

## **BRIEFING NOTE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 JUNE 2025**

### **PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING NOTE**

To provide a briefing note relating to NHS dental commissioning for the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

The ICB has recently refreshed its five-year NHS dentistry vision and strategic priorities. A 2-year delivery plan has been agreed from 2025 to 2027, building on priorities and areas of work which the Committee were previously updated on in September 2024.

SNEE's vision for what we want to achieve is:

- To improve access to high quality oral healthcare
- To reduce oral health inequalities
- To improve the oral health of the population
- To build stability and resilience across our NHS dental services
- To integrate dental care services with other healthcare providers/partners

The strategic priorities are:

1. Oral Health education and prevention for children, young people, and adults
2. Support and development of the whole dental workforce
3. Improved access to oral healthcare
4. Further development of Level 2 (intermediate care) services
5. Development of Secondary care (hospital) services
6. Integration – dental service integration and collaboration
7. Building of Clinical leadership, engagement, and collaboration

Examples of projects either planned or underway in the next 2 years, aligned with the strategic priorities 1 to 3 above are detailed in the body of the report.

### **CURRENT POSITION**

#### **1. Strategic priority: Oral Health education and prevention for children, young people, and adults**

The ICB works in partnership with Essex County Council who lead on the commissioning of oral health improvement programmes.

A mapping exercise has been completed to identify all oral health improvement activities in place across the whole Integrated Care System (ICS). This has included contributions from education, health, and care providers.

A Senior Clinical Dental Leadership Fellow has led the review. It is designed to help understand the current level of schemes in place and to inform the wider oral health

improvement prevention strategy and plan.

As part of the Oral health survey of 5-year-old schoolchildren in 2024 (National Dental Epidemiology Programme), 169 5-year-olds were examined across Tendring. Out of the examined children, 10% of those children had decay experience. This data demonstrates the importance of oral health education and prevention work.

## 1.2 Across north east Essex, the following work is underway:

Supervised toothbrushing significantly reduces tooth decay through daily fluoride use, helps tackle oral health inequalities in deprived areas, and offers a strong return on investment while supporting national health priorities for children. As of February 2025, supervised toothbrushing is taking place among 3–5-year-olds with children ‘actively brushing’ in 15 early years settings across Tendring. Targets for supervised toothbrushing are currently exceeded by 10% across north east Essex. In February 2025, Essex County Council further commissioned supervised toothbrushing for 20 additional Early Years Settings across Colchester and Tendring and extended the brushing period for the existing settings until March 2027.

In March 2025, the government announced plans to Local Authorities around a national [Supervised toothbrushing for children to prevent tooth decay - GOV.UK](#) to be rolled out for 3- to 5-year-olds in early years settings - including nurseries, childminders, and primary schools - in the most deprived areas of England. Essex County Council has been allocated £108,491.27 in 2025/26. Essex has a population of 53,520 children aged 3 – 5 yrs. old with 10%/ 5,373 of these classified with an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) of 1 and 2.

Alongside this, 23 million toothbrushes will be donated over the next five years to support the programme. The scheme will be supported by Colgate-Palmolive who are providing the toothbrush and toothpaste sets free of charge. They will also provide educational materials and support the NHS with a public-facing children’s oral health campaign.

The scheme started from April 2025 at a cost of £11m nationally and forms part of the manifesto commitment. Targeted areas will be IMD1 and IMD2 and Local Authorities will identify early years settings in the target areas and encourage them to enrol. Through this programme, 31 identified Early Years settings, childminders, and primary schools in Tendring are to be targeted.

Essex County Council is collaborating with partners to develop and implement the scheme across more early years settings.

## 1.3 Young People Oral Health champions are in place in 17 primary school settings across Tendring, 88% of the target for Colchester and Tendring by March 2025. The initiative recruits and trains young peer-to-peer oral health champions to encourage good oral health among their peers. The Community Dental Services CIC Oral Health Improvement Team who delivers the service were recognised in the 2024 Clinical Dentistry Awards for this initiative, winning the Local Oral Health Initiative award.

## 1.4 Life Long Smiles initiative in care homes. Four care homes across Tendring (55% of

target for Colchester and Tendring by March 2025) have been trained in general oral health and two have been accredited as Life Long Smiles care providers after meeting a set of six standards on providing good oral health care. Work is being undertaken with the ICB's north east Essex primary care team to aim to encourage further care homes to join the scheme.

- 1.5 An action plan is being discussed to distribute resource packs and education to various community organisations most in need of support. Current organisations who have benefited from oral health consumables, resources or training include; North Essex Support Team (N.E.S.T), Open Road, YES Charity, Tendring libraries, Jaywick community supermarket, and Community Hub Clacton.

## **2. Support and development of the whole dental workforce**

- 2.1 A series of workshops were held with NHS dental care providers to support us to understand: *Where are we now? Where do we want to be? and How do we get there?* A dental workforce sub group is being established to facilitate development and delivery of a workforce improvement plan.
- 2.2 The ICB has recently recruited a Dental Educator who starts in June 2025 to develop and deliver education, training and workforce initiatives that will shape the dental workforce of today and tomorrow. This post will work with the current ICB Training Hub team to develop initiatives to support dental practices to become learning organisations, increase student placements, develop education and training packages to provide career pathways and support retention, health, and well-being.
- 2.3 The ICB has commissioned NHS Primary Care Careers recruitment resource until March 2026 to support dental practice recruitment.
- 2.4 The ICB is working with the University of Suffolk to support Dental Hygiene and Therapy undergraduate placements with a range of dental care providers from this autumn.
- 2.5 To support NHS dentistry to recover, and to recruit more dentists to work in the NHS, the previous government commissioned a recruitment and retention scheme, known as the Dental Recruitment Incentive Scheme. SNEE ICB was requested to recruit 6 full-time dentists as part of this initiative.

SNEE agreed to support the recruitment of 14 posts across 10 practices. North east Essex was awarded 3 posts, and 1 one these was in the Tendring east area in Frinton-on-Sea. So far, a total of five dentists have been recruited across the ICS, with one in Colchester. The recruitment of the post in Frinton is ongoing.

The ICB has commissioned NHS Primary Care Careers to support dental practice recruitment for all staff.

## **3. Improved access to oral healthcare**

- 3.1 The Dental Priority Access and Stabilisation Service (DPASS) pilot was launched in April 2024 and is an eighteen-month programme to improve access to dental services to the most vulnerable and in-need populations in Suffolk and north east Essex.

The groups who are eligible for an appointment under DPASS are: -

- Urgent and Emergency Care patients.
- Those awaiting any NHS procedure that requires Oral Stabilisation.
- People who are homeless.
- People with a Learning Disability and Autistic people.
- Children in Care.
- Care Leavers.
- Residents of Care Homes (in-practice care only).
- High Dental Risk patients.
- People with dementia.
- Transient Populations including immigrants.
- Sex workers.

Four of the eighteen providers delivering the service across the ICS are in north east Essex. To date, over 12,000 DPASS appointments have been delivered, and over 4,000 of these have been delivered by practices in the north east Essex area.

NHS 111 refers people into DPASS practices, or people can contact the practices themselves.

Feedback around the service from patients, dental providers and NHS 111 has been incredibly positive.

A mid-term evaluation of the pilot has been completed. It demonstrated that most pilot outcomes have either been met in full or partially. A decision around longer-term commissioning of the service will be made later in 2025/26 following the final evaluation report.

### 3.2

In February 2025, the ICB was asked to commission an additional 15,413 urgent care appointments in 2025/26. The Urgent Care Dental Service increases the number of such appointments commissioned by the ICB, in line with the target set by the government this year. This brings the total number of such appointments commissioned for the current financial year to 59,921.

These appointments are for both adults and children who fall into one of two groups:

- those assessed as requiring dental care within 24 hours or as soon as possible, including those in pain and those who have infections or excessive bleeding from their gums or cheeks.
- those assessed as requiring care within seven days, unless the condition worsens, including those who need fillings, have loose crowns or bridges, or those who have broken a tooth by biting on something.

The ICB has agreed an investment of £1.2m in the new Urgent Dental Care Service.

28 Expressions of Interest were received from dental care providers, who offered to deliver over three times the level of care required.

The dental team allocated the distribution of additional activity as fairly and evenly as possible across the ICS area to enable all practices that had shown an interest to take part and ensure provision across the three Alliance areas.

Twenty-four practices have agreed to provide the service. Nine of these are in north east Essex, including one in the Tendring area (Frinton-on-Sea) delivering an additional 4,466 appointments.

During these appointments, the immediate problem will be treated, and patients will be given advice on how to care for their oral health.

Patients may be treated by a combination of dental practice staff including dentists, dental therapists, dental hygienists, and dental nurses. Some patients may also be referred to another practice for any ongoing oral health needs following the initial treatment.

People who think they need treatment from the Urgent Care Dental Service should contact NHS 111 where they will be supported to access the most appropriate care for their needs.

Patients who have had NHS dental care from a practice in Suffolk or north east Essex in the last 12 months are advised to contact that practice first to ask if an appointment is available and, if not, to then contact NHS 111.

As with other NHS dental care, standard charges apply. It is expected that patients will require between one and two appointments. These will be at a total cost of £27.40 to the patient. Some patients will qualify for [free NHS dental treatment or help with dental costs](#).

- 3.3 The ICB recognises that some gaps in dental provision across Suffolk and north east Essex will not be resolved by the DPASS and Urgent Care Dental Service initiatives. The ICB is working on a wider plan to address this, including aiming to establish additional NHS dental care in underserved areas.

Six areas across the ICS have been assessed as having a current shortfall in the level of primary dental care commissioned, either because there are currently minimal or no providers within some areas, or where the needs of the population indicate that more provision is required. Tendring east, south, and west have been identified as neighbourhoods requiring increased access to NHS dental services.

The ICB is planning to undertake a procurement process, and the commissioning plan is going through the ICB governance process in July for decision.

- 3.4 Primary care dental contract activity is commissioned and measured in Units of Dental Activity (UDAs). The DPASS and unscheduled care pilots have increased the UDAs commissioned and delivered.  
On top of this, the ICB has commissioned an additional 93,204 UDAs from providers.

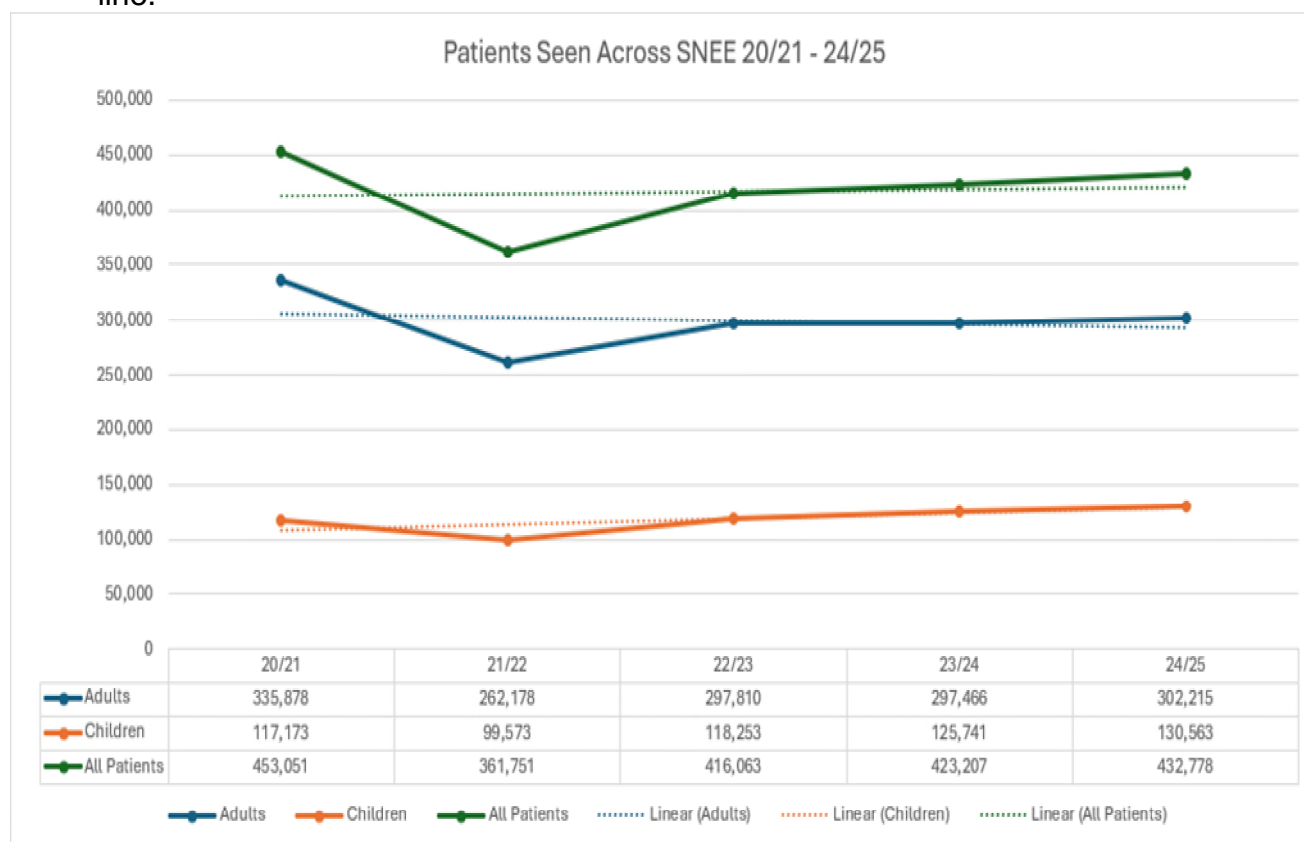
Of these, an additional 20,500 UDAs have been commissioned from practices in the Tendring area, an investment of around £542,000.

In north east Essex in 2023/24, 151,348 people received primary dental care and in 2024/25 the number increased by 6,799 to 158,149.

The table below is a summary of patients seen in the Tendring area over the same period.

Area	Patients Seen 2425	Patients Seen 2324	Difference
<b>Tendring East</b>	17,043	17,288	-245
<b>Tendring South</b>	22,898	21,440	1,458
<b>Tendring West</b>	8,852	8,524	328
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,793</b>	<b>47,252</b>	<b>1,541</b>

The orange line below shows that the total number of children seen in primary dental care across the ICB area has recovered more compared to adults shown in the blue line.



**PROPOSAL**

To provide an update to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the current position of NHS dentistry following a request for an off agenda briefing paper.

**DELIVERING CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

Improvements in terms of dentistry are in line with the corporate priority of: Working with partners to improve quality of life, and in particular in terms of promoting healthier communities by working with our partners.

**KEY GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND/OR DIRECT LINKS TO OTHER MATTERS**

No significant governance issues currently as this is providing an update to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

No specific consultation has taken place, but the briefing note is going to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**FINANCE, RESOURCES & CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no significant resource implications as this is an off agenda briefing update requested by the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the details of the update are provided by the dentistry lead office at the Integrated Care Board.

**Finance:** There are no significant budget implications

**Other resources (e.g. external parties):** The accountable organisation for dentistry is the Integrated Care Board who undertake the commissioning of the service provision.

**TDC Capacity:** The Partnerships Team correspond with the Integrated Care Board for provision of the updates and attendance at Committee where requested.

**LEGAL DUTIES, POWERS & RESTRICTIONS (EXISTING, NEW RESPONSIBILITIES OR EMERGING)**

This service is commissioned by the Integrated Care Board who therefore have responsibility for it.

**ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION**

As the Integrated Care Board commission the services there are no significant risks for Tendring District Council and this briefing note is provided as part of the Council's overview and scrutiny role.

**Financial**  
**Service Delivery**  
**Safety**  
**Reputation**

**NEXT STEPS & MILESTONES**

Following the provision of this briefing note it is proposed to invite the Integrated Care Board to

a meeting of the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June 2025 to provide a more in-depth update where they will have had further time to make ongoing improvements.

**APPENDICES**

None

**REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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