

Stakeholder Briefing:

Urgent dental care services across the South West

Background

Since the Prime Minister announced social distancing measures to slow down the spread of COVID-19, a set of restrictions on daily activity to contain the spread of the virus were introduced. All non-urgent dental activity has stopped in line with the changes to people's everyday lives that the Prime Minister has signalled.

In light of the public health control measures and in recognition of the difficulties that dental practices face, including continuing concerns about staff safety, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) is making a number of immediate changes to the delivery and operation of our dental services in the South West region.

Developing the local urgent dental care system

Across every NHS region local Urgent Dental Care (UDC) systems are being created to provide care for people with urgent and emergency dental problems.

The hubs are being established to meet the distinct needs of people with urgent dental care needs:

1. Those who are possible or confirmed COVID-19 patients – including patients with symptoms, or those living in their household
2. Those who are 'shielded', as being at most-significant risk from COVID-19
3. Those who are vulnerable/at increased risk from COVID-19
4. Any other people who do not fit one of the above categories

Hubs are being developed to allow appropriate separation and treatment of patients in these categories.

Each patient will be assessed and triaged depending on a number of factors, and their care managed accordingly. Patients will only be seen after a referral via the triage system. Drop-ins are not permitted.



Locations of urgent dental centres

Fifteen locations have been chosen to cover the South West as best as possible, within limitations posed by staffing and equipment. This means that some patients will need to travel.

With the initial service now operational, further centres are likely to be added to reduce journey time.

The locations of the hubs are:

1. Gloucester
2. Cheltenham
3. Chippenham
4. Swindon
5. Bath
6. Bristol
7. Weston super Mare
8. Taunton
9. Bridgwater
10. Dorchester
11. Bournemouth
12. Exmouth
13. Plymouth
14. Torquay
15. Bodmin

The precise locations will not be publicised, as hubs are accessible by referral only; drop-ins are not permitted.

How will triage work?

Triage will be used to decide which category people fall into, depending on their symptoms and level of pain.

The triage categories are:

- 1 Requires immediate treatment on the day
- 2 Treatment within 24 hours
- 3 Non-urgent

Those involved in triage have a detailed operating procedure to help them allocate different dental conditions to the correct category.



How do patients access these urgent centres?

Patients with an urgent or emergency dental condition must not attend any clinics as they need to be triaged first. This system also helps manage the flow to centres and avoid queues (in line with social- distancing measures).

Registered patients

People who have a dental practice and use it regularly should contact their dentist by phone to seek a referral. All NHS dental surgeries should be accessible by phone, even though their doors are shut.

Unregistered patients

People who don't have a dentist should call the dental helpline in their area as below:

Devon Call 03330 063300 Email accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net	Cornwall Call 0333 405 0290 Email westcountrydental.care@nhs.net
Somerset Call 0300 123 7691 Email dentist4u@sompar.nhs.uk	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire Call 111
Dorset Call 111	Gloucestershire Call NHS 111
Bath & North East Somerset Call NHS 111	Swindon & Wiltshire 0900 -1700 Monday - Friday Call 0345 758 1926 OOH (Evenings and Weekends) Call NHS 111

Out of usual surgery hours, people should call NHS111.

For further information, please contact the NHSE/I dental team in the South West at england.swdental@nhs.net

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