

Dental Care Briefing April 2021

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset help local people get the best out of health and social care services such as doctors, hospitals, dentists, mental health services, care and nursing homes and social workers. We do this by finding out what matters to you and we make sure your views shape the support you, your family and the community need. People's views come first, especially those that find it hard to be heard. We would like to hear what you have to say about the services you use.

Why dental care?

Over the last year we have been hearing from members of the public about their issues with dental care. Patients who have been finding it difficult to find an NHS Dentist who will accept them and others who have a dentist but have been waiting a long time to get treatment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have been signposting patients to the [NHS England 'Find a dentist' page](#) and to register their concerns with the NHS England Customer Contact Centre.

Some patients have contacted us saying:

- They cannot find an NHS Dentist who will treat them
- They are new to the area and cannot find an NHS Dentist
- They have pain but do not know where to go to be treated
- The dentist they contacted will only treat their child as an NHS patient if they sign on as a private patient with the practice
- They have received a quotation from a private dentist for £2,000 for treatments including root canal and fillings which they cannot afford.
- They had a couple of fillings come out over the last couple of months and really should get this seen to, but cannot find an NHS dentist who will treat them.

We have added all submissions from the public anonymously to our database and this data is shared with [Healthwatch England](#), [NHS England](#) and the [Care Quality Commission](#). We, along with other local Healthwatch across the South West, have also been sharing the data we have heard from the public at quarterly meetings of the [South West Dental Network](#).

Following a British Dental Association press release in December (<https://bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/Pages/Dentists-back-Healthwatch-call-to-fix-system-in-crisis.aspx>) Healthwatch England undertook a review of people's feedback on dentistry, looking at 1,129 people's experiences of accessing dental care between Oct – Dec 2020.

- Access remained difficult for 7 out of 10 people
- Many patients have a long wait to access an appointment
- Access to urgent NHS treatment, people have been told dental pain is not considered an 'emergency' and those prescribed anti biotics by NHS 111 were not provided any further treatment
- Some people have phoned over 40 dental practices to find an NHS Dentist
- When dental practices have been unable to offer an appointment they have advised people to buy dental repair kits, or use a nail file to deal with the sharp edges of a broken tooth.

Healthwatch England collated these findings into their [Dentistry and the impact of COVID-19 report](#).

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Healthwatch England have noted a rise of 452% in calls and complaints to local Healthwatch across the country and we have noticed a marked increase in the number of people contacting us about dental services.

We have explored the issues on dentistry that we have heard locally and our volunteers have contacted 46 dental services across Bath and North East Somerset. Findings show:

- Two dental practices have closed
- Only two dental services are taking on children and young people as NHS patients
- Of the 19 dental practices who say they have both NHS and private patients, **no services are taking adults as NHS patients**
- 24 practices are providing routine appointments for patients
- 26 practices have websites and only five dental practices offer booking online appointments for patients through their website
- 20 practices have email, with three practices offering online booking forms

We recommend:

1. There is more accessible information for the public on whether a dentist is able to take on new NHS patients on both the dental practice and NHS England websites

Healthwatch England have also recommended in their report that the government should make it a legal requirement of the dental contract for dentists to regularly update information on their websites and for NHS England to ensure that their 'Find a Dentist' page on their website is kept up to date.

2. There is information about the NHS charges for dental treatment, explained when a patient is booking

NHS Dental Charges:

There are 3 NHS charge bands:

Band 1: £23.80

Covers an examination, diagnosis and advice. If necessary, it also includes [X-rays](#), a scale and polish, and planning for further treatment.

Band 2: £65.20

Covers all treatment included in Band 1, plus additional treatment, such as fillings, [root canal treatment](#) and removing teeth (extractions).

Band 3: £282.80

Covers all treatment included in Bands 1 and 2, plus more complex procedures, such as crowns, dentures and bridges.

What if you need more treatment?

If, within two calendar months of completing a course of treatment, you need more treatment from the same or lower charge band, such as another filling, you do not have to pay anything extra.

If the additional treatment needed is in a higher band, you'll have to pay for the new NHS course of treatment.

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Once two months have passed after completing a course of treatment, a patient would have to pay the NHS charge band for any NHS dental treatment received.

Certain treatments (including lost items) are guaranteed for 12 months from the date they were completed. These are:

- fillings
- root fillings
- inlays
- porcelain veneers
- crowns
-

Treatments provided under this guarantee must be similar or related to the original treatment, but they do not have to be like for like.

Emergency or urgent treatment

If you require urgent care, you'll pay a Band 1 charge of £23.80

Most urgent treatments can be done in 1 appointment. Once your urgent course of treatment is complete, you may be advised to make another appointment for a separate course of non-urgent treatment. In this case, the relevant NHS banding charge will apply.

When you do not have to pay

There's no dental charge:

- for denture repairs
- to have stitches removed
- if your dentist has to stop blood loss
- if your dentist only has to write out a prescription – but if you pay for prescriptions, you'll have to pay the usual prescription charge of £9.15

Referral to another dentist

If you're referred to another dentist to complete your treatment, the amount you pay is dependent on the type of referral and whether the NHS treatment is carried out as one course of treatment. Your dentist will inform you how much you have to pay.

If you're referred to a private dentist (and you accept this option), you'll:

- pay the appropriate NHS banding charge to the dentist who referred you
- also pay a fee for the dental work carried out by the private dentist you're referred to

See <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/how-much-will-i-pay-for-nhs-dental-treatment/>