

Written evidence submitted by Healthwatch Hull (DTY0051)

Local Facts & Figures

- Reported that the wider region of the East Riding of Yorkshire is one of the hardest hit by staffing issues, with over 2,000 dentists quitting last year, 37 dentists per 100,000 in what the association of Dental Groups is calling a "dental desert".
- Owner of a local dental practice in Hull believes that the problems started in 2006. He said: "Blaming Covid is an easy, but incorrect pointing of the finger. That year, a new dental contract was introduced, and then deemed "not fit for purpose" by the Health Committee. In the following 14 years, nothing has changed. The contract has been linked to the loss of 3,000 dentists, with payment being the same regardless if a patient has one or ten fillings."
- In the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care's "Plan for Patients" statement on Thursday 22nd September, there was no mention of dentistry at all.
- An NHS checkup can cost from £23.80 to £282.80 depending on whether it's a regular checkup or a more complex crown. In comparison, at Bupa Dental Care on Holderness Road, Hull a simple check-up is £67 and a crown is £519.

Feedback – Quarter 3 2022

1. "Hello I found your details on NHS website. I am desperate for dental help and cannot get registered with one near me for 3 years. Most of my teeth have fallen out and the ones that are left are loose and painful making it almost impossible to eat or drink. It is severely affecting my mental health as am very aware how awful it looks and so don't go out. Please could you help me with this matter as cannot carry on like this.....I have not been able to find a dentist, this is making me feel suicidal."
2. "I have been on the waiting list years; I was left a voicemail this week to book an appointment. I've contacted them today to be told they can't confirm where I am on the waiting list, I can't have an appointment and I'll be waiting indefinitely. I was told the list is also a physical binder of names and addresses which doesn't seem appropriate for sensitive information, and they are not backed up on a computer so my place can't be confirmed, shocking! My removal from this binder was also discussed without confirming any DPA to confirm my identity."
3. Received email from patient desperate for dental work - they said most of their teeth have fallen out and only have a few left which are very painful which makes eating and drinking very difficult. They said it is severely affecting their mental health and they no longer go out.
4. Received email from patient asking for dental advice as said some of their teeth need removing and when called round to access an NHS dentist they were told the waiting list was years.
5. Person emailed to say that they were previously at Trenton Dental Practice but were informed last year that the practice was closing with immediate effect and that all patients were being

transferred to a practice in Grimsby. When the person contacted the practice they were not aware of this agreement. Since then the person has been trying to find a local NHS dentist to no avail so had to pay privately, which on a pension they said, they cannot afford.

6. Person contacted us on behalf of relative who recently had emergency root canal treatment but now needs further follow up treatment but is unable to find an NHS dentist to complete the work. Have rung round many dentists in local area but only given an option to join waiting list of at least two years, pay for private treatment or wait to be in pain again and have an extraction
7. Social worker contacted us with regard to a child in their care needing urgent dental care and asked if there were any services which they may be able to contact. Contacted community dental services who said the child didn't meet criteria. Signposted to emergency

Healthwatch Hull action

For all dental issues, we referred the individuals to the NHS England customer contact centre telephone and email system. We also informed the individuals that if they experience any pain, swelling or serious dental issues then they should contact NHS 111 who will refer them onto emergency treatment.

We refer people to the community dental service if they meet the criteria for referral. Unfortunatley, referrals are not always accepted, and when they are there is a long waiting list to be seen and treated.

We continue to play an active role in the local dental network meetings, ensuring that patient voice is consistently heard and on the agenda.

We promote good oral health, and participate in sharing where a dentist is taking on new patients.

- Poor access to NHS dentists in the Yorkshire & Humber area
 - Long unrealistic waiting lists for patients from 2 -4 years
 - Waiting lists are uncoordinated with some people on more than one list and others unable to have their name added to any list.
- Key trends**
- Access to community dental services is limited, and referral criteria seems to be inconsistent.
 - Emergency treatment is often out of the immediate area so incurs travel and cost implications – sometimes impossible for the most vulnerable to access.
 - Those entitled to free dental care eg children and pregnant women and those in receipt of benefits are unable to access an NHS dentist, widening health inequalities.

Jan 2023

