

Dental care hubs

I have received this update from NHS England:

Dear Mr Redwood

Since the announcement on 25th March that all routine dentistry should cease, there are now 36 hubs now fully operational across the South-East of England.

Urgent dental care hubs have been opened in Berkshire over the last week with hubs opening in Maidenhead and Bracknell on 14th April, Reading on 20th and Slough on 21st.

When establishing the urgent care hubs we have had to consider the requirements of patient access alongside the safety of those patients and the dental team delivering those services. Critical to the safety of the dental team is Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The availability of this equipment has limited the number of sites from which services can be provide at this stage. In identifying the sites for the hubs, we have located them in the main population centres, also trying to ensure they are accessible to the surrounding areas. Many of the residents of Wokingham Borough live in wards on the outskirts of Reading.

The other issue we have had to take into account are the different patient needs likely to be presented on an urgent basis. The potential Covid-19 status of the patients impacts on which hubs they will be referred to. The hubs in the two largest population centres (Reading and Slough) are for most of the population and can provide treatment for patients who are Covid-19 symptomatic, self-isolating or asymptomatic. The hubs in Maidenhead and Bracknell are for patients who have been identified as shielded from Covid-19 or greater risk to significant damage to their health due to Covid-19. The services delivered from these hubs will be delivered by a service provider who specialises in providing treatment for more vulnerable patients (the Community Dental Service).

Patients will access the hubs if necessary, via referral from their NHS dental practice. If patients do not regularly attend an NHS practice, they can find out about NHS dental practices close to their home via <https://www.nhs.uk/>

When they contact the dentist, the dentist will assess their needs offering advice or prescribing medication where necessary. If the dentist believes that urgent treatment is necessary, they will refer to an urgent care hub who will carry out a further assessment to confirm that urgent treatment is required and book the patient an appointment.

The referral process is underpinned by an electronic referral management system that will direct the patient to the hub that is closest to their home address and appropriate to their wider health needs.

The hubs that have been established to date are the first tranche of hubs and

we will continue to look at the possibility of opening further hubs if circumstances allow, but the safety of the patients and the dentists are primary considerations in this process.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Macdonald

Director of Primary Care and Public Health Commissioning

NHS England and NHS Improvement – South East Region