

Access to Dental Services - Update 23/04/20

Four weeks ago, all dental practices were instructed to stop normal dental procedures as part of the COVID-19 response. The task of establishing triage, telephone advice & prescribed medicines and access to face-to-face urgent dental care was led by the NHSE regional teams.

All Lincolnshire NHS and Private Dental Practices have now established telephone triage procedures and the NHSE regional team have supported the establishment of six Urgent Dental Care Systems (UDCs), with another to follow for vulnerable and shielded groups. In line with the nationally drafted SOP, these are the steps which patients should follow when they require urgent dental treatment:

- 1. Patient should call their own dental practice, or if unregistered, call their nearest practice. An answer machine message will give details of the Tier 1 triage line for that practice. If out of normal surgery hours the call is directed to 111.**
- 2. The patient will go through Tier 1 triage and will be given one of the following - Advice, Antibiotic prescription (sent to their nearest pharmacy) and/or Analgesic prescription (AAA).**
- 3. If the AAA approach does not work and the patient's symptoms worsen, they should telephone their own dentist, and following advice, may be referred to Tier 2 triage. This onward referral is done electronically. Patients cannot self-refer, nor will the UDC accept telephone, electronic or paper referrals from Hospitals or GPs or other health care professionals.**
- 4. Tier 2 triage will schedule patients for a F2F consultation, if deemed appropriate, at one of the UDCs. At the UDC, an initial risk assessment is carried out and if this is passed, treatment is provided. At this stage, only one site has the appropriate PPE to provide aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). The remaining sites are currently providing no AGPs, and as a result high speed drills cannot be used. The treatment options are therefore more limited than normal.**
- 5. There is still the facility for referral to specialist emergency Secondary Care services if needed, including 2 week wait cases.**

There is no provision for routine dental care, including orthodontics at this time.