

Out of Hours Dental Services in the West Midlands

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee presentation

NHS England and NHS Improvement



Introduction

Out of hours dental services are available for those who need urgent dental care from a dentist when their dental practice is closed.

Urgent dental care includes dental problems that need emergency care (assessment within one hour) or urgent care (assessment within 24 hours) and is often followed by dental advice or treatment in hours.

As most dental problems can be addressed in hours, the number of people using out of hours services is small.

Separate reviews of in hours dental services and community dental services (for special care dental patients) are currently being undertaken.

NHS 111 can signpost patients to the most appropriate service.

The case for change

Contracts for the current out of hours dental services in the West Midlands expire in March 2020. These services were established when the population and its health needs were very different to what they are now.

We have undertaken a patient and public engagement exercise and extensive stakeholder involvement; this included working with the West Midlands' Urgent Dental Care Managed Clinical Network, current and potential service providers, NHS 111 and local Healthwatch groups.

We have also produced a needs assessment which indicates that the current services are not well aligned to the present and future needs of people living in the West Midlands.

In July 2019 a commissioning standard for urgent dental care was published; this is the first of its kind in England and affords commissioners an evidence-based framework on which to plan services.

Our proposal

There is no intention to reduce the total spend on out of hours dental services in the West Midlands. Ensuring easy access to safe and timely out of hours dental care, particularly for vulnerable groups, remains our foremost priority.

Our proposal is to operate services from fewer sites with longer opening hours, to make better and more equitable use of resources. This is to ensure that services are organised in a way that is accessible to those who need them most.

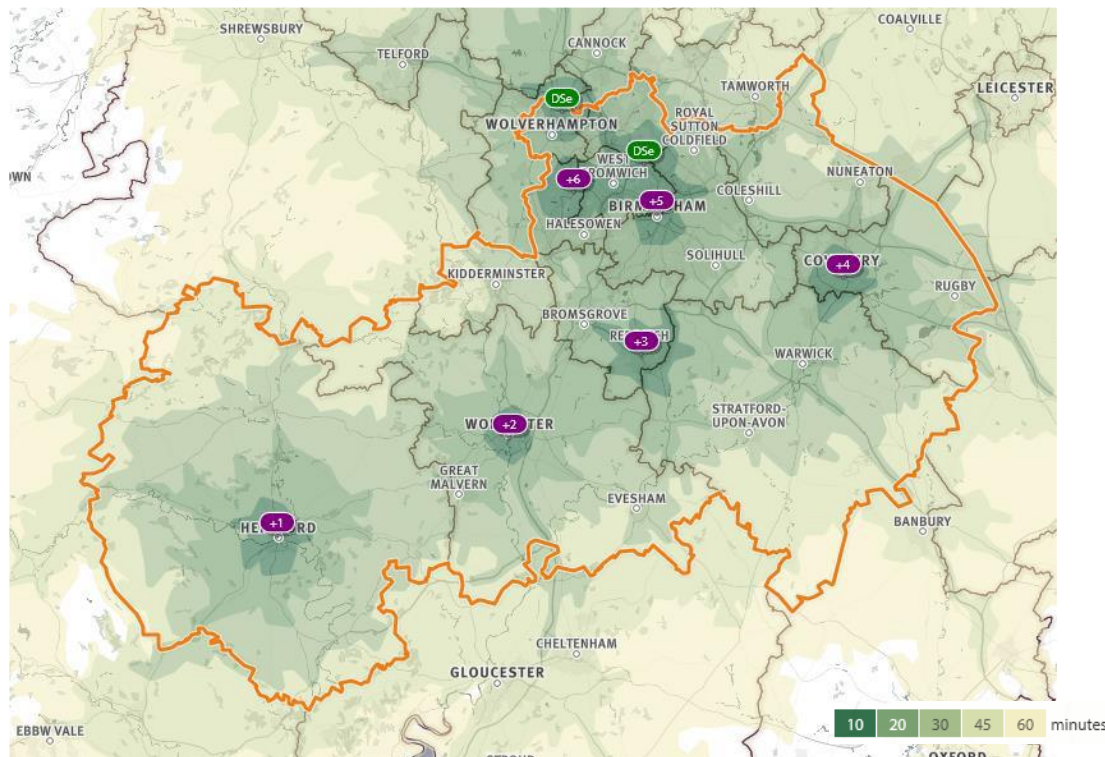
The vast majority of patients, including those in rural areas, will have access to a service within 30 minutes. All patients will have access to a service within 60 minutes and services will be sited close to transport links, with patients free to choose which service they attend.

There will be changes to services in some areas – some patients will have access to services not currently available (e.g. evenings in the week) whilst others may have to travel further than at present.

It should be remembered these are not day to day routine dental services, but provided to small numbers of patients when they have an urgent problem out of hours.

Weekends and bank holidays

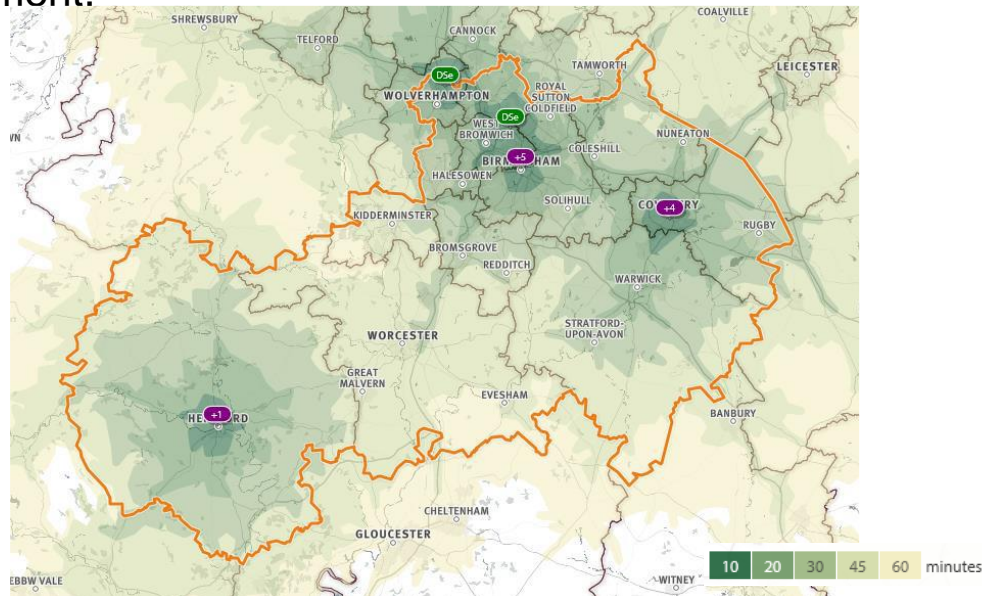
On weekends and bank holidays we are proposing to operate out of hours dental services from eight sites; six new sites (purple), in addition to two sites from which the existing services will continue on account of their contractual arrangements (green). The locations of the new sites are indicative only.



Weekday evenings

On weekday evenings we are proposing to operate out of hours dental services from five sites; three new sites (purple), in addition to two sites from which the existing services will continue on account of their contractual arrangements (green).

The locations of the new sites are indicative only. Retaining weekday evening services accounts for the further work needed to improve access in hours. The number of proposed sites reflects the fact that these services would predominantly provide telephone triage and advice, with only a small number of patients attending to receive treatment.



Public consultation

- 188 responses were received across the West Midlands from a range of participants. The majority were in favour of the proposals (two thirds vs one third)
- There was some useful feedback made on a range of issues about the detail of the proposals
- Some responses showed that many people did not fully understand the purpose of Out of Hours and were confusing this with extended access (late opening)
- Some people commented explicitly about attending A&E – unless explicitly triaged by NHS 111 taking this option will usually delay treatment rather than get people seen quicker.
- Concerns were raised about the importance of adequate staffing and capacity at proposed sites to ensure these could cope with any increase in activity due to movement from other less well used sites. Increased opening hours need to match this.

- Communication was considered important - both for patients about available services and also from the service to the patients dentist.
- A number of people commented about negative experience of using NHS 111 and this will be picked up direct.
- There were a lot of comments relating to availability of public transport and the importance of adequate and secure parking
- Many people commented on the importance of ensuring access for vulnerable groups. There are a number of other workstreams looking specifically at this (care homes, homeless, special care) and it is anticipated different tailored services will be provided
- NHS charges – people do not like having to pay charges but this is a legal requirement
- Redditch was a popular site but there were also comments made about the proposed changes for Kidderminster and Evesham

The current situation in Worcestershire

The oral health of the population of Worcestershire is generally good and population densities in a large part of the county are low (due to rurality). There is a higher proportion of older people although this varies across the county.

Weekend and Bank Holiday out of hours dental services are currently provided by Worcestershire Health and Community Trust at three sites in Worcester, Kidderminster and Evesham.

There is currently no evening service in the week. The small number of patients who do require to be seen urgently (as triaged by NHS111) will in future have access to a new evening service.

Proposed future services

There will be no geographical restrictions with patients free to attend whichever service is most convenient. Those services closest to Worcestershire are:

- Service in Worcester (Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays)
- Proposed new service in Redditch (Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays)

Other alternate services would also be available if more convenient depending on where a patient lives or works in the county:

- Service in Herefordshire (weekday evenings, Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays)
- Proposed new service in Dudley (Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays)
- Proposed new service in Birmingham (weekday evenings, Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays)

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