

**L & SC Integrated Care Board
Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee**

Date of meeting	12 February 2026
Title of paper	5 Year Dental Commissioning Plan Yr 2 Refresh (2026/27)
Presented by	Amy Lepiorz, Associate Director Primary Care
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Agenda item	6
Confidential	No

Purpose of the paper

This paper has been written to update Primary Care Contracts Sub-Committee on 2026/27 amendments to the 5-year dental commissioning plan which was originally supported by the Primary Care Commissioning Committee and Board in February 2025.

Executive summary

The programme is a collection of dental access and oral health initiatives which aim to help improve access and the oral health of priority groups across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

The paper provides a refresh of year 2 of the 5 year dental access and oral health improvement plan, aligning the second year to the 'Primary Care 5 Year Road Map – Dental' (previously received by the Sub-committee). The paper also provides a summary of progress for each of the projects that make up the programme.

Recommendations

The Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report;
- Receive a further update report at its meeting in September 2026

Governance and reporting

Meeting	Date	Outcomes
None		

Conflicts of interest identified

None

Implications

(If yes, please provide a brief risk description and reference number)	Yes	No	N/A	Comments

Quality impact assessment completed			X	
Equality impact assessment completed			X	
Data privacy impact assessment completed			X	
Financial impact assessment completed			X	
Associated risks			X	
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?			X	

Report authorised by:	Craig Harris, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Commissioner
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Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee

5 Year Dental Commissioning Plan – Year 2 Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee on the 2026/27 amendments to the 5-year dental commissioning plan which was originally supported by Primary Care Commissioning Committee and Board in February 2025. The report provides a refresh of the plan, considering national changes in policy, guidance and NHS England directions that have been announced since the original plan was approved.
- 1.2 This report will:
 - 1.2.1 Highlight amendments to the plan for delivery in 2026/27 (detailed in Appendix 1)
 - 1.2.2 Provide a funding and delivery summary for each of the investments
 - 1.2.3 Update on delivery of the programme's projects (detailed in Appendix 2)

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The projects that make up the plan are key to ensuring that patients who are at most risk of adverse impact due to their oral health are able access to services. The plan also supports working with wider stakeholders to implement upstream prevention measures at a population level.
- 2.2 The plan continues to support the wider NHS left-shift and demand management agenda, by ensuring patients are better supported in primary care, reducing the burden on specialist pathways including those in secondary care.
- 2.3 The current dental budget remains ring fenced, and while the budget is fully allocated, the plan's funding makes use of the non-recurrent and recurrent resources that become available due to the nature of how the NHS commissions and contracts with providers.
- 2.4 The contracting and delivery model of the schemes and pathways allows flexibility to match demand and need. Where demand may be lower during periods of delivery it is the intention to fully utilise the plan's budget by allocating resources across all pathways minimising reductions in care delivery.
- 2.5 The funding for the plan is drawn from two sources within the dental budget:
 - 2.5.1 Uncommitted recurrent resources from contract hand backs that have yet to be committed long term and are utilised non-recurrently.

- 2.5.2 Uncommitted recurrent resources because of updated contracting arrangements with secondary care providers that can be invested in primary care initiatives to avoid secondary care referrals.
- 2.6 The projects within the plan put into place the activities necessary to achieve the outcomes in the 'Primary Care 5 Year Road Map – Dental'. They also align with the three big shifts as articulated in the NHS 10-year plan.
- 2.7 Since year one of the programme the Medium-Term Planning Framework 2026/27 has been published, and the plan reflects these mandates which state that ICBs must:
 - 2.7.1 Deliver their contribution of the additional 700,000 urgent dental appointments.
 - 2.7.2 Successfully implement the contract reforms to ensure the manifesto target is incorporated into contract activity.
 - 2.7.3 Implement locally driven quality improvement approaches for dentistry and ensure clinical leadership is in place to support improved access and new pathways for complex and high needs patients.

3. Progress to date

- 3.1 All the year one projects are now mobilised, with patients being referred and treated in a variety of targeted services, in summary:
 - 3.1.1 The ICB is behind on delivery of the national target for urgent dental care appointments. However, the current reporting issues at NHSBSA, is resulting in a difficulty for all ICBs to accurately monitor and take steps to act on their position.
 - 3.1.2 Care pathways in place for priority patients e.g. follow up care to finalise treatment after an urgent intervention, patients on a surgical/medical care pathway where oral health is a priority and children in care, children in care and care leavers able to access care.
 - 3.1.3 Over 7,500 children have been referred into the pathway and a similar number of children treated by the practices involved in the scheme. These children have been from the most deprived neighbourhoods with 55% of them coming from Core 20 areas.
 - 3.1.4 There are now 68 care homes being supported by dental practice teams to improve the oral health of the residents.
 - 3.1.5 Agreement with local authorities on the approach to distribution of resources to improve coverage of supervised toothbrushing across Lancashire and South Cumbria, moving to a universal offer for children between the ages of 3 and 5.
- 3.2 Clinical networks have been convened to provide clinical leadership, support with delivery and clinical oversight of care. Through these networks providers are able engage with clinical leadership and commissioners.

4. Refresh for year two

- 4.1 As previously agreed by the Primary Care Contracts Committee, a refresh at the beginning of each year of the plan would be received, enabling the plan to accommodate any changes to national policy/guidance or shifts in financial position.
- 4.2 The overall aims of the plan remain the same and going into year two the core pathways will continue with slight amendments to the service specifications built on the learning from year one. There will also be adjustments to the volumes of activity reflecting that some providers have exited the schemes. This has given the opportunity to use some the resources freed up to introduce new elements to the plan listed below. Flexibility has been built into the plan to allow in year adjustments to address any variation in delivery, and where possible to match capacity where resources may become available to ensure resources fully utilised.
- 4.3 The plan includes the commitment to commission additional urgent care to the same volume and capacity as 25/26, topping up core urgent dental care services for patients who do not have routine access to NHS dental services.
- 4.4 The national dental contract reform programme includes an intention to increase the tariff paid to £75 per patient for urgent dental activity and to mandate 8.2% of the contract value to deliver urgent dental appointments. The reforms will have an impact on the activity delivered by providers which is not yet quantifiable. It remains to be seen if this will result in the urgent care being made available for new patients or utilised on their existing patients.
- 4.5 Quality improvement and clinical leadership were built into the original plan, and this remains the case for 26/27, with each initiative's cost includes the funding to enable clinical leadership necessary to support their development and implementation. Where the services rely on support from the referral management service or call handling, those costs are also included.
- 4.6 Additional pathfinder services to support demand management and left shift include:
 - 4.6.1 A safe discharge pathway for head and neck cancer patients
 - 4.6.2 Discharge to primary care for patients requiring complex bridge work
 - 4.6.3 Discharge special care adults into primary care
 - 4.6.4 Access support for diabetic patients leading to a reduction in medication prescribing costs
- 4.7 Aligned to demand management and left shift is the addition of a further 5 Integrated Dental Access Practices (IDAP). These practices will support anticipated increase demand for follow up treatment after an urgent intervention.
- 4.8 Full list of investments included in Appendix 1

4.9 A summary of delivery to date of existing schemes is included in Appendix 2

5. Risks

- 5.1 As with all current commissioning plans across ICBs there is a risk relating to the impact of organisational change. Year two of the plan relies on there being sufficient resources, both in terms of commissioning support and clinical leadership, to deliver the schemes detailed in the plan.
- 5.2 To mitigate some of that risk learning from the implementation of the care pathways in year one will be applied, and several of the schemes are already up and delivering care requiring minimal changes. Clinical leadership has been built into each of the care pathways, and better use of digital technologies (such as the dental referral management system) will help support quality improvement as well as the implementation of the care pathways.
- 5.3 Depending on the extent of the organisational change, some of the new schemes and pathway (for example those in 4.7) may have a delayed start or deferred into year three, leaving the team to focus on the expansion of existing pathways and schemes.

6. Finance

- 6.1 This section confirms that the current indicative dental allocations and the investments within the dental commissioning plans are fully funded and fully contained and affordable within the ringfence dental allocations.
- 6.2 The ICB received allocations specifically identified for dental services, the allocations cover all aspects of dental services. The allocation is utilised to fund primary, community and secondary dental services based on existing commitments, historic spend and to develop and enhance the services offered to the patients across the ICB.
- 6.3 The table below details the ICB allocations for dental services in 2026/27. The budget includes and fully funds the dental investment plan of £9.5m.

Dental Budget	2026/27 Budget £'m
Primary Dental	£102.2
Community Dental	£16.7
Secondary Dental	£31.4
Total Dental Services	£150.3

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 In summary the plan is enabling thousands of patients to access dental care, through targeted care pathways, aimed at addressing access inequalities, prioritising clinical need and giving care to patients who currently do not have routine access to NHS dental care.

- 7.2 The revisions to the plan for 2026/27 build on learning from the implementation of year one. They also strengthen the strategic direction of the ICB to treat and retain more patients in primary care.
- 7.3 Providing access to urgent care remains a priority for the government nationally, the plan includes provision for that commitment. To avoid the default position for patients requiring follow up care attending hospital after an urgent care appointment, strengthening IDAP provision has been considered too.
- 7.4 Year two continues to focus on reducing oral health inequalities for the population of Lancashire and South Cumbria, providing care for those who require it the most, addressing the challenges of there not being a NHS universal primary care dental service for population of Lancashire and South Cumbria
- 7.5 The plan is affordable withing current allocations and has been fully funded within the dental budgets for 2026/27.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Primary Care Contracts Sub-committee is requested to:
- Approve year two of the dental commissioning plan

Amy Lepiorz, Associate Director Primary Care

Nick Barkworth, Senior Delivery Manager

David Armstrong, Senior Delivery Assurance Manager

February 2026

Appendix 1 – Project Refresh

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	Duration
Urgent and Unscheduled Non-Urgent Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplement urgent care provision using general dental services providers Achievement of the additional urgent care mandate from NHS England (700K appointments nationally). <p>Investment £1,323,705</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients with an urgent dental need are able to access care. 2026/27 Delivery of an average of 13,165 urgent appointments per month (total for ICB). This additional capacity contributes 1,470 appointments to the trajectory. 	<p>April 2026</p> <p>This would allow a continuation of service.</p>	12 months
Integrated Dental Access Pathway (IDAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority access to a course of treatment for patient groups based on the risk of adverse impact due to their oral health and offer care. <p>Investment £2,610,607</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients who are deemed a clinical priority can access a course of dental treatment. Reduction in patients cycling through urgent care services. Reduction in patients requiring specialist pathways (hospital and community). An additional 5 practices taking the total of service delivery points to 17 across Lancashire and South Cumbria. Single point of entry into the pathway via call handling. 	June 2026	On Track

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	Duration
Children's Access and Oral Health Improvement Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted investment in areas of greatest deprivation. Provides dental access for children and prevention focussed 'behaviour change' for parents/carers. <p>Investment £ 2,705,277</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing children's health and wellbeing free from pain and suffering. Promotion of positive lifelong habits and engagement with dentistry. Improve attendance and performance at school. Reduction of use of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance. Single point of entry into the pathway via call handling. 	<p>September 2026</p> <p>Current contract variation ends August 2026</p>	31 months
Oral Health Support in Care Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project provides care homes with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for their team in implementing NICE Guidance 48 Clinical treatment for residents in the care homes. Dental support Primary Care Networks with their virtual ward rounds. <p>Investment £190,918</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access and oral health for older adults in care homes. Improved adherence to NICE Guidance 48 within care homes. Better integration of primary care services. 	<p>Current agreement ends in October 2026, plan is to continue subject to review and approval.</p>	12 months

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	Duration
Community Dental Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment to support implementation of Special Care/Paediatric Oral Health Needs Assessment for Lancashire and South Cumbria. This workstream also includes the unpicking disaggregation of the existing contracts, reviewing activity presently delivered under a secondary care agreement. Enhancing the digital support for referral management and safer discharge/shared care for inappropriate patients. Supporting the recruitment and retention of specialist dentists to delivery care in the community. <p>Investment £628,217</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement of a new service for the whole of Lancashire and South Cumbria. Implementation of recommendations from Special Care and Paediatric Oral Health Needs Assessments. A consistent and equitable service model delivered across Lancashire and South Cumbria 	New service due to commence in April 2028.	Not applicable
Minor Oral Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding will be used to enhance the current service model to include treatment under sedation (reducing hospital attendances), and support for wider workforce transformation to reduce inappropriate referrals (advice and guidance for dental teams). Enhancing the digital support for referral management and safer discharge/shared care for inappropriate patients. <p>Investment £188,165</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients have equitable access to a Tier 2 oral surgery across Lancashire and South Cumbria. Reduction of secondary care activity. Increased number of training opportunities in Primary Care. 	New service due to commence in September 2028	Not applicable

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	Duration
Orthodontics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary Care Orthodontics is recognised as a fragile service. Part of a proposed case for change has been developed with colleagues from the provider collaborative. Support for clinical delivery of the early discharge pathway. Funding to support patient engagement and consultation <p>Investment £511,142</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More resilient service. Patient wait times in line with national expectations. 	<p>Continuation of early discharge service</p> <p>Patient consultation date to be confirmed.</p>	On Track
Oral Health Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in supervised toothbrushing schemes delivered by Local Authorities. This will include, supporting community-based programmes as well as maximising prevention in clinical settings. <p>Investment £1,000,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased coverage of evidence-based programmes across Lancashire and South Cumbria. The current modelling of the investment means that for the first time ever there will be universal coverage of across Lancashire and South Cumbria for all 3 to 5year olds. There is a return on investment for supervised toothbrushing. 	April 2026	tbc
Developing a local quality improvement scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in a local quality improvement incentive scheme to improve adherence to national standards, clinical guidelines, and best practice. <p>Investment £131,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased adherence to national guidance and clinical standards. Peer review and clinical audit processes established Provider collaborative developed. 	June 2026	Annual scheme

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	Duration
Pathfinder pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe discharge for post head and neck cancer patients Complex bridge treatments in primary care Safe discharge of special care adults Periodontal treatment for diabetes patients Investment £172,040	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients treated in Primary Care practices Reduction in patients treated in specialist and consultant pathways Better use of resources Care closer to home Reduction in second line medication 	July/September 2026	12 months
Fylde Coast Access Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time limited exercise to develop a series of recommendations to address the lack of dental access and the stalled dental access recovery on the Fylde Coast. Engage with populations to develop access initiatives for specific populations/localities Investment £50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce inequalities Access recovery will be inline the rest of the ICB 	Continuation of work already started	N/A

Appendix 2 – Project Updates

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Urgent and Unscheduled Non-Urgent Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplement urgent care provision using general dental services providers Achievement of the additional urgent care mandate from NHS England (700K appointments nationally). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient with an urgent dental need are able to access care. NHS England target – Initially 1500 patients per month, revised to 2313 per month from July 25 to meet national target 	April 2025	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £1,345,397 Contribution of an additional 7,543 patients treated (Apr-Dec)* to support achievement of target. Clinical leadership from provider network established to implement new clinical criteria Additional capacity at call handling commissioned to manage increase. Achievement of NHS England target. <p>* lag in claims data</p>

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Integrated Dental Access Pathway (IDAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority access for patient groups based on the risk of adverse impact due to their oral health and offer care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients who are deemed a clinical priority can access a course of dental treatment. 400 patients per £100K invested 	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Patients requiring oral health support prior to medical/surgical care – not fully implemented due to delays in securing clinical lead for triage.</p>	<p>Of Track – Plans In Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the pathway from February 2026 to include practice ability to accept direct approaches utilising triage developed by clinical leads in the ICB Promotion of the pathway across clinical networks is being undertaken by the special care clinical leadership and hospital oral surgery teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £1,772,160 Referrals into the pathway to date (mid-Dec 25) 2,557 patients (demand is marginally ahead of capacity): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up care 1845 Medical/Surgical 91 Children in care 254 Other priority groups 367 Clinical leadership from provider network established

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Children's Access and Oral Health Improvement Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted investment is areas of greatest deprivation. Provides dental access for children and prevention focussed 'behaviour change' for parents/carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing children's health and wellbeing free from pain and suffering. Promotion of positive lifelong habits and engagement with dentistry. Improve attendance and performance at school. Reduction of use of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance. 	October 2024	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £3,189,948 7,500 referrals from October 2024 to Mid November 2025 Clinical leadership from provider network established Training delivered to all providers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advanced management of children in primary care behaviour change dental nurse leadership 42 providers presently delivering the scheme signed

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Oral Health Support in Care Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project provides care homes with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for their team in implementing NICE Guidance 48 ○ Clinical treatment for residents in the care homes. ○ Dental support Primary Care Networks with their virtual ward rounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access and oral health for older adults in care homes. • Improved adherence to NICE • Guidance 48 within care homes. • Better integration of primary care services. • Originally 27 providers engaged in the programme 	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Delayed start</p>	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned investment utilised £517,918 • Clinical leadership from provider network established • Training programme developed to support providers with delivery. • 9 providers engaged in the programme supporting 68 care homes across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Community Dental Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment to support implementation of Special Care/Paediatric Oral Health Needs Assessment for Lancashire and South Cumbria. This workstream also includes the unpicking disaggregation of the existing contracts, reviewing activity presently delivered under a secondary care agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement of a new service for the whole of Lancashire and South Cumbria. Implementation of recommendations from Special Care and Paediatric Oral Health Needs Assessments. A consistent and equitable service model delivered across Lancashire and South Cumbria 	New service due to commence in April 2028.	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No financial impact at this stage. Arrangements to extend the current term of the contract for a further 24 months are subject to ICB governance. Recommendations from the Special Care Oral Health Needs Assessment are presently being reviewed and prioritised. Paediatric Oral Health Needs completed recommendations to be received and reviewed by the ICB. This workstream also links directly with the ICB's children and young persons elective care recovery programme and the reconfiguration of children's dental care under general anaesthesia.
Minor Oral Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding will be used to enhance the current service model to include treatment under sedation (reducing hospital attendances), and support for wider workforce transformation to reduce inappropriate referrals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients have equitable access to a Tier 2 oral surgery across Lancashire and South Cumbria. Reduction of secondary care activity. Increased number of training opportunities in Primary Care. 	New service due to commence in September 2028	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No financial impact at this stage. Arrangements to extend the current term of the contract for a further 24 months are subject to ICB governance. This workstream also links directly with the elective care reform programmes currently being delivered across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Secondary Care Orthodontics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary Care Orthodontics is recognised as a fragile service. Part of a proposed case for change has been developed with colleagues from the provider collaborative. This funding is part of a proof of concept for early discharge pathway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More resilient service. Patient wait times in line with national expectations. 	March 2025	On Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £55,553* 15 Patients have been discharged early from secondary care. Ongoing developments to improve efficiency of the referral process from hospital to primary care This workstream directly links with the Lancashire and South Cumbria orthodontic collaborative board. <p>*includes support for the management referral service</p>
Oral Health Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in supervised toothbrushing schemes delivered by Local Authorities. This will include, supporting community-based programmes as well as maximising prevention in clinical settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased coverage of evidence-based programmes across Lancashire and South Cumbria. The current modelling of the investment means that for the first time ever there will be universal coverage of across Lancashire and South Cumbria for all 3 to 5 year olds. 	September 2025	Off Track Funding has been released for 25/26 to some local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £1,000,000 Agreement reached with the 4 local authorities on the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> types of interventions, the performance metrics the targeted populations. An additional 47,600 children will receive the intervention, and local authorities may also include additional child groups or extend the age range in areas of higher deprivation. This workstream also links directly with the ICB's children and young person's elective care recovery programme and contributes to the ICB's monthly progress update to NHS England via that group.

Scheme/Pathway	Description	Intended Outcomes	Commencement Date	On/Off Track	Achievements/Activity To Date
Developing a local quality improvement scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in a local quality improvement incentive scheme to improve adherence to national standards, clinical guidelines, and best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased adherence to national guidance and clinical standards. Peer review and clinical audit processes established Provider collaborative developed. 	September 2025	Off Track – Plans in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned investment utilised £30,000 Engagement with the Local Dental Committee and the chairs of the managed clinical networks has supported the development of a series of activities to better support care for patients in a primary care setting and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals into specialist care pathways.