



# Local Dentistry Network

Jody Wilson (Cornwall) + Hannah Gray (Somerset)

10 March 2021

# Content

- Overview of local Healthwatch
- Role of Healthwatch England
- Healthwatch England - focus on dentistry
- Local intelligence
- Next steps



# Who are local Healthwatch?

- Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012
- We exist on a national and local level, working towards the same goal of enabling people to have a voice about their health and social care systems.
- Local Healthwatch are funded by the Department of Health and Care - and accountable to local authorities.



# Who are local Healthwatch?

- Each are defined by their local authority and community:
  - Charities, Community Interest Companies, Social Enterprises, or Hosted by another organisation
- All act **independently** of their local health and care system



# Who are local Healthwatch?

Our main statutory functions are to:

- Obtain the views of people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services.
- Local Healthwatch make these views known to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of care services.
- Make reports and make recommendations about how those services could or should be improved.
- Promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.

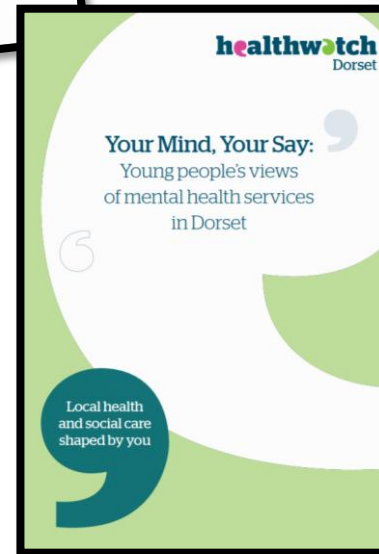
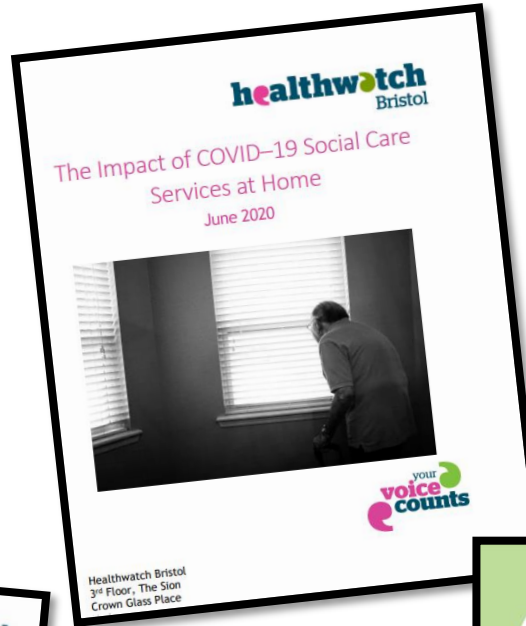
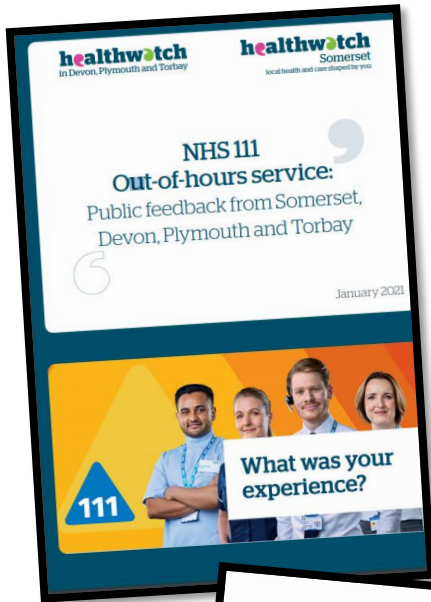


# Who are local Healthwatch?

- Provide information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and the options available to them.
- Make the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England, helping them to carry out their role as national champion.
- Make recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the CQC to carry out special reviews or investigations into areas of concern.



# Who are local Healthwatch?



# Who are Healthwatch England?

- A statutory committee of the independent regulator the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Main statutory functions are to:

- Provide leadership, guidance, support and advice to local Healthwatch organisations.
- Escalate concerns about health and social care services which have been raised by local Healthwatch to CQC. CQC are required to respond to advice from the Healthwatch England Committee.





# Who are Healthwatch England?

- Provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, NHS England and English local authorities, especially where they are of the view that the quality of services provided are not adequate.
- Bodies to whom advice is given are required to respond in writing.
- The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is also required to consult Healthwatch England on the NHS mandate, which sets the objectives for the NHS.



# Current ways of working - local and national

- Digital engagement rather than community
- Increase in 'unsolicited' feedback
- Focus on pandemic response



# Healthwatch England report - Dec 20 and Feb 21

The collage features three overlapping news articles:

- Healthwatch (top left):** Article titled "Dentistry and the impact of COVID-19" dated 9 December 2020. It states: "In our latest briefing, we share what over 1,300 people have told us about their experience of NHS dentistry during July and September 2020."
- BBC News (top right):** Article titled "Dentistry: NHS patients 'asked to pay for private care'" dated 8 February. It includes a "Coronavirus pandemic" tag and a photo of a dentist examining a patient's teeth.
- The Guardian (bottom):** Article titled "NHS dental patients 'told to go private' as watchdog warns of crisis" dated 9 December 2020. The sub-headline reads: "Covid is straining services, with patients advised to treat themselves, says Healthwatch England." It includes tags for "Coronavirus - latest updates" and "See all our coronavirus coverage". A photo of a dental procedure is visible at the bottom left of this article.

An advertisement for Sky and Sky Sports is also visible in the bottom right of the Guardian article, showing a price of £43 a month for 18 months.





Join the BDA

Log In

Search...

Coronavirus Advice Indemnity BDJ CPD Careers Library Good Practice Events About us

Home > News Centre > Press releases > Healthwatch Report: An access crisis that won't be solved by targets

- Press releases
- Latest news
- BDA press office
- Blog

## Healthwatch Report: An access crisis that won't be solved by targets

08 February 2021

The British Dental Association has urged the government to engage with the latest evidence from Healthwatch England, warning the huge barriers facing patients requiring urgent NHS care will only increase unless Ministers change course on targets.

Healthwatch's latest review, which looked at 1,129 people's experiences of accessing dental care received between October and December 2020, found access to dentistry remained difficult for more than 7 in 10 people, with major problems securing both routine and urgent care. Healthwatch England Chair Sir Robert Francis QC has stressed that "the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the human impact of years of structural issues in NHS dentistry and is now pushing it to crisis point."

Last month the BDA wrote an [open letter to Health Secretary Matt Hancock](#) following revelations that a leading chain has already refocused effort on routine check-ups and away from urgent care following the imposition of targets on 1 January. The policy, in place for the current quarter, requires practices to hit 45% of their pre-pandemic activity levels, or face steep financial penalties.

The review comes as [over forty MPs from five parties launched a call](#) on the Health Secretary to abandon these targets. The letter, organised by Ealing MP Virendra Sharma, states: "We are concerned that the current situation may lead to practices across the country closing their doors to NHS patients, depriving our constituents of dental care at a time when the effect of reduced access to dental care is still being felt."

Both in the short term and in the year ahead the BDA has said the government's focus must be on the care of higher needs patients and addressing already unacceptable levels of oral health inequality that are likely to widen as a result of the pandemic.

**Shawn Charwood, Chair of the British Dental Association's General Dental Practice Committee said:**

"Patients with urgent problems need to be at the front of the queue for care. Sadly, government is forcing dentists to prioritise volume over need by imposing inappropriate targets.



# HWE report - Main findings

- Since 2013, access to NHS dentistry is one of the recurring issues reported on
- Between July and September 2020, the number of people who provided feedback about dentistry was **452%** higher when compared with the previous three months
- Access to emergency appts; continuation of treatment; access for new patients; affordability of private treatment; lack of information from NHS 111, NHS website and dental practice websites
- 4% of people also told the network about **positive experiences** of dental care, praising staff who were helpful, kind and considerate and highlighting that clear and regular information from dental practices made them feel reassured



# Main findings

- Follow-up review of people's feedback on dentistry in Feb 21 - looked at a further 1,129 people's experiences of accessing dental care, received between October and December 2020.
- Access to dentistry remained difficult for more than seven in 10 people (72%).
- Some people who actively sought dental treatment were told they would have to wait anywhere between a few months to, in one case, two years for an appointment.
- Access to urgent NHS treatment was difficult for both people with painful teeth, with patients being told that dental pain was not considered an “emergency”, and those who were prescribed multiple courses of antibiotics by NHS111 without being provided any further treatment.



# Main findings

- Some people said they had called over 40 practices to find an NHS dentist, and pulled their own teeth out when they couldn't bear the pain.
- When dentists couldn't offer an appointment, they advised people to buy dental repair kits to treat themselves.



**healthwatch**  
Swindon

**healthwatch**  
Wiltshire

**healthwatch**  
North Somerset

**healthwatch**  
Dorset

**healthwatch**  
Torbay

**healthwatch**  
Devon

**healthwatch**  
Cornwall

**healthwatch**  
Bristol

**healthwatch**  
Plymouth

**healthwatch**  
Isles of Scilly

**healthwatch**  
South Gloucestershire

**healthwatch**  
Bath and North East  
Somerset

**healthwatch**  
Somerset

## South West LDN Report Dec 2020 - Feb 2021



Working effectively to involve  
Patients & the Public





# Introduction

This summary highlights the combined feedback gathered by local **Healthwatch** teams and was open to responses from

- **Bristol**
- **BaNES**
- **Cornwall**
- **Devon, Torbay & Plymouth**
- **Dorset**
- **North Somerset**
- **Somerset**
- **Wiltshire**

These were collected from our surveys, websites, telephone calls, volunteers and email messages.

**We have received over 182 individual pieces of feedback about dental services,** reflecting the views and experiences of the public about NHS dental provision between December and February 2021

## KEY ISSUE - Inequity of Access

- Access - Getting on a list
- Access - Pain Management
- Access - Costs
- Access - Information
- Access - Private pathways

## Access - Getting on a list

- Client wanted to know how to get an NHS Dentist as has **been on the waiting list for 2 years** and can't afford private treatment. – DP&T

The enquirer has **been searching for an NHS dentist for about 2 years now** and cannot get a place anywhere for her partner, herself and their 2 children. Her son is now almost 3 years old and is yet to see a dentist. This is not through lack of trying and is getting really silly. She feels this completely unacceptable. - SOMERSET

“..member of HM Forces living in bulford and since moving here in November 2017 we have not been able to register my wife and 3 children 16/14/7 with an NHS dentist.....when we ring they say they are not taking on any new patients and they **do not have a waiting list**. It has been 3 years now without my family receiving any routine dental check up. Would you be able to assist In helping to find a dentist that is taking on new patients? - WILTS

I work for a mixed NHS and private dental practice. We have in excess of 8000 patients and only 2 dentists, **the waiting list for NHS dentist is years** and we have so many enquiries every day and unable to help. The emergency dental helpline do not offer patients without a dentist the care they need it really needs to be looked at.- CORNWALL

## Access - Pain

The commentator's crown fell off a tooth during first lockdown and was **told to go on line and order some dental glue to stick it back on themselves.** Couldn't get it in place. So still not fixed and tooth is painful at times - SOMERSET

So I recon now I've been waiting 3 years nearly for a dentist, so how long now

As you no I've already pulled out my own teeth as my swollen face **wasent (sic) classed as an emergency** when I sent a picture to harligh st in Bodmin ,

So now I'm down to 12 teeth and 3 more need to be taken out as I now have **sever pain whilst eating anything at all** But still you won't help. I thought everybody was entitled to nhs dental

**So currently have severe stomach problems as I can't chew any food properly anymore . And effecting my bowels , it is a struggle.... problems with my mental health and am screaming out for help, to stop this constant dental pain** I've been suffering since I put my name down on your list for a dentist, So will I be ignored again. I need help now before I go absolutely mental and end up in prison, I cannot take anymore” - CORNWALL

I am without a dentist, despite my best efforts in the past 12 months. This has been especially difficult as I require actual dental treatment for a tooth extraction. **I have had ongoing infection, pain and to the point of requiring emergency care at RBH** almost a year ago now. This was a 'scary' experience for myself especially at the start of Covid 19/lockdown and the impact to NHS staff/RBH to witness. All they could do was prescribe antibiotics and pain relief for which I was very grateful. - DORSET

## Access - Costs

Client wanted to know how to get an NHS Dentist as has **been on the waiting list for 2 years** and can't afford private treatment - *DP&T*

“Trying to register with an NHS dentist. Husband has a plate which is broken and is currently undergoing chemotherapy and has been told that the current state of his teeth could affect his cancer therapy. **He has been quoted £10,000 for a replacement plate privately**” - CORNWALL

“I need to ask you about whether it is legal, or correct to be charging NHS dental patients their treatment costs at the time of booking- rather than on the day of the treatment? I paid yesterday for my treatment today at my dentist in Clevedon. When I went to book in further treatment in February, today at the dentist. **I was asked to pay now, for the future treatment, or lose the booking. This made me upset, because I said no and they cancelled the booking**” - NORTH SOMERSET

## Access - information

Good morning i am trying to find a nhs dentist taking on new patients but it is a nightmare ! i get told by 111 look online so go through every dentist within a 20 mile radius nothing at all. then it says contact nhs england who email me back with look online , but there is nothing so how can i? fair enough covid has really played about with services but feel like my hands are tied now - DORSET

- "I have tried to find an NHS dentist in Exeter, and **everyone is telling me that they are not taking on any NHS patients.** I have an old crown that food keeps getting under and I keep getting a lot of pain from it. I need a dentist. Can you help me to find one?" - DP&T

Caller concerned he was unable to access dental care, **although he was registered the dentist has told him it will be at least 3 months before he can be seen unless he is prepared to pay for private treatment** - BNSSG

## Access - Private pathways

The Enquirer could not find an NHS dentist in Somerset and had **paid over £100 to see a private dentist** and was quoted over £3,000 for work on his teeth which he wouldn't afford - SOMERSET

I saw a Dentist, the tooth requires antibiotics which were prescribed but that was it in terms of NHS treatment. The Dentist stated the tooth in question needs to be removed. **I was told to find a Private Dentist as NHS treatment was not possible.** NHS cost for tooth extraction Band 2, is £62. Private cost is £200 - DORSET

Commentator is finding it impossible to find an NHS dentist, as they have a broken tooth and have **been quoted over £950 by a private dental practice to repair it**, which they cannot afford. - SOMERSET

## Positive feedback

“Coly House provided **first class service** in a COVID-19-safe environment. Client had a broken tooth extracted and they visited the hygienist. They felt everyone was helpful, friendly, and highly skilled” - BNSSG

“Appointment reminders sent by text. Accepted on line. **All precautions observed.** Temperature taken, social distancing , additional time for cleaning between appointments” - BNSSG

Caller had dental check-up arranged. They were provided with instructions by telephone prior to the appointment regarding waiting outside and wearing a mask. The staff see patients through the front window and come out with a clipboard and forms about Covid safety and a health check. Once called in the callers temperature was taken, she was asked to sanitise her hands and shown to the treatment room . Check-up was **smooth and comprehensive and staff polite** , saw no other patients or close contact. Staff sent payment request by text later in the day. - BNSSG

“I recently required emergency dental treatment. Just before Christmas. My dentist is White Rose dental practice - Camborne. **Amazing service.** Was seen the same day I called. Tooth extraction done. The following week I had got an infection and called again. I was seen that afternoon. I really cannot fault the treatment I received.” - CORNWALL



## Suggestions and recommendations

- Clear and current information on individual dentists' websites and regularly update NHS.UK profiles
- Clear explanation regarding NHS/Private appointments
- Signposting and information regarding emergency provision