

# How easy is it to find an NHS dentist in Derbyshire?

A review of the NHS.uk find a dentist search function

Engagement: July - November 2021

Publication: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

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## About us

Healthwatch Derbyshire (HWD) is the health and social care champion for the people of Derbyshire. We provide an independent voice evidencing and representing patient and public experiences of health and social care services. We are here to listen and gather the experiences of Derbyshire residents, to make sure NHS leaders and other decision-makers hear their voice and use their feedback to influence service improvement, address gaps in service quality and/or provision.

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## Summary

Since before the Covid-19 pandemic, NHS dental services have been in the spotlight. As practitioners move to private practice, NHS provision has become harder for patients to access.

The impact and pressures of Covid-19 on dentistry have been severe. An initial suspension of services at the start of the pandemic delayed thousands of treatments. Ongoing guidance for safe methods of working along with robust infection prevention measures have meant dentists are unable to see as many patients each day. Dental practices are working hard to recover to pre-pandemic levels of operation but current circumstances have amplified the shortage of NHS dental provision, affecting those who are not already on a NHS dental practice list the most.

The recommendation of how to find a dentist, as stated by NHS Choices<sup>1</sup> is to *'Simply find a dental surgery that's convenient for you, whether it's near your home or work, and phone them to see if there are any appointments available ... NHS England commissions dental services in England and is required to meet the needs of their local population for both urgent and routine dental care.'*

HWD recorded a 50% increase in calls in each quarter this year (115 calls January - October 2021) from people having difficulties finding an NHS dental practice convenient to them. Callers were frustrated with the search function on the NHS website<sup>2</sup>. They also found many practice profiles to be inaccurate, outdated or with lack of information often resulting in having to phone over 20 practices. The lack of capacity for new patients in Derbyshire was becoming apparent but establishing the actual availability for new NHS patients in Derbyshire was not possible by details provided on the NHS website<sup>2</sup> alone.

At the end of July 2021, HWD researched the capacity to accept new NHS patients at 98 dental practices in the county and city using the NHS find a website<sup>2</sup>. For comparison, this research was repeated at the end of September 2021, following sector prompts and requests to practices to update their profiles. Practices with no information displayed were contacted by phone to establish their capacity to accept new NHS patients, to understand any waiting times and establish reasons for lack of information displayed on their NHS profiles<sup>2</sup>.

We found that just 25 (34%) of the practices updated the NHS website<sup>2</sup> between the two research periods. Fifty-nine (59) of the 98 practices (60%) had no information displayed for patients to understand if they were accepting new patients thus illustrating it is not easy to find an NHS dentist in Derbyshire.

At the time of our research (24<sup>th</sup> September - 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021), there were 25 surgeries accepting children and just nine accepting adults as new NHS patients. Three areas<sup>3</sup> had no provision for new adult NHS patients disproportionately affecting those without transport and risking population oral health. Once accepted, patients could be waiting for up to a year for their appointment.

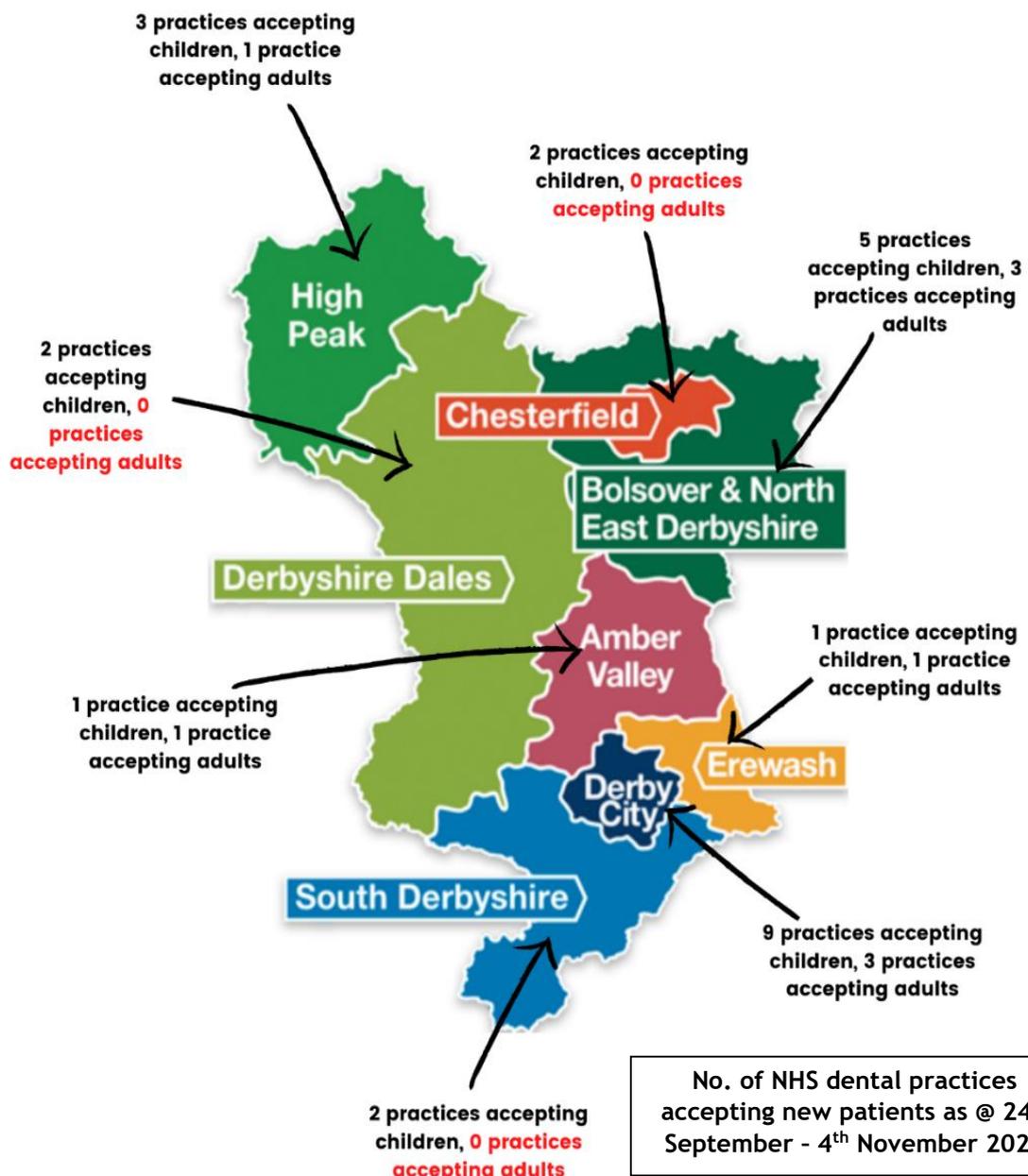
Responses from dental practice managers and staff concerning why they had not updated their NHS profiles<sup>2</sup> varied but there was a general sense of apathy towards its importance with many identifying issues surrounding the administration of updating them.

Recommendations to stakeholders for improvements:

- Additional funding in Derbyshire for new NHS patient capacity in areas of need
- A protocol to be defined to ensure practices update their profiles, especially their capacity to accept new NHS patients
- Improvements to be made to the NHS find a dentist website<sup>1&2</sup>.
- Clear information to be made available to the public in Derbyshire about how to access NHS dentistry.

Healthwatch Derbyshire has had a 50% increase in dental calls each quarter, a total of 115 this year

More than half of the dentists we reviewed had not provided information on whether they were taking on NHS patients



## Introduction

NHS dental services in England have been in the spotlight for several years, recently receiving a lot of negative feedback with the main area of concern for people being a lack of provision. The Healthwatch network has seen an increase in the number of people sharing their experience of trying to access NHS dental care as the Covid-19 pandemic affects dentistry.

This report aims to identify the current capacity in Derbyshire for new NHS dental patients, highlight the user experience of the NHS Choices Find a Dentist search tool<sup>2</sup> and look to understand the reasons that dental practices have inaccurate/out of date information displayed.

In December 2020, Healthwatch England (HWE) published a report<sup>4</sup> on the impact of the pandemic upon dentistry, and how it has pushed dentistry to crisis point. The report found that more than seven in ten people (73%) found it difficult to access help and support when they needed it. Access concerns continued in the HWE update of May 2021 finding 80% of people found it difficult to access timely care<sup>5</sup>. Both reports urged the Government to, *'Make it a legal requirement for NHS-contracted dentists to regularly update their website and information on their practice notice boards. The NHS 111 and the NHS.UK website must be able to provide relevant and latest information to the public.'*

In July 2021, a joint letter from the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Healthwatch England was issued to NHS dental practices asking they keep their NHS profiles up-to-date (see appendix A). On 21 October 2021, HWE co-signed an open letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, calling for a recovery plan for NHS dentistry.<sup>6</sup>

HWE chair, Sir Robert Francis QC, said in December 2020, *'If we don't improve access to NHS dental care, not only do people risk facing far greater dental problems in the future but it also puts pressure on overstretched hospitals and GPs. Untreated dental problems can lead to pain, infection and the risk of long-term harm, which is comparable with other medical conditions.'*

HWD has seen a 50% increase in calls every quarter this year (115 calls January - October 2021). These have highlighted the difficulties the public experience finding and accessing NHS dental appointments.

Calls to HWD were often due to signposting on the NHS website<sup>1</sup> which states, *'Problems finding an NHS dentist ... Your local Healthwatch may be able to give you information about services in your area or raise a concern if you have one.'*

Some of the concerns outlined from the people of Derbyshire were:

### Referrals from a dentist

One caller commented on the fact that some practices show that they are accepting new patients, *"Only with a referral from a dentist"* saying: *"How do you get a referral?"*

Callers who had received emergency treatment were confused as to why they had not then been referred to those practices accepting referrals for their ongoing treatment, instead they had to search in the same way as those looking for a routine appointment.

### Outdated or lack of information

Thirty-six (36) callers found difficulties with the NHS website<sup>2</sup> as many practices had not updated their profiles in the last 90 days, having to then call each practice in turn to ascertain whether they were taking new patients or not. We regularly heard from people having made calls to over 20 practices.

One caller phoned every dentist listed on the Find a Dentist website<sup>2</sup> in the Chesterfield area describing this as a *“frustrating task”* they found that none were accepting new NHS patients summarising the NHS website<sup>2</sup> as, *“Not fit for purpose”*.

Others commented:

*“The website is inadequate as much of the data is out-of-date or not showing at all. There is no search function for finding a dentist accepting new NHS patients.”*

*“... [the website is] a waste of time.”*

*“Why are these websites in the public domain giving out false and outdated information?”*

*“One dentist had not updated their information since 2012.”*

### Practices promoting private treatment

Sixteen (16) callers told us that, when they called dental practices, they had been told that they could not access the service as an NHS patient but were offered private services instead.

*“Many practices are stating they are accepting new patients but when you call, they say they’ve not been doing so for ages and then aggressively promote their private treatment plans.”*

*“I feel people are being forced down the private route to get treatment.”*

### Signposting to Healthwatch

Four callers were confused by Healthwatch’s role. One caller thought that Healthwatch were an NHS service provider who would be able to offer NHS dental services with another commenting: *“The NHS website needs to be clear with what Healthwatch is able to do.”*

Calls to HWD not only described difficulties with finding a dentist but often described in detail their pain, discomfort, desperation for an appointment, DIY dentistry and the impacts on their mental health. It was clear from the comments received that research into the NHS Find a Dentist website<sup>2</sup> for Derby City and Derbyshire NHS dental practices was required to gain a full picture of the gaps in information on dental profiles and capacity for new NHS patients.

## Method

### Website research No.1

Between 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021, HWD staff and volunteers reviewed the NHS Find a Dentist website<sup>2</sup>. Using a list of dental practices within Derby City and Derbyshire produced by the CQC. HWD looked at their profiles, recording whether they were taking on new NHS patients and when their details were last updated.

Practices only appearing on both the CQC provider list and the NHS Find a Dentist website<sup>2</sup> were reviewed as some listed on the CQC provider list were operating on a private only basis.

Thirty-two (32) practice profiles in Derby City and 66 in Derbyshire were reviewed on the website.

This report was shared with the Regional Commissioning Team, NHS England and NHS Improvement - Midlands. We were informed that all dental practices offering NHS services had been asked to update their information upon the find a dentist website regularly.

### Website research No.2

HWD volunteers reviewed the NHS Find a Dentist website<sup>2</sup> between the 24<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for a second time. This was to investigate whether practices had updated their profiles as requested by the Department of Health and Social Care joint letter (Appendix A) and the Regional Commissioning Team.

### Contact with practices

To establish a complete picture of the new NHS dental patient capacity, on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 HWD wrote to the 59 practices whose entries showed, *“This dentist has not supplied this information in the last 90 days. Contact the dentist directly for more information.”* The letter informed them that HWD would be telephoning them in October to gain accurate data of new NHS patient capacity throughout Derbyshire. These calls also aimed to understand any reasons or barriers preventing dental practices from updating their profile on the website<sup>2</sup>.

Between 11<sup>th</sup> October and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021, HWD staff called 59 practices asking five questions (Appendix B), all data gathered was anonymised to encourage practices to speak freely and openly. New NHS patient capacity data was collected from all 59 practices.

## Findings

Data in the tables, quotations and information provided in this section were gathered during the research period 24<sup>th</sup> September - 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This included online research of the NHS choices website<sup>2</sup> and telephone calls to practices where no data existed on their profile.

## Practices accepting new NHS patients

Place Area <sup>3</sup>	Practices in Derby & Derbyshire accepting new NHS patients			
	Only with a referral from a dentist	Accepting children (under 18)	Accepting adults (18 and over)	Accepting adults entitled to free dental care *
High Peak	1	3	1	1
South Derbyshire	0	2	0	0
Erewash	0	1	1	1
Chesterfield	2	2	0	0
Bolsover & North East Derbyshire	0	5	3	3
Amber Valley	1	1	1	1
Derbyshire Dales	2	2	0	0
<b>Total County</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Derby City</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total County &amp; City</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

\*Practices listed as accepting adults entitled to free dental care were the same practices accepting adults.

Of the 98 practices researched, 59 had no information about their capacity to accept new patients on their profile the message displayed, *“This dentist has not supplied this information in the last 90 days. Contact the dentist directly for more information.”*

Twenty-five (25) practices had updated their profiles between the two research periods.

Upon calling the 59 practices without information some informed us that they had since updated their profiles as a result of our letter.

## Waiting lists for accepted new NHS patients

The table below shows responses from 15 practices when asked how long new patients would be waiting to be seen by appointment:

	Less than 1 month	1 - 3 months	3 - 6 months	6 - 12 months	12 months or more
Treatment appointment	6	6	2	0	1
Routine / Check-up appointment	3	6	4	1	1

When explaining the waiting periods for new patients one practice manager explained:

*“... [we are] working through the first three pages of the waiting list as people on the waiting list need lots of treatment. Not taking on any more.”*

### Recovery of routine appointments for existing NHS practice patients

We asked practices if they had been able to start offering their existing NHS patients routine/check-up appointments since the pandemic. From the 51 responses, all were able to confirm that they were offering routine appointments to both children and adults. Some had fully recovered having seen all patients listed for a routine appointment. Many, however, explained that they were still in a period of recovery which in some cases could take a year.

*“Once we have caught up with our routine appointments, we will be able to take on new NHS patients, we are about a year behind with those.”*

*“We are more or less up-to-date but routine appointments are getting pushed to more like a nine-month recall rather than six months.”*

### Reasons given by practices not updating their profile

Practices were asked for any reasons or barriers for not updating their practice profile on the NHS website<sup>2</sup>. Responses were recorded from 43 practices (16 practices were not able to comment due to the practice manager not being available). Practices gave multiple reasons in some instances, the table below shows their responses grouped into themes:

Theme of response	No. of responses
Didn't know an update was required or had lost the website login details	16
No longer receive emails from the website to prompt a profile update	11
No longer receive emails from the dental commissioners asking for profile details	10
Found it too time-consuming	7
Practice capacity changed so often, data soon out-of-date, updating not a priority	4
Didn't need to update as they had sufficient patients on lists to fill gaps	4
Reluctant to display as accepting new patients when contract targets were unknown	3
Their situation hadn't changed (some for years) so their profile was not updated	3
Preferred new patients to phone, to discuss the alternative of private dental plans	2
Practice stated they had updated their profile, suggested the website was incorrect	2
New practice manager/new owner, updating their profile was on their 'to do list'	2
Mainly a private practice with a small NHS contract so saw no need to update	1
Not looking to take on new NHS patients so not updated	1
Did not realise this was a requirement, updated in response to the letter.	1

A sample of comments from dental practices:

*"Account linked to old practice manager. We have lost the logins as they were linked to her NHS email which is no longer active."*

*"Books have been closed for four years to new NHS patients. As we have nothing to update that is why we haven't updated. I don't see the information on that website being of help to patients so, as we have no changes to make, I haven't updated it since being in post."*

*"There is no update from us so no need to update. There should be an IT solution to resolve this so that it shows it is the correct information for patients."*

*"It would be useful to have an email and link to remind us every so often if it helps keep the information on the website up to date. We understand how frustrating it must be for patients trying to find a dentist but our situation can change quite often."*

*"I hadn't realised we were over 90 days. I do many roles at present, a reminder email would be helpful so that I could factor this in would be helpful. We have changes of staff at present so it's not been a priority of ours"*

*"Email reminders would be helpful and I wasn't aware of how our details are displayed for patients."*

*"On a Saturday we can get up to 30 calls a day for people wanting appointments, these mainly come from 111, we just can't manage this, we probably see two genuine emergency patients on a Saturday, we have to stagger our contract. We do of course see as many people as possible who have genuine need."*

*We are receiving a large volume of calls to the surgery we only have one dentist so it's really hard having to tell people to look on NHS choices or call the National Dental helpline number."*

*"We are short of staff, we have been trying to recruit dental nurses for several months and haven't received any applications from qualified dental nurses. We have not updated NHS choices as we have been too busy. The dentist is responsible for updating it and simply does not have the time."*

## Practice manager comments about urgent/emergency appointments

Additional comments linked to their capacity to accept new NHS patients were recorded:

*"We are getting so many calls from new patients as there are some practices near us that have closed. We do take the 111 emergency appointments but can't do the follow on treatment."*

*"We feel like other practices are not doing their bit. We are frustrated as we get five for six referrals from 111 every day ... Funding is an issue, if we got the funding we would do more ... we had to make the hard decision to stop seeing the five to six people referred a day and now see only one as per our contract. We have heard horrendous stories from people calling 111 which is why we tried to help as many people for as long as we did."*

*"We are aware that some local practices are not seeing urgent emergency patients or from 111 especially those with facial swellings, pain or trauma. We always speak to the dentists about how we can fit those people in, often seeing them at lunchtimes or asking them to wait in surgery for a gap. It's not good enough that others are not doing this."*

*"We were inundated with calls recently from new patients as a dentist in our area retired. We are seeing patients on an emergency basis from 111 or if people call direct but it is all dependant on when they ring if we have capacity on that day as we are often seeing our own patients for emergency appointments. It's really hard to know where to direct people as we don't have an out-of-hours service in this area, it's really difficult when you know someone is in need."*

## Conclusions

It is not easy to find an NHS dentist in Derbyshire

- The research highlights the limited capacity in Derbyshire for new NHS patients, three areas are without any provision for new adult NHS patients. With capacity being scarce, it will inevitably and disproportionately affect those without their own transport or means to access transport links. The current situation risks the oral health of the population and affects the national public health strategy of prevention for the promotion of good oral health. Limited access to NHS dental care risks greater dental pain, infection, and long term harm such as poor mental health for patients, adding pressure on overstretched hospitals, urgent treatment centres and the 111 service
- Some practices listed as accepting new NHS patients were found to be only able to offer new patients an appointment in over a year's time. This is not helpful to the public as the expectation of indicating on the NHS website<sup>2</sup> as accepting new patients is to be able to then make an appointment in the near future
- Sixty percent (60%) of the practices had no information on their profile about accepting new patients. This is a huge frustration for patients and professionals supporting them, it deems the website<sup>2</sup> ineffective, it makes the transparency of new patient capacity in the

county hard to analyse and puts patients in a loop of complaints with NHS England Customer Contact Centre and Healthwatch. There is an assumption that people will persistently call multiple practices to find a dentist however, in reality, this presents a barrier for many, and they may give up their search

- Practices were able to see existing patients for routine appointments but many had not caught up entirely delaying their acceptance of new patients
- Access to urgent/emergency treatment appears inconsistent between practices with differing approaches to triage and the acceptance of self-referrals or referrals from the 111 service
- Many dental practices could not see the importance of updating their profiles. There was a lack of awareness of the patient experience of searching for a dentist on the NHS website<sup>2</sup>. Administration issues were identified as the major reason for not updating their profiles. The added benefit of an up-to-date website<sup>2</sup> will be ease of analysis of countywide capacity for new patients.

## Recommendations

- **Additional funding in Derbyshire for new NHS patient capacity in areas of need**
- **A protocol to be defined to ensure practices update their profiles, especially their capacity to accept new NHS patients, including local actions:**
  - Regional commissioning team to issue information/update requests direct to dental practices by email
  - Requirement for dental practices to update NHS website profiles<sup>2</sup> as their capacity to accept new patients changes to form part of the NHS contract
  - Automatic direct email from NHS website<sup>2</sup> to practices when their profile is out of date
  - Local Dental Network to support practices to update their profiles
  - ‘Accepting new patients’ to only be selected when appointments can be offered in the near future.
- **NHS find a dentist website<sup>1&2</sup> to make improvements:**
  - ‘Referral only from a dentist’ - information to be provided to the public and to dentists about how to gain or make a referral from a dentist
  - Whilst some improvements to the search function have been observed during November 2021, filters to be added to allow searches by postcode e.g. All dentists accepting children, all dentists accepting adults
  - Revise the explanation of what local Healthwatch can do to support the public and champion their voice.
- **Access to NHS dental appointments - to provide clear information to the public in Derbyshire:**
  - How and where to access urgent dental advice and treatment
  - Importance of attending routine appointments to remain on regular patient lists
  - How to find an NHS dentist in Derbyshire for new patients
  - Why there is no formal registration at dental practices, unlike GPs.

HWD will continue to monitor new NHS patient capacity in Derbyshire and champion the experiences of Derbyshire residents whilst the recommendations are considered.

## Responses

NHS England and NHS Improvement for the Midlands - received 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021

### Response to Healthwatch Derbyshire report: How easy is it to find an NHS Dentist in Derbyshire?

Thank you for your email of 6th December and the *How easy is it to find an NHS dentist in Derbyshire* report which outlines concerns about the current access to NHS dental services in Derbyshire.

The report provides a useful snapshot of the current situation, which we know remains very challenging. We appreciate the research that you have carried out in this instance along with our continuing dialogue on these matters. We have shared the report with Rami Khatib, as the Local Dental Network Chair for Derbyshire, so that he is aware of the issues raised. It is important that people with specific complaints about NHS dentistry are directed to the Customer Contact Centre ([NHS England » Contact us](#)) to allow us to investigate complaints in detail and take contractual action should a provider not be adhering to their commitments as NHS contractors.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS dental services were suspended in March 2020. Although face-to-face services have resumed, dental teams continue to face challenges due to the specific infection prevention and control measures essential to ensuring the safety of patients and staff [COVID-19: infection prevention and control \(IPC\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Requirements for social distancing as well as ventilation and cleaning between patients remain in place.

Dentists are continuing to prioritise patients with the highest need or priority, such as those needing urgent care, children, and those most at risk of oral disease. Although the situation is improving there remains a significant backlog of people who will not have seen a dentist recently.

It is a condition of a practice's income that they prioritise all patients, who are known and unknown to the practice, who require urgent dental care if contacted directly or via 111 services. However, it may currently be difficult to find a dentist who is taking on new NHS patients for routine care/check-ups.

Patients wishing to find an NHS dentist can visit the NHS (<https://www.nhs.uk/>). It is the responsibility of each individual dental practice to ensure that their entry is kept up-to-date. However, this is not a contractual requirement and we are aware that practices may fail to do so, resulting in understandable frustration for patients. Recognising the effect of this on patients (particularly in light of the pandemic) when they looking for an NHS dentist. NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) is currently redesigning the NHS website and has emphasised again the need for providers to keep their entries up-to-date. Formal letters have been sent to all practices from both the Office of the Chief Dental Officer for England, the Local Dental Network Chairs and Public Health England. This has been supported by a ministerial letter from Jo Churchill MP. NHSE/I will be working with the new Derbyshire LDN Chair, Rami Khatib in the New Year with the aim of ensuring that more accurate information is available from the website.

We do understand the frustration of patients who are facing longer waits for routine care, especially as they can now see other areas of society becoming less restricted. Our focus remains to support dentists and their teams to see as many patients as safely possible.

Infection prevention and control means a return to normal practice is not yet possible, but nationally the contractual threshold of activity has been increased, and practices are now required to manage a minimum of 65% of pre Covid-19 dental activity, and a minimum of 85% of pre Covid-19 orthodontic activity. This will provide access for more patients whilst ensuring that

the practices are supported financially to allow them to stay open and continue providing care. We expect these measures to be in place until the end of December 2021 when they will be reassessed.

We have commissioned additional weekend sessions in Derbyshire which will also help to improve access and are in the progress of commissioning further additional access initiatives across the Midlands Region where one of the criteria conditions is to update the NHS website.

In addition, NHSE/I have provided some assistance for practitioners with ventilation and other safety measures to increase the number of patients that providers can safely see in a day.

You may find the attached note useful when responding to the members of the public asking about access to NHS dental care.

Kind regards

**NHS England and NHS Improvement for the Midlands**

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### **Local Dental Network - received 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

Thank you to Healthwatch for carrying out this important research. It highlights the challenges facing access to NHS dental care, and also draws attention to the frustration faced by patients in relation to inaccurate information on whether practices are accepting new patients or not.

As the newly-appointed Local Dental Network Chair for Derbyshire, I have supported this research because I wish to understand the difficulties facing dental patients in Derbyshire.

Dental services have been extremely challenging over the pandemic period. As a dentist working in primary care myself, I have seen first-hand the challenges facing dental teams whose patients have to take their masks off, including during aerosol-generating procedures which increase the risk of spreading Coronavirus. I have also seen an army of local dental volunteers who have supported the Urgent Dental Care centres across Derbyshire, as well as the wider NHS, for example within vaccination programme.

The local NHS Commissioners are already procuring additional services to improve access to NHS dental care in Derbyshire.

As a result of this report, we will undertake work locally and nationally to ensure better availability of accurate information regarding whether dental practices are accepting new patients or not.

Dental teams are working hard to restore services while ensuring that they keep their staff and patients safe. This report highlights that updating practices' profiles is an important step in the restoration and recovery path.

Kind regards,

Dr Rami Khatib  
LDN Chair for Derbyshire

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## Derby & Derbyshire Oral Health Steering Group - received 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

The Derby and Derbyshire Oral Health Steering Group is a group of organisations working together to improve oral health in Derbyshire and Derby City. As a collective we recognise and value the insight presented within this report, and intend to use the key findings to inform our future actions and commissioning priorities.

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Derbyshire would like to thank all dental practice teams who shared their honest feedback about new NHS patient capacity and their NHS website profiles<sup>2</sup>. We also extend our thanks to the volunteers who researched the website and to the support of practitioners including Dr Rami Khatib, Local Dental Network Chair, who supported the research questions and letters to dental practices.

## Disclaimer

The comments outlined in this report should be taken in the context that they are not representative of all patients or dental practices, but never the less offer useful insight. It is important to note that the engagement was carried out within a specific time frame and therefore only provides a snapshot of patient and dental practice experiences collected at this time. They are the genuine thoughts and feelings of dental patients in Derbyshire conveyed to Healthwatch Derbyshire. The data should be used in conjunction with, and to complement, other sources of data that are available

## Appendix

### Appendix A



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear NHS Dental Contractors

Firstly, we would like to thank you and your teams for your continued resilience and dedication over what has been a very challenging 15 months.

It goes without saying that NHS dentistry has been significantly affected through the pandemic and the steps we have had to take to keep dental staff and patients safe, has substantially reduced the amount of NHS dental care that is available for patients. We are making progress in restoring NHS dental care and activity is continuing to increase. The progress the NHS has made is a reflection of your hard work, dedication and clinical skill in prioritising patients and adapting to new ways of working.

But despite this progress, access is still challenged. Healthwatch published their report on 24 May 2021 showing that patients are continuing to struggle to access care. One of the recommendations of the Healthwatch report was that we take steps to improve patient information, to help signpost patients to available care. A link to the full report is available here: [Dentistry during COVID-19 insight briefing | Healthwatch](#)

Patients' main source of information when looking for an NHS dentist is from the nhs.uk website. The website lists dental practices and provides information on practices taking on new NHS patients. Although there are many practices that are updating their information regularly on the nhs.uk page there are also many profiles that are not up to date.

We are therefore writing to ask you collectively to please review your information on the nhs.uk website in order to help patients find information about available care more easily.

Guidance on updating your profile on the nhs.uk website can be found [here](#). Further advice is also available from Dental Services, to support you with limiting cancellations and managing your appointment times for patients here: [the link](#)

A range of materials have been produced for dental practices to support them to communicate with their patients and the public about changes to dental practice services and how to access treatment if they have a dental concern. These also include posters telling people not to enter the practice if they have coronavirus symptoms, and posters to remind patients to keep a safe distance. Further details can be found here: [NHS Resources for Dental Practices - updated 19.03.21 - Coronavirus Resource centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](#)

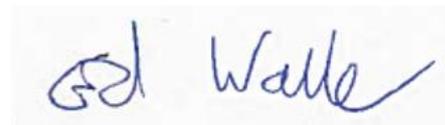
Social media cards with accompanying messages targeted at patients and explaining current arrangements, can also be downloaded for social media use here: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/nhs-dentalassets/>

NHS England is currently developing a communications toolkit for dental practices, which will help practice staff explain the current situation to patients. Information on publication will follow shortly.

We would like to thank you once again for working with us to help patients.



Jo Churchill  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care



Ed Waller  
Director of Primary Care,  
NHS England



Sara Hurley  
Chief Dental Officer England



Chris McCann  
Director of Communications, Insight and  
Campaigns, Healthwatch England

## Appendix B

### Dental Practice questions - profiles not updated for 90 days

1. Is your Practice accepting new NHS patients? Options reflect the profile page online:

Only with a referral from a dentist	Accepting Adults
Accepting Children	Accepting Adults entitled to free dental care (exempt from charges)

2. Once accepted how long would a new patient be expected to wait for an appointment requiring treatment (non-routine check-up)?
3. Once accepted how long would a new patient be expected to wait for an appointment requiring a routine check-up?
4. Thinking about your regular NHS patients, have you been able to start offering them routine/check-up appointments since the pandemic?

Yes
No (treatment only)
Only children
Other - (provide details)

5. We are calling you today as your dental practice profile on the NHS.uk website - find a dentist has not been updated for 90 days meaning that the public cannot see if you are accepting new NHS patients. We'd like to understand any reasons or barriers the practice has for not updating your profile on the website, we will treat all feedback anonymously.

## References

1. NHS 10 December 2019, *how to find a dentist*, accessed July - October 2021, <<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist/>>
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3. Joined up Care Derbyshire, *What is place?* accessed Nov 2021 <<https://joinedupcarederbyshire.co.uk/our-places>>
4. Healthwatch England, 9 December 2020, *What people are telling us*, <<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2020-12-09/what-are-people-telling-us-july-september-2020>>
5. Healthwatch England, 24 May 2021, *Dentistry during COVID-19 insight briefing* <<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2021-05-24/dentistry-during-covid-19-insight-briefing>>
6. Healthwatch England, 21 October 2021, *NHS dentistry: we have co-signed an open letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer*, <<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-10-21/nhs-dentistry-we-have-co-signed-open-letter-chancellor-exchequer>>