

Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee: Update on West Cumbria Dental Services

Date of meeting	4 October 2021
Title of paper	West Cumbria Dental Practice Service Report
Presented by	David Blacklock, CEO Healthwatch Cumbria Kerry Prescott, Healthwatch Director
Prepared by	Healthwatch Cumbria

Executive Summary

HWC has been highlighting the dental problems faced by members of the public in West Cumbria. This has been done through listening to the experiences of people in Copeland who have struggled to get NHS dental treatment, by producing a questionnaire specifically for those people living in Cleator Moor who are not registered with an NHS dentist, to help paint a clearer picture of the current situation. The survey ran from the 27th May 2021 until the 29th June 2021, and there was a total of 128 responses, which were then analysed and compiled into a report.

The report was initially shared with the West Cumbria Dental Project Steering Group (which is made up of representatives from the public, health professionals, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), and HWC). As well as with Copeland Borough Council, Copeland PPG, Lowther PPG, and West Cumbria Support Groups. To further raise awareness of the dental issues in West Cumbria with the people who commission dental services in the area and help influence local policy.

There was an option in the survey for respondents to leave their contact details if they wished to take part in a case study to further share their experience. The next step is to finish conducting these case studies. To then document the first-hand personal experiences and stories that these conversations provide and attach them to the West Cumbria Dental Report.

West Cumbria Dental Project – Summary

What we did:

HWC has been highlighting the dental problems faced by members of the public in West Cumbria. This was done through listening to the experiences of people in Copeland who have struggled to get NHS dental treatment because they are not registered with an NHS dentist or are not on a dental practice list of patients. As well as those who have had to travel many miles to visit an NHS dentist because they are unable to register with one near where they live.

A short questionnaire was designed and produced by for people living in Cleator Moor who are not registered with an NHS dentist, to help paint a clearer picture of the current situation as well as allowing the respondents an opportunity to share their personal experiences and stories. The survey went live on 27 May 2021, and ran until the 29th June 2021. There was a total of 128 responses, which were analysed and compiled into a report. The following are the key themes identified from the survey results:

- Registering for an NHS dentist in the area is very difficult and the majority do not have an NHS dentist.
- Most were last treated by an NHS dentist more than 2 years ago.
- The usual travelling distance for dental treatment is 0 to 10 miles, however, nearly 1 in 4 (24%) travel over 21 miles.
- There is a lot of concern around children accessing dental care, especially with multiple reports of children having never been seen by a dentist.
- Private care is not a suitable solution or appropriate option for many as it is too costly.
- There has been a significant impact on both people's physical and mental health as a result of the lack of dental care.
- There is a strong desire and need for an NHS dentist in the area.

Main Outcome:

The HWC West Cumbria Dental Report provides context and supporting data to highlight the state of the current dental situation in West Cumbria. It was shared with the West Cumbria Dental Project Steering Group. Which is made up of representatives from the public, health professionals, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), and HWC, with the aim to bring sustainable dental provision to West Cumbria.

The report was also shared with Copeland Borough Council, Copeland PPG, Lowther PPG, and West Cumbria Support Groups, to further raise awareness of the dental issues with the people who commission dental services in the area and help influence local policy.

Next Steps:

There was an option in the survey for respondents to leave their contact details if they wished to take part in a case study to further share their experience. These case studies are still in the process of being completed and documented and will provide first-hand personal experiences and stories.

The aim of this project is still ongoing mission to find a solution to the chronic shortage of NHS dental places in Copeland.