**NHS Dental Commissioning Statistics for England – December 2017**

 Published 1st February 2018 (Quarterly)

**About this release**

This release provides information about the amount of NHS dental activity that has been commissioned for the following year, measured in Units of Dental Activity (UDAs).

The UDAs commissioned are shown for each Local Office in England. There are now 14 Local Offices that commission NHS dental activity. Previously, there were 13, but Lancashire and Greater Manchester Local Office have now separated following devolution in Greater Manchester.

**87.6 million UDAs were commissioned**

As of 31st December 2017, to be provided between 1st January 2018 and 31st December 2018

* This is a decrease of 587,000 UDAs compared to September 2017, equivalent to a 0.7% decrease.
* It was 825,000 fewer UDAs, or -0.9%, compared to the number of UDAs commissioned at 31st December 2016 to be provided between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2017.



**Key Definitions**

Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) are a measure of the amount of work done during dental treatment. More complex dental treatments count for more UDAs than simpler ones. For example, an examination is 1 UDA, fillings are 3 UDAs, and dentures are 12 UDAs.

‘Up and running UDAs’ refer to UDAs that are in contracts that are already delivering services.

Contracts which are not yet delivering services may be new contracts, where the contract has been signed but the dental activity has not yet started.

**3 of the 14 Local Offices increased the number of UDAs commissioned compared to a year ago**

* The largest percentage increases – quarterly (1.4%) and annually (12.5%) – were Central Midlands and Lancashire and South Cumbria respectively, due mostly to recent boundary changes with the Cumbria and North East area.
* At a regional level, the Midlands and East saw an increases in commissioned UDAs, both quarterly (0.2%) and annually (0.2%). Whereas, the other four regions all saw quarterly and annual decreases.

**0 UDAs in contracts not yet delivering services**

* The number of UDAs commissioned in contracts which are not yet delivering services decreased from 44,300 to 0 in December 2017.



**Responsible Statistician:**

Muhammad Ismail Hussain

**Feedback or queries:** ENGLAND.DEAT@nhs.net

**Next publication:**

May 2018

**Previous publications:** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/category/statistics/dental-commissioning/>

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**Changes at National and Commissioning Region level**

**Compared to the previous quarter (September 2017):**

* The total UDAs commissioned in England by the end of December 2017 were lower (-0.7%, which was 587,000 less UDAs).
* Midlands and East had a increase (+0.2%) at regional level. This was a total increase of 47,000 UDAs.
* London had the largest percentage decrease (-1.8%) of all the regions. This was a decrease of 229,000 UDAs.

Table 1 below summarises the changes from last quarter.

*Table 1: Units of Dental Activity Commissioned by* ***Quarterly*** *Change.*

England, Commissioning Regions



*\*The NHS England South region has recently been divided into two regions – the South West and the South East.  Figures are presented here for the old ‘South’ region as we await further clarification on the division of the region and new regional codes.  The Dental Commissioning Statistics for next quarter will fully reflect this change.*

**Compared to the previous year (December 2016):**

* The total UDAs commissioned in England by the end of December 2017 was slightly lower (-0.9%, which was 825,000 fewer UDAs).
* The Midlands and East region had the only percentage increase (0.2%) in the number of UDAs commissioned. This was an increase of 46,000 UDAs.
* The South had the largest percentage decrease (-1.7%) of all the regions. This was a decrease of 364,000 UDAs.

Table 2 below summarises the changes from last year.

*Table 2: Units of Dental Activity Commissioned by* ***Annual*** *Change.*

England, Commissioning Regions



**Changes at Local Office level**

**Compared to the previous quarter (September 2017):**

* 1 out of the 14 Local Offices showed increases in the number of UDAs commissioned, and 13 showed decreases.
* Central Midlands had the greatest percentage increase (1.4%). This was 97,000 more UDAs.
* South West had the largest percentage decrease (-2.3%, or 131,000 fewer UDAs).

**Compared to the previous year (December 2016):**

* 3 of the 14 Local Offices showed increases in the number of UDAs commissioned, whilst 11 showed decreases.
* Lancashire and South Cumbria had the largest percentage increase (12.5%, or 314,000 more UDAs).
* Cumbria and North East had the largest percentage decrease (-5.7%, or 340,000 fewer UDAs).
* These movements, as with the quarterly changes, resulted largely from the boundary changes for Local Offices relating to South Cumbria.

*Table 3: Units of Dental Activity Commissioned, Quarterly and Annual Changes*

England, Local Offices

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**Long term quarterly trends (national)**

The data from December 2017 shows that there has been a small decrease in the number of UDAs commissioned nationally (-0.7%) compared to the previous quarter (September 2017). In September 2017, there had been a -0.1% decrease.

**These are small fluctuations, and the long-term quarterly trend has generally been quite stable since 2010.** The largest quarterly increase was back in September 2009 (2.9%) and the largest decrease was in June 2013 (-1.3%).

As Figure 1 below shows, there have been seasonal variations affecting the quarter to quarter changes. Historically, the larger dips have been seen in the March and June quarters (for precise figures see Annex). This is most likely due to non-recurrent commissioning contracts coming to an end (end of the financial year) and new commissioning for the year not yet decided upon.

*Figure 1: Total UDAs commissioned and percentage change of UDAs Commissioned quarter on quarter.* England, September 2008 to December 2017.





**Long term annual trends (national)**

Slightly fewer UDAs were commissioned nationally from December 2017 compared to a year ago (-0.9%). This annual change was more than that registered in September 2017 (-0.7%).

For each quarter between June 2008 and June 2010, the total number of UDAs commissioned was at least 3.0% higher than at the same time 12 months earlier. **The annual percentage change has been between a 1.3% increase and 1.3% decrease from December 2010 onwards.**

The most recent data represent the seventh consecutive quarter seeing a year on year decrease. Against an increasing number of patients being seen, this emerging trend might indicate a decrease in treatment intensity based on improving oral health across the population.

*Figure 2: 12 month moving average for Total UDAs commissioned and percentage change of UDAs commissioned year on year.* England, September 2008 to December 2017.



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**‘Up and running’ UDAs**

**Over time, the gap between the total number of UDAs commissioned and the ‘up and running’ UDAs has narrowed.** The number of UDAs commissioned in contracts which are not yet delivering services in December 2017 was 0, a decrease from both the previous quarter September 2017 (44,300) and from the previous year December 2016 (5,400).

This means that, as of December 2017, there are no new contracts which are yet to commence delivery. This does not mean that commissioners are not applying growth to existing contracts.

*Figure 3: Time Series of Units of Dental Activity Commissioned*

England, June 2008 to December 2017.

**Changes to commissioning strategies**

**The approach to commissioning dental care is evolving.** The Dental Contract Reform programme is testing different models of remunerating dentists that do not rely on UDAs as currently measured. There are also commissioning innovations being trialled in areas where there have historically been issues with access to NHS dental care. This year two Smile4Life initiatives are being progressed to improve NHS dental access and care for young children.

Geographically – in response to political devolution and the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships emerging in the wider NHS – there have been changes to the coverage of Local Offices and this may evolve further in the coming months and years. Therefore like-for-like comparisons at a regional and area level are becoming less meaningful.

In light of these changes, it is worth noting that ‘commissioned UDAs’ may become a less relevant indicator of commissioning intent across England.

**Annex**

*Table 4: Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) Commissioned*

England, September 2008 to December 2017



\*Commissioned UDAs cover contracted UDAs in the next 12 months in GDS and PDS contracts and in VDP arrangements. *This excludes salaried services where there are no contracted UDAs*.