

**Joint meeting**

**Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families and Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health**

**25 October 2023**

**Public Question Time**

**Question submitted by Eva Bryczkowski:**

**PREVENTATIVE CARE AND ORAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN**

*The countywide varnishing scheme, supervised tooth brushing, handing out free toothbrushes and toothpaste to children, is an excellent pathway to preventative care and oral health.*

*However, the above scheme comes too late for many children who are in severe pain now.*

*I accept that the Integrated Care Board, (ICB), cannot wave a magic wand. These initiatives take meticulous planning and time to set them up.*

*The ambition of extending countywide access to NHS dentistry and oral health in Somerset, workplace development and support packages, among other aims, is a good one, backed up by robust research.*

*At the same time, the reality remains that the ambition and timescale of 2023 to 2027 will not reach people in severe pain of Somerset quickly enough.*

*It will need a veritable miracle to achieve the stated aims.*

**EXAMPLES**

*I would like to give two examples of desperate need in Somerset.*

*The first example is what happened to a neighbour of mine.  
Her four year old daughter was in severe pain and her face was swollen. Her mother rang round as many dentists as she could and was unable to access any of them, despite this being a clear emergency. Finally ringing 111 she eventually managed to access a dentist in Somerset.*

*Among with many others, her child could not see a dentist during the pandemic, nor see her previous one afterwards because they were full to capacity*

*My friend always ensures that her two children brush their teeth properly and supervises this.*

**Q1. What can be done NOW for children and adults in severe pain?**

**Response from:**

Sukeina Kassam, Deputy Director for Primary Care, NHS Somerset ICB

**Answer**

Somerset has contracted with Smile Dental Triage to support patients with advice and appointment booking for emergency/urgent dental treatment. This is accessed in Somerset by ringing NHS 111 and following the options for dental care.

Patients who need to see a community dentist may be booked into a dedicated urgent care appointment or a 'stabilisation' appointment, whereby the dental team will provide the patient with a full course of treatment before discharging.

**Question submitted by Eva Bryczkowski:**

*Another example is of a friend of mine who damaged a tooth in an accident. Unable to see a dentist, being in severe pain, he pulled his tooth out with pliers, and it became infected. After a lot of searching, he finally managed to see a dentist. They accepted him as an emergency only because he had been in an accident. If the infection was due to his DIY, they would have refused to see him, according to my friend.*

*UNITS OF DENTAL ACTIVITY - One problem for NHS dentists, as I understand it, is that they are paid the same for doing one filling as they are for five. It means they can make a loss on those needing lots of treatment, so many people are flocking to private practice.*

**Q2 What, specifically, can be done to rectify this situation?**

**Response from:**

Sukeina Kassam, Deputy Director for Primary Care, NHS Somerset ICB

**Answer**

The UDA contract is a nationally agreed NHS Dental contract form which isn't really in the gift of NHS Somerset ICB to change; however we are in the process of reviewing contract baselines, and we will be using the flexible commissioning guidance framework to enable greater access to NHS dental services wherever possible.