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Wednesday, 17 May 2023

Via email

To:

Healthwatch colleagues and all who attended the NHS West Yorkshire oral health and dental engagement session on 16 May 2023

Cc:

- Rob Webster CBE, CEO for NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
- Ian Holmes, Director of Strategy and Partnership, NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
- Kathryn Giles, Associate Director for Primary and Community Care, NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board.

Dear colleagues

NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board – dental and oral health engagement session

I am writing to say a huge thank you for your attendance at the NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) session on Tuesday 16 May in Halifax. The engagement session with ICB Board members that day was really welcomed within a matter of weeks of NHS West Yorkshire taking on the delegated commissioning for dental care services from NHS England.

The session provided an opportunity to hear about local people's experiences of dental care and the service improvements required shared via Healthwatch. This enabled an open discussion between the Board and Healthwatch about the challenges facing people when accessing dental care ahead of the full Board meeting in the afternoon when improvements to the service across West Yorkshire were considered. I am grateful for your contribution to the session, particularly your honesty, to further our work together in oral health and dental care. Thank you.



Healthwatch colleagues explained that dental and oral health is the number one area of concern highlighted by local people and communities. Learning about local people's experiences about accessing an NHS dental appointment and urgent care reminded us how very important this area of health is for everyone and that improvements to services are needed.

I have noted key points from our engagement session conversation including:

- The importance of making sure people with greatest needs are met and with access to specialist services
- Timings of routine appointments for existing dental patients and the regularity of these to potentially free up appointments for more people to access NHS dentists
- Preventing poor oral health in children, for example, active work via health visitors and in schools
- The contracting arrangements for dental practices
- Improved data and understanding of waiting lists
- Good dental access can highlight serious health illness sooner, such as mouth cancer
- The importance of joining up care with hospital services
- Carrying out risk assessments for people not accessing appointments
- Information sharing on the availability of NHS dentists and how to get an appointment.

The deep dive dental and oral health report and the film of the Board meeting in public on 16 May, which followed our session together, are on our [website](#), in case of interest and for reference. The Board report included recommendations which were all approved, including evidence informed oral health prevention that supports a life course approach, investment in resources to commission NHS dentists, and supporting the development of a West Yorkshire dental workforce plan.

Flexible commissioning of dental services was highlighted throughout the session and in the Board meeting, and we have asked Ian Holmes, Director of Strategy and Partnerships for NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, to give you an update on work underway and to consider all your feedback in more detail. This will help to ensure we do all we can to work together to address the challenges and concerns people face as well as keeping in view opportunities to improve.

West Yorkshire Voice

Finally, we are passionate about making sure the voice of local people is central to our work and we have asked [Healthwatch](#) (the independent health and social care champion) across West Yorkshire to develop the West Yorkshire Voice to feed directly into decisions made about health and care. It will be developed in partnership with residents to reflect our diverse communities.

West Yorkshire Voice will be a network that will bring together individuals, groups, local panels, networks, and organisations to ensure the voice of people is at the heart of health and care decision-making in West Yorkshire.

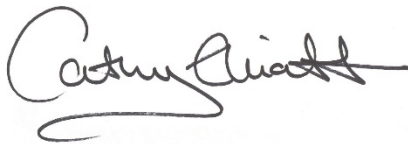


It will complement existing involvement mechanisms that are already in place at a local and West Yorkshire level, including via the voluntary and community sector. It will be a new way of working with people, communities and organisations that will not replace or duplicate what is already there.

The intention is to add to and build on existing approaches. This might be something that you, your family and friends might be interested in joining, and to find out more and join us, you can contact Healthwatch West Yorkshire on 0113 898 0035 or email: info@westyorkshirehealthwatch.co.uk

Thank you again for attending the engagement session with NHS West Yorkshire Board members; we are grateful for the contribution you make to help to keep local people and communities healthy across West Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Elliott', with a long, sweeping underline.

Cathy Elliott
Chair of NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
Deputy Chair of the Integrated Care Partnership - West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership Board

