

## Update for Portsmouth HOSP 21 February 2020

### Procurement of NHS dental services in Portsmouth

#### Background

NHS England holds contracts with dental care providers on behalf of the NHS, as part of its responsibilities for the commissioning and oversight of all NHS dental services (including general dental services, specialist community dental services and secondary care (hospital) dental services). General dental services and specialist community dental services are commissioned in line with national regulations, with dental providers commissioned to deliver care and treatment as measured by units of dental activity.

Providers of NHS Dental services are independent contractors.

In 2019, the Colosseum Dental Group informed NHS England that they wished to give notice on three contracts under which they provided NHS general dental services in the Portsmouth area.

It takes some time to procure new services and we worked with existing Portsmouth dentists, to support them to provide more appointments for NHS patients where individual practices were able to do so as an interim measure. We secured agreement from two existing local dental providers to provide more appointments for NHS patients during the period of the procurement. A further request to provide additional appointments at an enhanced rate was sent to Portsmouth dentists in February 2020 with a request for responses by 2 March 2020.

#### Procurement of new NHS dental contracts

An update on the progress of the procurement process for new long-term NHS dental services was sent to stakeholders on 3 February 2020. The Invitation to tender was published on 4 February 2020.

In planning the procurement, we gained feedback from patients, stakeholders and the dental profession to ensure that services we are commissioning will best meet the needs of patients in the city, whilst also aiming to ensure the long-term sustainability of services.

#### Patient and public feedback

People were asked to rank the top three things which are most important to them when seeing an NHS dentist. The most important reason stated was getting good dental treatment, followed by treatment being affordable and availability of appointments with convenient appointment times also being a key factor. People were asked when they would most like to have appointments. The majority said they



would like to have appointments on weekday evenings with 42% of respondents selecting this as their preferred option. This was closely followed by weekday daytime, selected by 38% of respondents. 20% of people said they would like appointments on Saturdays with afternoons being the most popular time.

### **Market engagement**

The contracts held by the Colosseum Dental Group were terminated because they did not deem them viable and were not able to deliver the amount of dental activity that had been commissioned from them. Therefore, it was important to engage with the market to understand how the procurement could result in the establishment of new long-term sustainable contracts.

Recruitment of NHS dentists is difficult in many areas of the country including Portsmouth. The dental profession informed us that they have found it particularly difficult to recruit to certain areas including Paulsgrove and Portsea. In order to attract new dental providers to the area we have not specified specific locations for practices, but instead have asked for services to be provided for people in the north and south areas of the city. As part of the procurement process we have asked bidders to describe how people will access their service which will include their proposed practice location as well as information on transport links. Consideration of this will be included when bids are evaluated.

The lot areas have been developed to give as much flexibility as possible to ensure that bids are received and to provide greater options for bidders to find suitable premises that will be large enough to deliver new services from that are compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. Dental providers are responsible for providing their own premises which are suitable for the delivery of services including meeting best practice for decontamination, having an area to provide radiography (x-rays) and being suitable to meet different patient needs. If details are provided for someone to contact, then we can make potential bidders aware that there may be premises available in Paulsgrove and Portsea. However, the providers would remain responsible for ensuring their suitability and deciding if this is a location they would want to use.

We have offered a higher than average payment rate to help offset any potential workforce issues.

The services will be monitored through our usual processes to ensure they deliver the services commissioned and that they meet the needs and demands of local populations.

Julia Booth  
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