These additional UDAs are funded by freed up budget due to other contractors performing lower than expected.

These additional UDAs, performed by contractors who exceed their core commissioned UDAs, helps boost access for patients who may otherwise be unable to obtain NHS dentistry.

It is anticipated 38 contractors are eligible for over-performance funding in 24/25. These are providers that over-performed in 23/24 and who have exceeded the mid-year target of providing 30% of their UDA allocation. If approved, the additional 10% performance would deliver 30,097 additional UDAs.

In Bracknell Forest, it is anticipated that 14 of the 15 UDA providers will be eligible for over-performance funding in 24/25, delivering an additional 15,000 UDAs.

7.0 Future schemes to improve access to NHS dentistry

Resilience support packages

Dental practices will be able to apply for packages of funding to support with recruitment or other issues.

Practices can apply for either or both of the following:

- Practice support – Funding for ‘one-off’ recruitment costs, premises works or equipment upgrades
- UDA flexibility – increase in UDA rate for up to 2 years

An outline scheme has been developed for South East ICBs; which is currently being refined and personalised for Frimley ICB dentists prior to the formal launch in 2025.

Permanent procurement of new UDAs

Mandatory dental services (high street dentistry) must be procured according to the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023.

Utilising the funding freed up from rebasing contracts we intend to permanently procure:

- Additional urgent access (as an alternative to the additional hours scheme)
- Additional UDAs focussed on areas of need such as specific patient cohorts or geographical areas of high oral health needs

The mid-year performance conversations commenced in November 2024 with a view to identifying contracts which were unlikely to address the issues that lead to under-delivery of UDAs.

Next steps:

- Continue to monitor access to primary care dental services with the aim of maintaining on-going improvements in access.
- Consider the implementation of innovative approaches such as flexible commissioning to support access for patients with greater oral health needs.
- Work with the Dental Workforce, Training and Education teams to promote recruitment, development and retention of all staff groups in Dentistry.
- Work with the Bracknell Forest Council Public Health team to promote Oral Hygiene and Education.
- Work with colleagues and Dental Service providers to address key challenges facing their services.