

Key themes and issues....

- In 2022, 415 people contacted us about dental services, this is 18% of our total interactions for the year.
- The only service we received more feedback about in 2022, was access to GP Services.
- Some people with a private dentist cannot afford essential treatment.
- Many families are concerned that their child/ children have never seen a dentist.
- Some people have got into debt whilst paying for dental care.
- Some people are travelling as far afield as London and Birmingham to see a dentist.

Key themes are problems with Access, Cost and Equality.

Healthwatch Isle of Wight is the local consumer champion for health and social care.

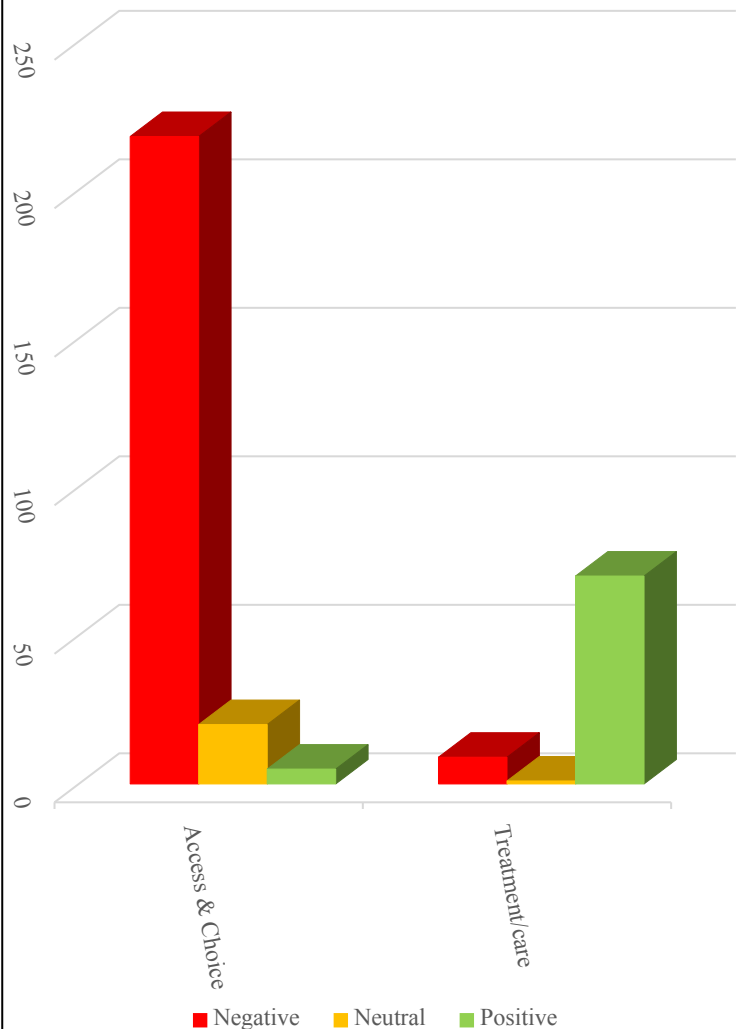
Local people have been raising concerns about a lack of NHS dental services for many years, but this problem has been made much worse by the Covid-19 pandemic.

6 18% of the feedback we received Jan 1st – Dec 31st 2022 is directly related to Dental Services (415 interactions).

66% of this feedback was negative
19% was positive
5% was neutral

Most of this feedback was related to access.

Dentistry Themes 2022



Inequalities.

Lack of NHS dentistry on the Isle of Wight is compounded by the fact that we are surrounded by water. We do not have the luxury of travelling to a nearby city or county to access NHS dental care, without the additional cost and inconvenience of travelling by ferry which can be unreliable in poor weather and can add hours to traveling time.

Lack of NHS dental services has widened health inequalities, with people on lower incomes often getting no service, while those who can afford to go private can get treatment without delay.

We have been contacted by pregnant women, cancer patients, people with mental health conditions, autistic people and cancer patients, all of whom have been unable to access any NHS dental care. This has affected their mental health and wellbeing, caused financial hardship and has increased pressure on urgent care services such as NHS 111, A&E and GP services.

Solutions

We have spoken to local dental providers who are aware of the issues and who are keen to help. They would like the following:

- Easier route for foreign dentists to work in this country.
- Fairer remuneration for preventative dental treatment and treatment that stabilises people's dental health.
- More focus on providing people with necessary treatment, rather than people having to go through urgent and emergency services in regular cycles.
- Make contracts more flexible to allow undelivered UDA's to be allocated to dental practices that have the capacity to deliver these.

What are we hearing?

"I'm struggling to find an NHS dentist anywhere on the Isle of Wight. I can't go private due to having no money."

"Terrible, teeth in awful state."

"I haven't see a dentist for over ten years because as soon as an NHS dentist opens, they go private. It is the worst type of medical service in Britain."

"No new NHS patients being taken on, but we can take you on as a private patient."

"I have chipped teeth and can't get anywhere..even privately."

"My teeth are falling out, I can't eat properly, in pain all the time! It's a nightmare that I never wake from. I need dentures and I can't afford private treatment. Please help."

"As we have been unable to register on the Island, we have travelled as a family to Southampton area to see a dentist. This involves a return ferry crossing costing both time and money."

What else are we hearing?

“In pain all the time.”

“Went private otherwise I wouldn't be able to do my job. Meant I've had to borrow money for the treatment I need otherwise I'd effectively lose my job. Annoyed and worried.”

“I have had pain on and off and not been able to work. No treatment and just a waiting service. Left with ongoing pain.”

“It's meant that I've had to pay for private treatment at a cost of over £6000. This is a lot of money to find from savings.”

“Now I am over 50, I see signs of decay and I worry whether I will need major treatment and lose teeth as I get older. I worry about suddenly having a broken tooth or an infection and being unable to see a dentist or being told to go private when I cannot afford it.”

“We are concerned that our oral health is being ignored.”

“It has affected my anxiety massively and it worries me so much not having a dentist.”

“One of my children has never been to the dentist, and the other has had 2 emergency appointments, which we had to beg for.”

“My son has had a lot of trouble with his baby teeth failing to come out while the adult teeth are coming through. His mouth is now a mess. I have emailed all the Island surgeries many times, only to be told that I can register as a private patient.”

“It's difficult having to toss up if it's worth addressing my dental issues and ongoing issues with my jaw by going to a private dentist, knowing I could be in debt if I do.”

“I have had pain on and off and not been able to work. No treatment and just a waiting service. Left with ongoing pain.”

“Unable to access NHS dental care for my child is outrageous and upsetting.”

“I have tried (looking for an NHS dentist) for over 10 years. I was born on the Island and the only access I have had to dental treatment is the emergency dentist. It is a constant worry.”

“I cannot afford private treatment. I have a broken bridge teeth hanging low in my mouth that stops me from eating properly. It upsets my wife to see me like this.”

“Been trying to register (with NHS dentist) since 2019. Needed emergency extraction and then 3 months later needed another. Apptm made during lockdown but surgery rang me to say dentist couldn't get over from mainland. In the end forced tooth out myself as chemo patient could not risk infection.”

“As my family and I have not been able to enrol at a dentist on the Isle of Wight, I feel really upset. I have had to stay registered with the dentist where I used to live 130 miles away. I would not be able to get any treatment done there as it is usually done over a number of weeks. I don't know what I will do if any of us need treatment?”

Cancer patient who is the main carer for a disabled child had to postpone cancer treatment after she was informed that her cancer had spread. She was unable to find an NHS dentist who would complete the dental work she needed before she could start chemotherapy and she could not afford to go private.

