



Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West
Integrated Care Board

NHS Dental services in Reading

Report to:

Reading Adult Social Care, Children's and Education (ACE)
Committee meeting 16th October 2024

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1. Introduction

The ICB attended the Reading Adult Social Care, Children's and Education Committee meetings in October 2023 and March 2024 to report on NHS dental services, particularly in terms of recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. This report updates on progress.

Patients are not registered with dentists and can attend any practice of their choice. A dental practice is only responsible for a patient's care while in treatment. Practices maintain a list of regular patients and should recall for check-ups in line with the intervals set out in NICE guidance CG19; <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg19> . Practices will take on new patients should capacity allow.

Dental practices deliver services via cash limited contracts in which they are required to deliver agreed levels of activity each year.

Since the onset of the pandemic dental services have faced major challenges. Enhanced infection control procedures, necessitated by the types of procedures carried out in dental surgeries, led to reduced dental capacity. Their capacity has been gradually increased as infection rates have dropped, under strict guidance aimed at keeping patients and staff safe. Since July 2022 practices have returned to full capacity.

Access to services has improved over the last two years but challenges remain. The rate of recovery has been impacted by the greater oral health needs of patients due to gaps in their attendance with treatment plans taking longer to complete and some practices have decided to cease NHS provision.

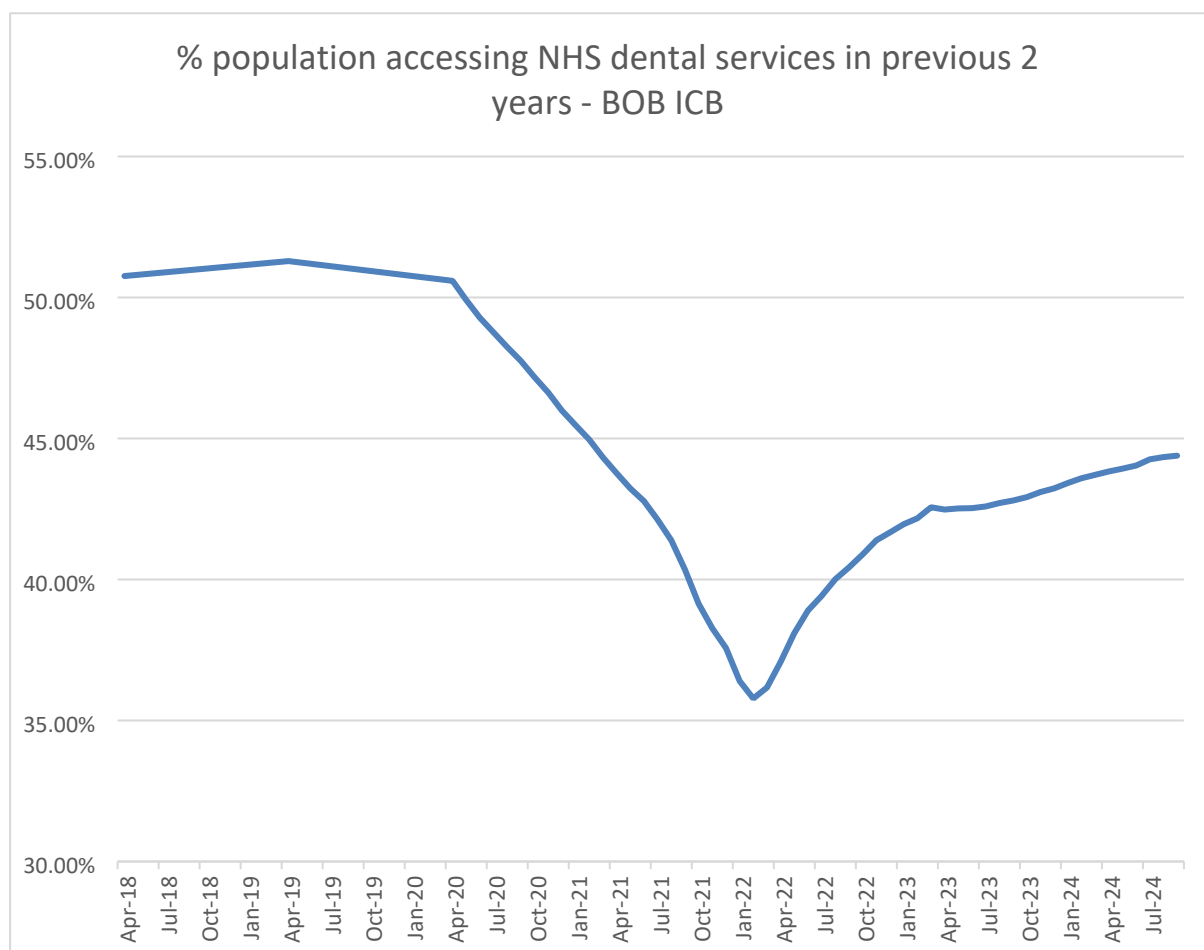
This paper provides an update in terms of access to primary care dental services and the actions being taken to address challenges.

2. Access to services

Access to primary care dental services is measured based on the number of unique patients attending over a 2-year period.

The impact of the pandemic was such that by early 2022, the number of patients attending BOB ICB dental practices in the previous 2 years fell from 52% of the population to 36%. Since then, there has been a recovery in access. In September 2024, 44.39% of the BOB ICB population, 765,121 people had attended an NHS dental practice in the previous 2 years. This is an increase of 148,513 people (24.1%) since February 2022. This is the second highest percentage in the South-East Region.

Table 1 Access to NHS Dental services in BOB 2018 – 2024



The rate of increased access has been similar for adults and children.

Reading has experienced a similar pattern of recovery since early 2022:

Table 1 Number of people accessing NHS Dental services in BOB February 2022 and September 2024

Patient group	Number attending Feb '22	% of popn	Number attending Sept '24	% of popn	Increase	% increase
BOB	616,608	35.78%	765,121	44.39%	148,513	24.1%
Reading	62,566	38.67%	80,018	49.46%	17,452	27.9%

3. Contract Delivery

In 2024-25, the ICB is commissioning 238,984 Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) from 15 NHS dental practices. Eleven of those practices provide services to adults and children and 4 provide to children and patient charge exempt patients only. The 11 'full' NHS practices are commissioned to deliver 228,389 UDAs (95.6% of the total). The number of UDAs commissioned is about 1.48

UDAs per head of population in Reading compared to an average of 1.29 for the South-East and 1.22 for the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) ICB.

Having operated at below 100% capacity for over 2 years because of the pandemic, 100% capacity was restored in July 2022. Contract delivery in Reading in 2022-23 was:

Table 2 Contract delivery and access 2022-23

UDAs commissioned	UDAs delivered	% delivery	Unique patients Mar '23
236,320	207,208	87.68%	76,304

Contract delivery has been increasing since then:

The tables below detail contract performance in 2023-24 and to date in 2024-25.

Table 3 Contract delivery and access by practice 2023-24

Practice name	Contract for all patients	UDAs commissioned	UDAs delivered	% delivery	Unique patients Apr '23	Unique patients Mar '24
Inspire Dental Practice	Y	59,263	64892.06	109.50%	19,989	21,917
MyDentist Tilehurst	Y	33,138	16949.84	51.15%	9,103	8,718
PureSmile Reading	Y	29,025	29167.17	100.49%	6,808	7,216
University Dental Centre *	Y	23,000	25119.60	109.22%	6,631	7,266
Friar Street Dental Surgery	Y	22,041	21661.93	98.28%	8,043	8,298
Riverside Dental Centre Ltd**	Y	18,096	13552.38	74.89%	5,672	5,530
The Village Dental Practice	Y	15,338	15248.40	99.42%	5,145	5,996
Shinfield Road Dental Practice	Y	10,897	11364.93	104.29%	2,998	3,073
Gentle Dental 4U***	Y	5,375	5519.59	102.69%	2,403	2,275
Triangle Dental	N	5,000	5402.38	108.05%	2,179	2,416
Prospect Street Dental Practice	N	3,522	3784.80	107.46%	2,136	2,115
Highgrove Dental Care	Y	2,969	2989.05	100.68%	896	894
Castle Hill Dental Care****	Y	2,922	2060.80	70.53%	3,139	2,021
Vesta Dental Care	Y	1,358	936.32	68.95%	89	316
Kendrick View Dental Practice	N	1,233	1222.95	99.18%	548	567
The Elms Dental Practice	N	840	806.40	96.00%	318	326
TOTAL		234,017	220678.60	94.30%	76,097	78,944

*4,000 temporary UDAs 23-24

**1,000 UDAs sub-contracted to Vesta Dental Care

***Flexible Commissioning practice

****Contract handed back September 2023

The Castle Hill Dental practice left the NHS in September 2023, but some of this activity was replaced via temporary activity commissioned at the University Dental Centre (4,000 UDAs in 2023-24).

With delivery of 94.30% in 2023-24, Reading had the highest level of delivery amongst the 8 local authorities in BOB. Early in the year, the ICB agreed to pay practices for performance of up to 110% as part of implementing the national dental contract changes introduced in 2022 and 8 of the practices delivered more than 100% of their contracted activity.

Table 4 Contract delivery and access by practice 2024-25

	Open to new patients	UDAs commissioned	UDAs delivered	% delivery	Unique patients Mar '24	Unique patients Sept '24
Inspire Dental Practice*	Y	65,263	36,760.88	56.33%	21,917	23,134
MyDentist Tilehurst	Y	33,138	6,844.16	20.65%	8,718	8,264
PureSmile Reading	TBC	29,025	12,231.26	42.48%	7,216	7,117
University Dental Centre*	Y	25,000	13,381.35	53.53%	7,266	7,892
Friar Street Dental Surgery	Y	22,041	11,249.89	49.32%	8,298	8,365
Riverside Dental Centre Ltd**	N	17,096	6,366.99	37.24%	5,530	5,308
The Village Dental Practice	N	15,338	8,317.56	53.65%	5,996	6,189
Shinfield Road Dental Practice	N	10,897	7,432.08	68.20%	3,073	3,400
Gentle Dental 4U***	N	5,264	2,791.75	53.03%	2,275	2,142
Triangle Dental	N	5,000	2,839.81	56.80%	2,416	2,428
Prospect Street Dental Practice	N	3,522	1,931.20	54.83%	2,115	2,100
Highgrove Dental Care	N	2,969	1,556.77	52.43%	894	846
Vesta Dental Care	Y	2,358	1,714.47	72.71%	316	611
Kendrick View Dental Practice	N	1,233	638.29	50.96%	567	549
The Elms Dental Practice	N	840	367.56	39.83%	326	316
Castle Hill Dental Care	N	0	0.00		2,021	1,357
TOTAL		238,984	114,524.02	47.92%	78,944	80,018

*Additional recurrent UDAs commissioned 2023-24

**2,000 UDAs sub-contracted to Vesta Dental Care

***Flexible Commissioning practice

Note: % delivery includes UDAs carried forward from previous year (511 UDAs)

In early 2024 the ICB worked with local practices to re-commission activity that had been lost due to contract handbacks and reductions. The Inspire Dental practice (6,000) and the University Dental Centre (5,500 UDAs) agreed to provide additional activity on a recurrent basis. This increased the number of UDAs commissioned recurrently from the pre-pandemic level of 235,345 UDAs to 238,984 in 2024-25.

Contract delivery increased from 207,208 UDAs (87.68%) in 2022-23 to 220,679 UDAs (94.30%) in 2023-24. At month 6 in 2024-25 delivery stands at 114,524.02 UDAs (47.92%), which would mean forecast delivery of 229,048 UDAs (95.84%) for the year.

The number of unique patients accessing services has increased from 76,097 in April 2023 to 80,018 in September 2024.

The ICB has again agreed to pay for contract performance of up to 110% in 2024-25. At this stage, one practice has advised of plans to deliver more than 100% of contracted activity in 2024-25.

4. Dental Recovery Plan

Nationally, changes have been made to the dental contract as part of implementing the Dental Contract Recovery Plan. National changes were introduced in July 2022 and February 2024. The ICB has also implemented local initiatives designed to support increased contract delivery and patient access. The tables below detail progress against the Dental Recovery Plan:

Table 5 National and local contract changes 2022 - 2024

Action	South-East	BOB	Reading
National changes			
Increase Band 2 treatment bands for more complex cases	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Minimum UDA price of £28	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Payment for higher levels of contract performance (up to 110%)	Implemented in some ICBs	Implemented	Implemented
Practices to update information for patients on NHS Service Finder		ICB monitoring	ICB monitoring

		76 practices open to all new patients October 2024	5 practices open to all new patients October 2024
Action	South-East	BOB	Reading
Payment of New Patient Premium	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
'Golden Hello' payments to areas of identified need	Implemented	Implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherwell • Vale of the White Horse • West Oxfordshire 	Not implemented
Workforce - increase number of training places by 2031-32 (Dentists and Dental Therapists)	Under review	Under review	Under review
Skill mix and direct access to Dental Care Professionals to work at full scope of practice	Legislation passed; training under development; practice decision about implementation.	Legislation passed; training under development; practice decision about implementation.	Legislation passed; training under development; practice decision about implementation.
Unliterally re-base contracts if underperform for 3 consecutive years	Under review. Possible implementation post 2024-25.	Under review. Possible implementation post 2024-25.	Under review. Possible implementation post 2024-25.
'Smile for Life' – promotion of Oral Health, particularly children's oral health	Review with local authorities as part of LA leadership on commissioning Oral Health Promotion	Review with local authorities as part of LA leadership on commissioning Oral Health Promotion	Review with local authorities as part of LA leadership on commissioning Oral Health Promotion
Local action			
<i>Contract handbacks 2021 - 24</i>		19	3

<i>Contracts reduced 2021 – 24</i>		9	0
<i>UDAs lost due to handbacks and reductions</i>		131,057	9,888
Action	South-East	BOB	Reading
UDAs replaced via local practices from April 2024		68,798	11,500
UDAs plan to replace via procurement		88,000	0
Additional Access sessions for patients needing treatment – number of practices taking part	34	2	1
Flexible Commissioning scheme to support access for more vulnerable patients – number of practices taking	0	34	1
Impact			
Increase UDA delivery – delivery 2023-24	84.84%	87.57%	90.34%
Increase patient access - % patients accessing services Sept '24	43.02%	44.39%	49.46%
% increase in numbers attending dental practices April 2023 – Sept 2024	4.29%	4.51%	5.15%

5. Commissioning Pipeline

In addition to seeking to improve access to primary care services, the referral services below are currently under review across the South-East with plans to re-commission from April 2026:

- Special Care and Paediatric Dental (Community Dental) Services
- Urgent Dental Care
- Sedation
- Tier 2 Oral Surgery
- Tier 2 Restorative
- Orthodontics (option to extend contracts to 2029)

6. Local initiatives

The ICB is pursuing the following initiatives to support oral and overall health improvement:

- Review of the Flexible Commissioning service to test strengthening the focus on children's oral health improvement
- New primary care commissioning in Oxfordshire – additional service in respect of children's oral health improvement
- Assessment of oral health needs of older people in care homes in Oxfordshire – proof of concept
- Cardiovascular Disease Prevention – Hypertension case finding in dental practices. This is a one-year national pilot. The ICB submitted a successful application to take part. Two Reading practices have signed up to the scheme.

Nationally, there are also plans to implement oral health and eye checks in schools for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in 2025.

7. Conclusion

Access to NHS dental services has been recovering over the last 2 years and the rate of recovery in Reading has been higher than other parts of the ICB and South-East. Dentist concerns about the NHS contract remain and some are still leaving the NHS. Access remains a challenge for some patients.

When the government announced the contract changes in 2024, they advised of the planned implementation of a new contract in 2025. Since then, a new government has been elected. They have advised of plans to increase urgent dental appointments, but further details have yet to be received. The ICB will



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continue to work with key stakeholders to seek to maintain improvements in access and commission services that improve oral health.

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