

## NHS England and NHS Improvement South East recommissioning of dental services for patients with additional needs

Dear Colleague

You will be aware that NHS England and NHS Improvement South East has been working on the re-commissioning of dental services for patients with additional needs. These can be split into three distinct services:

- special care adults and paediatric dental services
- unscheduled dental care
- treatment under sedation.

We have been pursuing a re-commissioning process with two main strands:

1. Special Care and Paediatric services which provides care for patients with underlying health and developmental issues.

NHS England and NHS improvement South East is planning to commission these services based on contracts that will last for a minimum of 10 years. It was planned to commission these contracts on the basis of geographical areas (lots) to achieve the required critical mass of services to meet the range of patient needs with effective arrangements for clinical leadership and development. The service providers would work in close partnership with primary care, hospital services and local authorities.

2. A separate, aligned process to recommission unscheduled/urgent dental care and sedation services. Some of these services are currently delivered by providers of Special Care and Paediatrics. NHS England and NHS Improvement South East has undertaken work to separate these services from the 'core' Special Care and Paediatric Services as distinct services for different patient groups and in doing this to align services across the region.

In August 2021 we wrote to you about undertaking a review of the re-commissioning process due to the impact of the proposed delegation of dental commissioning to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) from April 2022, and the proposed Provider Selection Regime that would repeal public contracting regulations, both subject to legislative changes. Our aim was to agree a way forward by the autumn with new arrangements to be introduced in line with these wider system changes.

We appreciate this is a time of great uncertainty for those involved in the provision of these services but due to this changing landscape we are unable to provide more clarity at this stage for both incumbent providers and the wider market.

We believe it is likely that the principles we're following for the re-commissioning process (i.e. services delivered in line with national standards with collaborative working between providers to ensure services best meet local needs) will be in accordance with the approach to be pursued by ICBs and the requirements of the Provider Selection Regime.

In terms of next steps NHSE/I S-E will:

- Continue with the development of an approach involving working collaboratively with ICBs and service providers on the implementation of re-commissioned services from April 2023
- Develop detailed ICB focussed system profiles to inform the re-commissioning process
- Seek to confirm this approach complies with the proposed Provider Selection Regime arrangements

We hope that this is helpful in setting out our planned approach and will provide confirmation of this should the legislative changes be agreed.