

Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 7 March 2011

Agenda
Item No.

7

NHS Walsall's Proposed Relocation of Walsall Dental Access Centre (DAC)

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor McCracken – Social Care and Health

Report:

The Walsall Dental Access Centre (DAC) provides emergency dental care and advice for people from across Walsall and surrounding areas.

The DAC is currently based in the NHS Walk-in Centre in the Market Square in Walsall town centre.

Opening hours are:

- 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday
- 8.30 am to 12.30 pm weekends and all bank holidays

Patients are signposted to the service in a number of ways to enable them to seek urgent treatment. They may obtain information about the DAC from a recorded message when they ring their own dentist out of hours, from their GP or out of hours GP service, from NHS direct or from A&E, or from the NHS Walsall website or other online health information.

The DAC service is targeted at patients who are often in considerable pain and require urgent treatment, rather than people who simply take the opportunity to 'pop in' for some dental advice while in the town centre.

The DAC provides a full range of emergency dental care. It has two surgeries, allowing two dentists to work at once.

Funding from NHS Walsall is for the equivalent of 1.6 whole time dentists. The service is currently provided by Walsall Community Health, but management will transfer to Birmingham Community Healthcare on 1 April this year as part of the changes under Transforming Community Services (TCS – on which OSC members have previously been briefed)

As the organisation responsible for commissioning dental services for Walsall people, NHS Walsall is considering options for the future of the DAC, prompted by a number of considerations.

Issues affecting the current location of the DAC

There are a number of dental clinics across Walsall which have facilities that are not being fully utilised and which could provide high quality accommodation for a DAC service.

With the DAC in its current location, anyone using their car to travel into the town centre for urgent treatment has to pay to park.

A single town centre location restricts the choice of treatment location for patients.

The DAC is competing for clinical space in the walk-in centre. One of the results of this competition for space is that the current GP services based there are operating in cramped conditions.

The long-term lease on the Walk-in Centre building has expired and is being renewed on a rolling short term basis.

There is a risk that if opportunities for redevelopment arise, the lease could legitimately be terminated by the landowners at short notice. A longer term base for the service is therefore required.

Proposal to relocate the DAC

A plan has been drawn up in partnership with the DAC dentists and other staff to relocate the service.

The proposed relocation would see one clinic permanently located at Blakenall Dental Clinic with the other following a fixed timetable that would take in three other dental clinics – Brace Street, Darlaston and Brownhills – following the timetable set out below.

Monday to Friday

	Blakenall	Brace Street	Darlaston	Brownhills
Monday	AM and PM			
Tuesday	AM and PM			PM
Wednesday	AM and PM		AM	
Thursday	AM and PM		PM	
Friday	AM and PM	PM		

Out of hours (weekend and bank holidays)

	Blakenall
Saturday	AM
Sunday	AM
Bank Holidays	AM

On the basis that NHS Walsall do not anticipate any change to the services on offer – only to the physical location of those services – the Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel is asked to confirm that this proposal does not represent a substantial change to the service.

Advantages to the proposed relocation of the DAC

- **Improved patient choice**, with a wider range of venues at which urgent dental care would be available
- **Free on-site parking** at all venues for patients
- **Greater certainty and security** for the location of the DAC in future. (Staying put at current location is not a long-term option)
- **More efficient use** of several dental clinics across Walsall
- **More clinical space** freed up at the Walk-in Centre for the GP services provided there.

Impact of the proposed relocation

The opening hours, staffing levels and range of services available would not change as a result of the relocation.

Subject to the Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel confirmation that the proposed move is not a substantial change (and therefore no formal consultation is required) the relocation of the DAC could be carried out swiftly, with no break in the provision of service.

The service would not be moved from the Walk-in Centre until the Blakenall Clinic was set up and ready to receive DAC patients. We believe this could be completed before the end of March 2011.

The weekend and bank holidays out of hours phone number is a mobile number and would not change.

The weekday service phone number is a land line in the NHS Walk-in Centre; this would change to the Blakenall office number. A divert would be placed on the current Dental Access Centre phone number at the Walk-in Centre, so that calls will be forwarded to Blakenall.

Agencies such as Waldoc, Phoenix and NHS Direct would all be informed of the new number and information on all other 'signposting' channels would be updated to avoid confusion.

The move would also be publicised via all NHS Walsall's internal and external communications channels.

Recommendations:

That:

1. Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel members agree that the proposed relocation of the Dental Access Centre is not a substantial service change and therefore no formal public consultation is required.
2. Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel members support NHS Walsall's plan to relocate the DAC as set out in this report.