
Access to Dental Services in Torbay

Report O SB/16/04 to the Health Scrutiny Board
1st November 2004

Report to the Executive 7th December 2004

Forew ord	1
1. Executive Sum m ary	2
2. Introduction	4
3. Process	6
4. Key Findings	7
5. Concl usions.....	13
6. Recom m endat ions	14
7. Monitoring Arrangem ents	15
Acknow ledgem ents	16
Appendix 1 (Implications)	17
Appendix 2 (Project Plan)	18
Appendix 3 (List of Key Docum ent and Resoures)	21

Published by Corporate Governance Directorate, Torbay Council
Paul Lucas, Executive Director

Further copies of this report can be obtained from :

Mark Hammett Overview and Scrutiny Officer
01803 207063
markhammett@torbay.gov.uk

Foreword

This Review Panel was established to investigate the people of Torbay's access to Dental Services. However, throughout the review we have worked closely with other local authorities in Devon and Cornwall to deal collectively with this issue and a Joint Report into Access to Dental Services in the South West was published in September 2004.

The Panel investigated the extent to which access to dental services presented difficulties for patients in Torbay and identified measures that would help to reverse the decline in the number of NHS Dentists.

Throughout the process the Panel invited input from a number of parties including Torbay Primary Care Trust, the Local Dental Committee as well as commissioning a questionnaire on dentistry in Torbay.

It is hoped that this report will help in some way to alleviate the current shortage of NHS dental care in Torbay and in the South West region.

Finally I express my thanks to all of the people who kindly gave their time and expertise to the Panel over the duration of the review.

Councillor Wendy Burridge
Chairman of the Access to Dental Services in Torbay Review Panel

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Access to Dental Services Review Panel considered the current provision of dental services in Torbay and in co-operation with other local authorities in Devon and Cornwall issued a Joint Report into Access to Dental Services in the South West.
- 1.2 It examined the extent to which access to dental services presents difficulties for patients in Torbay and identified measures that could be taken to reverse the decline in the number of NHS dentists.
- 1.3 The Panel met with a variety of interested parties and made a number of site visits within Torbay to assess the level of service for local people.

That it be recommended to the Health Scrutiny Board:

- 1.4 That the Department of Health be pressed to explore the possibility of enhancing the training facilities for dental staff in the South West (the location of a Dental School as part of the Peninsula Medical School would appear to be a feasible option).
- 1.5 That the Department of Health should be pressed to significantly increase the funding for NHS dentists, give NHS dentists more clinical freedom and reduce the bureaucracy endured by NHS dentists.
- 1.6 That the Department of Health be requested to ensure that funding for dentistry in the future would be devolved to the local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) on the same basis as all other NHS services i.e. on patient population, and that the ring-fencing of the dental budget for PCTs should be extended beyond three years to allow them time to make a difference to dental services.
- 1.7 That South Devon Healthcare Trust be pressed to explore re-locating their dental facilities into more appropriate accommodation at Torbay Hospital.
- 1.8 That the Torbay Primary Care Trust should consider the quality and compatibility of a dentist's training when recruiting non-UK trained dentists.
- 1.9 That the Torbay Primary Care Trust be urged to take further measures to increase awareness of dentistry services in the area.

That it be recommended to the Executive:

- 1.10 That the Strategic Director for Environment be requested to explore any possible ways that the planning system could be lawfully used to better encourage the greater provision of dental practices in Torbay.

- 1.11 That the Housing Partnership be urged to give consideration to the possibility of making available shared ownership accommodation to dentists who want to relocate from other areas of the UK.
- 1.12 To endorse that Torbay Council should work with the South West Peninsula Strategic Health Authority and Torbay Primary Care Trust in developing promotional events, literature and other means aimed at recruiting, attracting and employing dentists in Torbay.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 There has been a recent decline in the number of patients registered with a NHS dentist in Torbay. This decline started in 1992 when the National Contract became much more stringent, however the decline has increased significantly in recent months. In October 2003 there was only one practice taking on new NHS patients in Torbay, with Ashburton being the next nearest town with a practice taking on NHS patients.
- 2.2 Following the setting up of the Health Scrutiny Board in January 2004 Torbay Council had been advised that Cornwall County Council and Devon County Council had started a review on the accessibility of dental services within their respective areas. Given the particular problems in relation to dentistry provision in Torbay, an approach was made to these authorities for Torbay to join this review. The County Councils acceded to this request and also invited Plymouth City Council to become involved.
- 2.3 These four authorities published their Joint Report into Access to Dental Services in the South West in September 2004 which the Health Scrutiny Board had approved on the 6th August 2004. The Health Scrutiny Board also requested that a separate report should be written by the Access to Dental Services in Torbay Review Panel outlining the findings of the Panel.
- 2.4 The key objectives of the Review were:
- (i) To explore whether Torbay has a greater shortage of NHS dentists than other areas of the county.
 - (ii) To investigate the extent to which access to dental services presents difficulties for patients in Torbay.
 - (iii) To judge the long-term impact on dental care, especially among children and pregnant women in Torbay.
 - (iv) To judge the changes in the dental health of the population, especially children, in recent years.
 - (v) To investigate whether an increase in the proportion of dentists providing private services in practice has had an impact on the dental health of the people of Torbay.
 - (vi) To identify measures that will reverse the decline in the number of NHS dentists.
 - (vii) To judge the likely impact of the proposed changes to dentists' contracts.
- 2.5 The Project Plan, which sets out the full details of the review including the methodology that was adopted is attached as Appendix 2.

- 2.6 The Membership of the Panel comprised Councillors Burridge, Bye, Carter, Cope, Hayman, Hytche and Jennings. Councillor Burridge chaired the meetings of the Review Panel.

3. Process

3.1 The Panel met formally on three occasions to consider evidence and to work through its Project Plan.

3.2 Evidence for the Review Panel's work was collected from the following discussions and site visits with:

Roger Anderson, Dental lead, Torbay Primary Care Trust

Peter Douglas, Dental Consultant, Torbay Hospital

Penny Wilson, Dentist at the Castle Circus Emergency Dental Centre

John Longstreet, Chairman of the Local Dental Committee

3.3 The Panel also commissioned a special questionnaire on Dentistry in Torbay.

3.4 A conference entitled, "The Dental Dilemma - Access to Dental Services in the South West" was held at St Mellon Golf and Country Club, Salish, Cornwall on 25th February 2004. There were approximately 70 attendees including officers and members of Health Scrutiny Panels from Cornwall and Devon County Councils, Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council, representatives from Primary Care and Hospital Trusts across the peninsula, the Dental Practice Board and dental professionals and practitioners. This was a high profile conference at which views were given by health professionals from both a national and local perspective.

3.5 The list of key documents (including background papers, reports and briefing notes) which were considered by the Panel is attached as Appendix 3.

4. Key Findings

General

4.1 There are principally three groups of dentists who work in Torbay

(a) Dentists working in Primary Care settings i.e. High Street Dentists. They are called General Dental Practitioners (GDPs). They provide primary dental care to the public. There are 65 dentists registered with the PC T who can provide NHS care in 26 practices across Torbay. If a patient is registered with a dentist the dentist has an obligation to maintain the patient as dentally fit and to provide emergency care. Some GDPs also choose to carry out specialist work such as orthodontics and receive referrals from other GDPs.

GDPs are independent contractors and can choose to do any amount of NHS work from 0% to 100%, they can also choose to register specific groups such as children, exempt from charges adults and adults in general. Some GDPs will offer single treatment under the NHS but will not register you. Also if you are registered with a GDP a patient can expect emergency dental care out of hours.

GDPs are paid per registered patient and on items of service fees. If a patient is not exempt from NHS charges they will pay 80% of the cost.

(b) There are also Salaried dentists (directly employed dentists) who provide treatment to specific groups. In Torbay there is a service that is managed by South Devon Health Care Trust which is based at Castle Circus Health Centre. This offers a Salaried, Community and Emergency Service and is only for non-registered patients. The Salaried service is there to offer limited one off treatment to non-registered patients. The Community service is there to offer on-going care to particular need groups, like the physically disabled that may not be taken on by GDPs. The Emergency service is there to offer emergency care to unregistered patients.

(c) Torbay also has salaried dentists who are employed by Torbay Hospital who offer specialist dental care on referral from the GDPs.

How acute is the shortage of NHS dentists in Torbay

4.2 Until recently Torbay had a steady level of NHS Registrations at 58% of the population. But in the last few months there has been a noticeable change with the withdrawal of dentists offering NHS Dental services. The rate of NHS dental registrations in March 2004 was 54.8 for those people aged over 18 and this decline will only increase in the future if efforts are not made to remedy the current situation.

- 4.3 The Questionnaire on Dentistry in Torbay discovered that 43% of the respondents were very dissatisfied with the availability of NHS dental services in Torbay and a further 11% were quite dissatisfied.
- 4.4 However, the Panel were informed that the problems in Torbay were not unique, and that other areas of the UK suffered from the same problem and in some areas the situation was more acute.
- 4.5 In the Department of Health's National Report of the Primary Care Dental Workforce Review, reference was made to a study on the projected demand and supply of dental time. The assessment of the current situation was that there was an under-supply of dental time at present of around 9% required to meet demand. The under-supply of dentistry was projected to increase markedly up to 2011 assuming that no intervention was made to affect the supply of dental staff or the demand for services. Clearly the study indicated the need for action to address the situation.

To what extent does access to dental services present difficulties for patients in Torbay

- 4.6 The most obvious impact of dentists withdrawing from offering NHS dental services is that Torbay has a large number of concerned people who are looking for access to dental services for themselves and more particularly for their children.
- 4.7 In terms of the difficulties created by the lack of dental provision in Torbay, one effect was that Torbay Hospital was seeing a significant increase in the amount of patients who were referred to the hospital from their GP due to the lack of NHS dental services in Torbay. The hospital was also seeing an increase of people turning up unannounced at the hospital seeking dental care as they could not access dental services locally. The Accident and Emergency Department has had to develop a protocol to deal with patients who turn up complaining of "toothache". This Protocol dictates that the patient should be given painkillers and sent to the Emergency Dental Centre at Castle Circus in Torquay. However, the Panel were also told that at times the hospital did provide some rudimentary dental care in some extreme cases as the patient had nowhere else to go.
- 4.8 The increase in patients requiring dental treatment at the hospital is impacting upon the hospital's resources in terms of staff time, and materials as well as increasing the waiting lists for other types of treatment.
- 4.9 The Panel also noted that the facilities used to provide dental care at Torbay Hospital are cramped and inappropriate to meeting the needs of patients comfortably. The Panel were informed that the rooms were too cold in winter and too hot in summer, and that many rooms could only be accessed via another room where a patient was receiving

treatment making privacy non-existent. There was also some concern about the treatment of patients undergoing pre-operation assessments in the dental treatment rooms for cardio treatment, as if they were taken ill there was very little space to treat them. The Panel felt that South Devon Healthcare Trust should be pressed to consider the possibility of re-bating their dental facilities into more appropriate accommodation at Torbay Hospital.

4.10 Another effect of the lack of NHS dental services in Torbay is that the Emergency Dental Centre at Castle Circus, Torquay is experiencing a large increase in referrals over the last 12 months. The Panel were informed that at the time of visiting in June 2004 that 536 patients were currently waiting for an appointment for the following day. Staff at the centre felt overwhelmed with the volume of patients and their frustration often led to the staff being verbally abused. This has led to the Centre having to install CCTV to deal with aggressive patients.

4.11 The Panel found examples in Torbay of dentists who would only accept children as NHS patients if their parents agreed to become a private patient.

4.12 The Panel also felt that the local Primary Care Trust needed to improve the public's awareness of the range of dental services that are available in Torbay.

What will be the long-term impact on the dental care and dental health of the population in Torbay

4.13 The knock on effect of a lack of NHS dental services in Torbay will be that local people's teeth will be poorly maintained and that the financial cost of dealing with this will be higher in the future as there teeth will require more extensive and expensive treatment to remedy the problems that are currently being created.

Does the increase in dentists providing private services impact on the dental health of the people of Torbay

4.14 The Panel also discovered that the current lack of NHS dentists in Torbay was impacting heavily on the low income section of Torbay's population, who at present have little or no access to a NHS dentist and cannot afford to pay for private treatment or to travel to another area for treatment.

What measures will reverse the decline in the number of NHS dentists in Torbay

4.15 The NHS needs to build up a relationship of trust with dentists in the UK as dentists feel that they have been badly treated in the past by previous governments. There is also considerable anxiety among local

dentists about the new contract which will come into operation in October 2005.

- 4.16 It was explained to the Panel that there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed to encourage dentists to provide NHS treatment. These issues included a significant increase in funding for NHS dentists, greater clinical freedom for NHS dentists and a reduction in the bureaucracy experienced by NHS dentists. There is a feeling amongst many dentists in Torbay that they have to work harder as NHS dentists to earn a living, and a by-product of this was that the NHS service could be termed a "second class service". This is due to the fact that NHS dentists have to treat more patients than private dentists to make a living, therefore this has an obvious impact on the quality of the work that is undertaken. Put simply treating NHS patients does not make economic sense to a dentist as the funding provided sometimes does not even cover the overheads to carry out the surgery.
- 4.17 There was also a feeling from dentists in Torbay that their workloads prevented them from providing an adequate standard of care for NHS patients and this disillusioned many from continuing to provide a NHS service. Therefore a reduction in the workload of a NHS dentist would be another way in attracting dentists back to providing some level of NHS provision.
- 4.18 The Panel were informed that there was currently a significant shortfall in the number of trained dentists in the UK. This problem is compounded in the South West by the fact that recruitment is made more difficult because the region does not have a local dental school. It was explained that newly qualified dentists preferred to live and work near to their training institution as they could receive advice and support from this institution in the future. A possible solution to this problem would be to set up a Dental School in Plymouth, possibly as part of the Peninsula Medical School.
- 4.19 Anecdotal evidence also suggests that a number of dentists are dissuaded from setting up a practice in Torbay due to the high cost of housing and that this impacts on the number of NHS dentists that are available in Torbay. Therefore the high cost of real estate in Torbay is a problem that needs to be addressed in the future. In acknowledgement of the foregoing, Members suggested that the Housing Partnership should be urged to give consideration to the possibility of making available shared ownership accommodation to dentists who want to relocate from other areas of the UK.
- 4.20 The recruitment of dentists from abroad is one way of dealing with the decline in NHS dentists but it was stressed that this is only a short-term solution. These non-UK registered dentists sometimes even compound the current problem because their training differs from the training of a UK trained dentist. Therefore because a non-UK trained dentist lacks

certain skills a UK trained dentist would consider routine, they tend to refer more cases to the local hospital which has to deal with these cases with the obvious ramifications on staff time and finances. Therefore when recruitment of foreign dentists is taking place a consideration of the quality of their training would be advisable.

4.21 Torbay Primary Care Trust (PCT) is currently investigating the possibility of "buying" time from private dentists so that they can treat emergency patients with NHS funding, this scheme is called the Mini Personal Dental Service Scheme.

4.22 The Panel were informed that the Government had been establishing Dental Access Centres to fill some of the gaps in dentistry provision in the UK. However, the local Primary Care Trust stated that these centres were only being set up in large urban areas and that Torbay did not have a large enough population to warrant the opening of one of these centres.

4.23 Local dentists also pointed out that dental provision should be investigated when the local authorities make planning agreements with building developers.

What will be the impact of the proposed changes to NHS Dental Services

4.24 In August 2002 the Government published "The NHS Dentistry: Options for Change Report" which outlined a new deal for patients and new systems of dental care delivery. The Health and Social Care Act provides the legislative framework for taking the changes forward. The Primary Care Trusts will for the first time be given a duty to secure or provide primary dental services to the extent that they consider reasonable within their area. To meet their new responsibilities, they will assess local need. The intention is to move to local commissioning from October 2005.

4.25 The new system will have the following ramifications:

- Removal of the registration system
- All GPs will receive a guarantee of a new contract that will guarantee them the same level of income for the same level of NHS commitment. The item of service payments system will cease to exist.
- The new contracts will no longer require GPs to provide out of hours emergency dental treatment for their patients, this responsibility will now pass to the local PCT.
- The PCT will have a fixed budget from October 2005 that will enable them to have greater control and flexibility over the delivery of local dental services. This funding will be based on

historical patterns of NHS dental expenditure within the area rather than on the population requiring NHS dental services. The Department of Health is stating that there will be growth in PCT budgets over and above present local expenditure figures. However it was noted that this budget will only be ring-fenced for 3 years and after that will be incorporated into the PCT's larger budget.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The Panel recognises that there is an acute shortage of NHS dentists in Torbay and that access to a NHS dentist is almost impossible for many sections of the local population.
- 5.2 This shortage is and will continue to impact on the dental health of Torbay and is placing an unimaginable and unsustainable burden on the local hospital and other health providers.
- 5.3 The Panel has identified that a number of measures need to be taken to alleviate the current situation. Most importantly these include the need to significantly increase the funding that is given to NHS dentists,

the need to give NHS dentists greater clinical freedom as well as the need to see a reduction in red tape and bureaucracy.

- 5.4 Finally the Panel concluded that the new contracts for GDCPs that will come into effect in 2005 will have wide-ranging implications for local dentists. It is hoped that these contracts will allow local GDCPs and the local Primary Care Trust the freedom to deliver better dental care standards in Torbay in the future for the benefit of all sections of the population.

6. Recommendations

That it be recommended to the Health Scrutiny Board:

- 6.1 That the Department of Health be pressed to explore the possibility of enhancing the training facilities for dental staff in the South West (the location of a Dental School as part of the Peninsula Medical School would appear to be a feasible option).
- 6.2 That the Department of Health should be pressed to significantly increase the funding for NHS dentists, give NHS dentists more clinical freedom and reduce the bureaucracy endured by NHS dentists.
- 6.3 That the Department of Health be requested to ensure that funding for dentistry in the future would be devolved to the local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) on the same basis as all other NHS services i.e. on patient population, and that the ring-fencing of the dental budget for PCTs should be extended beyond three years to allow them time to make a difference to dental services.
- 6.4 That South Devon Healthcare Trust be pressed to explore re-locating their dental facilities into more appropriate accommodation at Torbay Hospital.
- 6.5 That the Torbay Primary Care Trust should consider the quality and compatibility of a dentist's training when recruiting non-UK trained dentists.
- 6.6 That the Torbay Primary Care Trust be urged to take further measures to increase awareness of dentistry services in the area.

That it be recommended to the Executive:

- 6.7 That the Strategic Director for Environment be requested to explore any possible ways that the planning system could be lawfully used to better encourage the greater provision of dental practices in Torbay.
- 6.8 That the Housing Partnership be urged to give consideration to the possibility of making available shared ownership accommodation to dentists who want to relocate from other areas of the UK.
- 6.9 To endorse that Torbay Council should work with the South West Peninsula Strategic Health Authority and Torbay Primary Care Trust in developing promotional events, literature and other means aimed at recruiting, attracting and employing dentists in Torbay.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 The Panel wishes to monitor the progress made on their recommendations regularly via the meetings of the Health Scrutiny Board.

Acknowledgements

The Members of the Review Panel would like to thank all of the people and organisations who contributed towards the work of this review particularly:

Roger Anderson, Dental lead, Tobay Primary Care Trust

Peter Doughty, Dental Consultant, Tobay Hospital

Penny Wilson, Dentist at the Castle Circus Emergency Dental Centre

John Longstreet, Chairman of the Local Dental Committee

Appendix 1

Implications of the Recommendations

Legal	There are no legal implications
Financial	There are no financial implications
Human Resources	There are no human resource implications
Property	There are no implications for the Council's property as a result of these recommendations
Change Mgt Plan	There are no implications for the Council's Change Management Plan as a result of these recommendations

Appendix 2

Access to NHS Dentistry Services in Torbay

Project Plan

Objective of the Review

To examine the current provision of dental services in Torbay and, as necessary, to make recommendations that will lead to easier and fairer access to dental services for Torbay's residents and visitors and that will lead to improved dental health within the population of Torbay.

Scope of the Review

1. To explore whether Torbay has a greater shortage of NHS dentists than other areas of the country.
2. To investigate the extent to which access to dental services presents difficulties for patients in Torbay.
3. To judge the long-term impact on dental care, especially among children and pregnant women, in Torbay.
4. To judge the changes in the dental health of the population, especially children, in recent years.
5. To investigate whether an increase in the proportion of dentists providing private services impacts on the dental health of the people of Torbay.
6. To identify measures that will reverse the decline in the number of NHS dentists.
7. To judge the likely impact of the proposed changes to dentists' contracts.

Local Background

There has been a recent decline in the number of patients registered with an NHS dentist in Torbay. This decline started in 1992 when the National Contract became more stringent, however, the decline has become steeper over the past few months. At present there is only one practice in Torbay taking on new NHS patients. (There is also one practice in Ashburton and two in Plymouth taking on new NHS patients. There are none in Exeter.)

Feedback from the public via the ViewPoint Survey, PALS and the Complaints Manager shows that the lack of access to NHS dentistry provision is of concern.

The Dental Helpline and NHS Direct are receiving a steadily increasing number of enquiries as they are the points of referral for people seeking an NHS dentist. Other parts of the dental service, such as shared and community dental services, are reporting increasing numbers of calls and requests for treatment.

Review Panel

Councillors Burridge, Bye, Carter, Cope, Hayman, Hytche and Jennings

Access to Dental Services in Torbay

Timetable for Review and Methodology

Date	Time	Venue	Council/Stakeholder/Community Representatives	Key Tasks
14th January 2004	5.30pm	Torquay Town Hall	Health Scrutiny Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the Project Plan and Timetable for the Review. 2. To receive an overview of the issues facing Torbay in relation to access to dental services in Torbay.
25th February 2004	9.00am	St Mellion Golf and Country Club, Salish, Cornwall	Dentistry Conference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To analyse the extent of any difficulty in accessing NHS dental services within Torbay. 4. To investigate the factors leading to these difficulties, including the changing pattern of dentistry and the likely effect of further changes proposed by central government. 5. To assess the impact of the difficulties in accessing NHS dentistry services on the dental health of the residents and visitors to Torbay.

Access to Dental Services in Torbay

Date	Time	Venue	Council/Stakeholder/Community Representatives	Key Tasks
9th June 2004	10am	Torbay Hospital and the Emergency Dental Centre at Castle Circus, Torquay	Peter Douglas, Dental Consultant, Torbay Hospital Penny Wilson, Dentist at the Emergency Dental Centre	6. To assess the degree to which the difficulties are specific to Torbay or are common with other areas.
6th August 2004	2pm	Torquay Town Hall	John Longstreet, Chairman of the Local Dental Committee Roger Anderson, Dental Lead, Torbay Primary Care Trust	7. To review the current developments and initiatives at a national and local level to address the problem and to assess their effectiveness.

The final report of the Review Panel will be presented to the Health Scrutiny Board at its meeting to be held on 1st November 2004.

Appendix 3

List of Key Documents and Resources

- The NHS Dentistry: Options for Change Report, Department of Health, August 2002
- NHS Dentistry in the Torbay PCT Area Report submitted to the Torbay Primary Care Trust Board on 19th November 2003
- Findings from a special questionnaire on Dentistry in Torbay, published by Torbay Council
- Access to Dental Services in the South West, A Joint Report by Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Councils
- Modernising NHS Dentistry - Implementing the NHS Plan, Department of Health, September 2000
- NHS Dentistry: Delivering Change, report from the Chief Dental Officer (England), July 2004
- Report of the Primary Care Dental Workforce Review, Department of Health, February 2004
- Information presented at conference entitled "The Dental Dilemma - Access to Dental Services in the South West".