

NHS Western Isles

Operational Delivery of Dental Services - Uist

Update report to the Integration Joint Board

Purpose:

For information.

Situation:

Continued alteration of service due to Covid pressures.

Background:

Dental Services in the Uists have been under review for some time, with the aim of modernising services to increase efficiency and capacity. The IJB had approved a plan to create a single Dental hub in the Uist and Bara Hospital, replacing the existing outdated facilities. In March 2020 Covid restrictions came into effect, stalling this development at a crucial point.

Assessment:

Many of the already identified failings of the existing dental estate in the Southern Isles came to the fore during the pandemic. Requirements for social distancing became challenging in clinics which were too small. A recent episode saw several dental staff become Covid Positive, with others isolating as distance rules were breached. Poor ventilation has further limited surgery use.

With lock-down ended progress on the dental hub is progressing. Work has been tendered and contracts will shortly be issued. The new facility may be complete by September/ October 2022, followed by transfer of staff to the Hub.

Service delivery:

With improved ventilation and four available surgeries 'fallow time' will effectively end, allowing more available appointments. Previously, a portable dental kit had been obtained to allow 'pop-up' clinics in those areas most removed from the Hub. This would use schools, community halls and perhaps other venues. The only essentials were for hand washing and clutter free, easily cleaned rooms. New standards for ventilation, decontamination, and safe areas to don and doff PPE render most locations unsuitable. The dental service will operate exclusively from the hub, with the exception being individuals at home or in care, minimising cross infection risk.

Other developments:

One dentist in the Uists is entering into additional training for minor oral surgery. This will reduce travel and waiting times in time to coincide with the Hub becoming available.

END

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21 February 2022

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