

26th November 2018

George Eustice MP
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

Director of Commissioning Operations
NHS England South SW
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Dear Mr Eustice

Re: Access to dental services across Cornwall

Thank you for your letter to Jennifer Howells which has been forwarded to our office for response. As you state in your letter dental access in Cornwall has historically been difficult and therefore remains as a priority work area.

The dental team continues to work to improve access to dental services for children and adults in Cornwall:

- Working with dental providers to ensure existing contracts are delivering to their maximum potential – we review the under and over performance of our dental contracts on a regular basis, and as part of reconciling activity to contract payment explore with those contractors with the most variance what they are doing to address under performance. We are able to procure new contracts in an area where there is insufficient dental access but need to be able to ensure the workforce can be secured by a new contractor.
- Commissioning additional NHS work from dental practices that have capacity available across Cornwall – we review this aspect as part of the above contract review activity and unfortunately have not identified any available additional capacity in West Cornwall at this current time.
- Practices are working with the dental helpline to ensure that as NHS places become available they are made available to those whose names are on the helpline waiting list – we are able to help individual patients secure the best waiting list for them according to their location and ability to travel, and to continuously review where and when places are becoming available and ensure patients are taken off the waiting list as quickly as possible when places become available. This is a moveable picture but we are focusing attention on West Cornwall.
- Developing plans to commission dental services to meet those areas of demand within available resources – we have a Local Dental network and a number of Managed Clinical Networks for dentistry through which we work with dentists, public health and the dental school to develop referral pathways and identify initiatives to increase dental capacity in the community.

- The limiting factor currently is workforce and we are engaging with the national NHS England dental workforce team to look at more innovative ways to attract dental staff to the West Cornwall area and other parts of our geography where it is hard to recruit. We plan to have some firm plans later in the year and would welcome any support you can give to increasing the visibility and urgency of this issue at a national level.
- Working with practices as part of the dental contract reform programme to test an alternative contract model. We have a small number of practices piloting a new prototype contract model as part of the national work looking at contract reform, as it is considered that the current contract disincentives dentists undertaking NHS dental work. The outcome of this work will feed into a national contract review process.

The waiting list data as of 1 November 2018 shows that the total number of people waiting for placement with an NHS dentist in Cornwall is 20,457 with 3026 waiting in Penwith and 3428 in Kerrier. During the month of October 462 patients were added to the waiting list whilst 215 patients were allocated to practices in Kerrier. In Penwith 202 patients were added to the waiting list and 80 patients allocated to practices.

Amanda Fisk, Director of Assurance and Delivery and I would be happy to arrange to meet with you to discuss this further if you feel this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Cooke', written over a circular scribble.

Mark Cooke

Director of Commissioning Operations
NHS England and NHS Improvement (South West, South)

Please forgive the electronic signature. It is the quickest way to ensure we provide you with a response within a reasonable time. I do however personally read and approve all responses.