

# Primary Care Networks: Integrating Oral Health within the Multi-Disciplinary Management of Care Home Residents, a Pilot Model

Natalie Bradley

StR Special Care Dentistry

Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, UK



## INTRODUCTION

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have been a key part of the Five Year Forward View<sup>1</sup> and now form part of the NHS Long Term Plan<sup>2</sup>. Originally seen as a GP collaborative system, PCNs are casting the net wider to include other parts of the health service.

PCNs are designed to cover populations of **30,000 to 50,000** people. The lead for PCNs is via GP practices but other members can include:

- Community pharmacy
- Dental providers
- Voluntary sector organisations
- Optometrists
- Social care providers
- Community services providers<sup>3</sup>

PCNs will be required to deliver a set of seven national service specifications; in 2020, **Enhanced Care in Residential Care Homes** was launched.

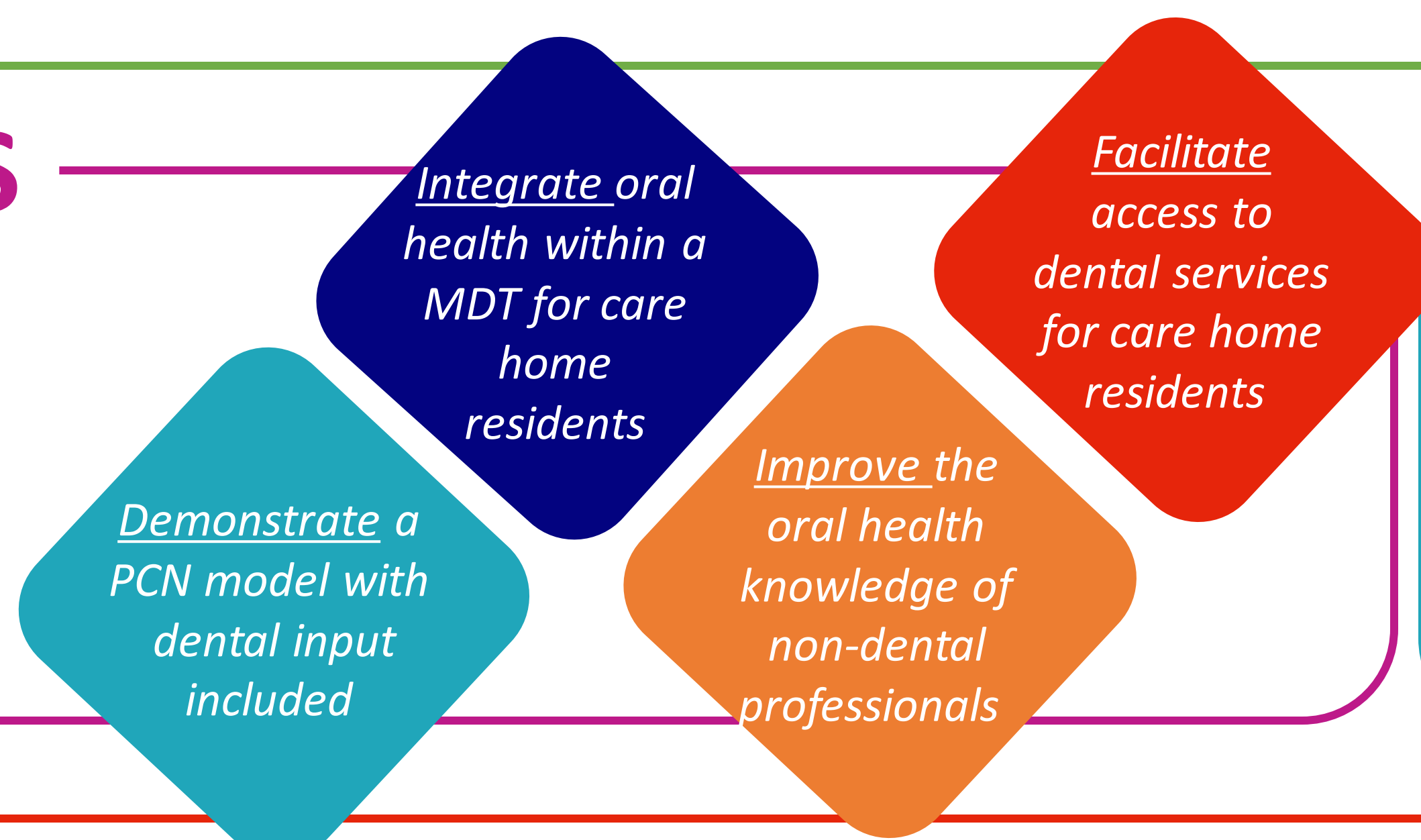
The commitment in the framework is that all care homes will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team organised by the PCN<sup>4</sup>.

This is an opportunity for the dental community to develop a model for dentistry in care homes through the PCN multi-disciplinary team.

*Enhanced Framework for Care in Residential Care Homes, 2020*  
NHS England & NHS Improvement

*"helping care homes ensure their residents have good oral health"*

## OBJECTIVES



## METHOD

Local networks established via the Restoration and Recovery Network during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic lead to local discussions as to how the local PCN in the East Surrey region could integrate dentistry into their 'Care Alliance' PCN for the care home residents of the area.

It was agreed that a dental professional would pilot attendance at the weekly Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting for care home residents, held virtually.

## RESULTS

Over a **3 month pilot period**, 13 MDT virtual meetings were held of which 10 had a dental professional representing the residents' oral health needs; either a mouth care lead nurse, and/or a dentist when timetabling allowed.

Input from the dental team included:

- Ensuring residents had an oral health assessment if there were concerns about loss of weight or a reduction in appetite
- Answering queries surrounding the dental implications of polypharmacy & medications e.g. anti-coagulant therapy
- General mouth care advice for residents
- Signposting to the appropriate dental services, including domiciliary care.

- 2 residents had oral health reviews whilst they were inpatients in the hospital where the dental service was situated
- Dental input on a case where safeguarding concerns were raised for 1 patient
- 2 residents had domiciliary assessments
- 1 patient was referred into the hospital to have dental treatment under sedation
- Oral health training session held by the dental team for the MDT, including how to refer into dental services

## CONCLUSION

The dental team has a role to play in multi-disciplinary care for vulnerable and older patients, such as participation in local PCNs. The increase in the use of virtual meetings has made attendance at such MDTs more feasible and can ensure the oral health of care home residents is considered as part of their overall care.

This work has also highlighted a lack of awareness of oral health and dental services among health and social care professionals that needs to be addressed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Feedback from the PCN Care Alliance MDT has demonstrated the value of having access to oral health and dental input into the care of their vulnerable patient group. We will continue to engage with the MDT and evaluate the model in another 3 months.

The involvement of dentistry within the **1,250** PCNs<sup>5</sup> across the country needs to be formalised to ensure uniform engagement between dentistry and the rest of healthcare in primary care. This includes contractual and remuneration clarification.

## REFERENCES

1. NHS England 2014 'Five Year Forward View'
2. NHS England 2019 'The Long Term Plan'
3. The British Medical Association 2020 'What is a Primary Care Network' <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/primary-care-networks/what-is-a-primary-care-network/>. Accessed November 2020
4. NHS England & NHS Improvement 2020 'Framework for Enhanced Care in Residential Homes'
5. Kings Fund 2020 'Primary Care Networks Explained' <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/primary-care-networks-explained>. Accessed November 2020

