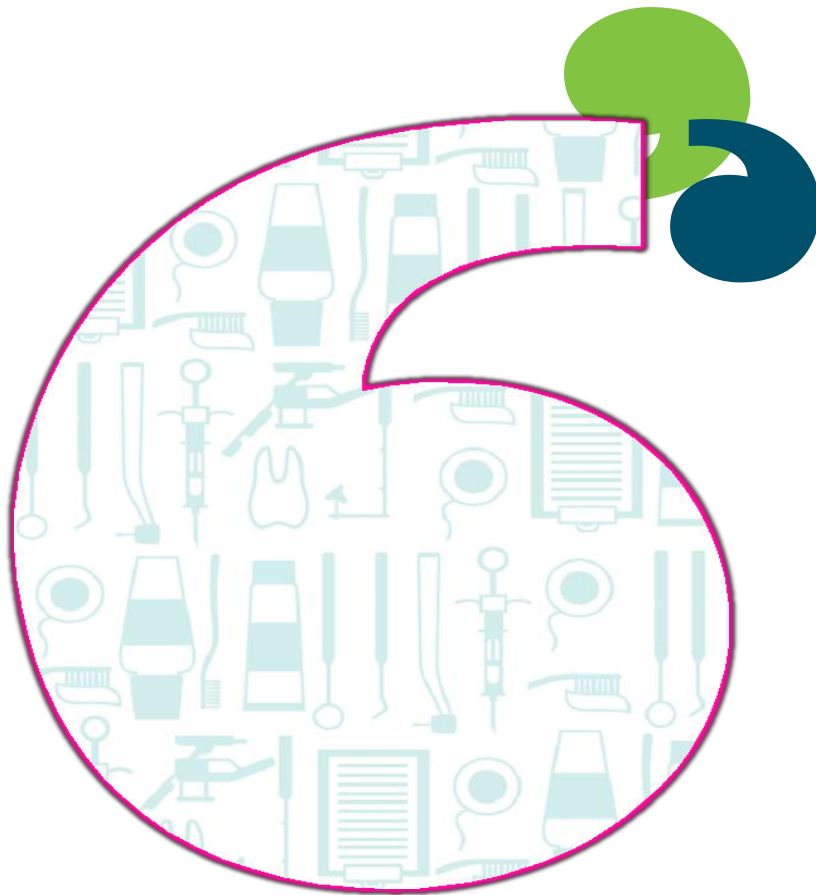


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



Damira Dental Studio
75 South Street, Bishop's Stortford, CM23
3AL
East Herts Area

Premises visited: Damira Dental Studios
Date and Time of Visit: 01.02.18 10:45am
Visit Conducted By: Tom Barrasso and Nigel Broe

NHS Contract Holder: Dr A Brogan

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the staff we spoke to on the visit.

Purpose for the Visit:

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) is conducting an Enter and View visiting programme into Dental Practices in Hertfordshire following the outcomes of a joint project between HwH and Public Health locally. For further information our report can be found here:

<http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Access-to-NHS-Dental-Services-in-Hertfordshire-2016.pdf>

The focus of the visits is to look at the:

- Environment
- Physical Access
- Information Access
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints Handling

We are working with Public Health East of England and have informed NHS England locally. We are also working closely with the Central Region Inspection Manager - Dentistry at the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The Local Dental Committee has also been informed and has been very supportive of this work.

Methodology:

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) is the independent health and social care champion. Local Healthwatch is in place to gather the views and experiences of people accessing services, to use this information to influence decisions and to provide information and advice to the local community about health and social care services.

Legislation allows HwH authorised representatives to 'Enter and View' health and social care premises to see and hear for themselves how services are provided.

We are focussing on one area at a time that has been randomly selected. We began with a pilot in Welwyn and Hatfield, where 50% of the practices were randomly selected for an Enter and View visit; the summary report of our findings for the district can be found here:

<https://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WelHat-Summary-Report-FINAL.pdf>

We have visited 25% of the St Albans and Harpenden District, and are now focussing on 25% of dental practices with NHS contracts in the East Herts District.

These Enter and View visits are 'announced/unannounced' visits where we notify the practice of our intention to visit within the next 4 weeks but do not give a specific date or time. Authorised HwH representatives use an observational checklist to record their findings and have thirteen specific subject areas to ask the person on duty at the Reception desk about.

Desktop research is carried out on the website of the dental practice and the practice's entry in NHS Choices.

Disclaimer

The report relates only to a specific visit (a point in time) and the report is not representative of all service users (only those who contributed within the restricted time available).

1. Introduction

Damira Dental Studio is situated on South Street in Bishop's Stortford. This is part of a chain of dental surgeries; the company that owns it was established in 2003 in Oxford, and owns seventeen other practices across the south of England. They provide a mix of NHS and private dental treatments. Currently working at the premises are two dentists, one hygienist, two dental nurses, and a practice manager.

Due to the practice's position on South Street in the town centre, there are good travel links. It is a 5 minute walk away from the train station, where there are links into London and further north. There is a bus stop a moment's walk away up South Street that has links to Stansted Airport, Harlow, and surrounding rural areas.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

The practice is located on the high street and was easy to find. There are two 'Damira Dental Studios' signs, one in the window and one above the practice. As the main sign above the practice cantilevers over the footpath, it would be difficult to see as a pedestrian; however the sign in the window addresses this, and it was easy to locate the practice as both a road user and a pedestrian.

There were a number of cars parked directly outside the practice which did obscure some of the signage from the road. However, it was still relatively easy to find the practice due to the large sign at the top of the building.

The practice also has an embedded Google Map on their website for patient's convenience.

2.2 Car Parking

There is no on or off street car parking available at the practice. There is a drop off zone directly outside, however, during our visit, this was blocked by parked cars meaning patients would need to be dropped off further down the road.

There is also no disabled or blue badge parking available, and disabled patients would therefore need to park in an alternative location. We identified the closest car park to be in Apton Road, which is approximately a 5 minute walk away. This could potentially be problematic for disabled patients, or patients with limited mobility, especially given the practice's proximity to the main road and the busy high street. That being said, patients would be able to be dropped off directly

outside the practice if cars weren't parked in the way. We were informed that the area is warden patrolled and that the cars we observed would be ticketed and asked to move.

There was no information about the lack of parking on the website, so patients visiting for the first time may experience some challenges if they came by car.

2.3 Visible External Information

There was plenty of information visible from outside the practice including two large 'NHS Dental Services' signs; NHS dental treatment was very clearly advertised from all directions.

The opening times and contact numbers were very clearly displayed on the front of the practice, as was some information about making appointments online. Information about out of hours service was also provided, advising patients to contact 111. Whilst out of hours information was provided, it was in fairly small font and was not clearly differentiated from the opening times. Out of hours information was not provided on the website.

2.4 First impressions

Upon arrival, we were made to feel very welcome by both the receptionist and practice manager. We also observed several patients enter and leave the practice who were treated in the same friendly, welcoming, and helpful manner. The reception area and the waiting room are incorporated in the same room.

The reception desk was spacious, uncluttered, and included a lowered area that was wheelchair accessible. There was a clear view of the receptionist from both the low and high areas, without any noticeable barriers or obstructions.

The practice was very light and airy, and large windows allowed lots of natural light to enter. The seating area was spacious, very clean, and comfortable. A number of leather sofas and chairs were available, with more than enough seating for the size of the practice. The chairs were all at the same height, but were at a height that was easy to transfer in and out of.

There were three noticeboards in the practice that included lots of information including: fire procedures, a list of services provided under the NHS, a quality assurance statement, information citing a £1 charge for wasted appointments, NHS banding information, a price list for private services, a certificate of registration, liability insurance, and information about providing patient feedback titled 'talk to us'. The practice had also displayed Healthwatch Hertfordshire posters and contact cards. The boards were very neat and organised, and information was easy to locate. However, the font size for most of the information displayed was very small and difficult to read for people with visual impairments.

The reception desk also included a comments box for patients to provide feedback, and a Healthwatch Hertfordshire poster had been put up.

The practice did not include any photos of staff members.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

Access from outside the building was very good. There was clear and easy access to the main entrance, and there were no noticeable obstructions. There was plenty of free space outside the building to manoeuvre wheelchairs and walkers. The pathway was completely level, and no ramps were required to enter the building. It was noticed that the threshold to the building had only a very small gap and thus did not present any accessibility issues for walkers or wheelchairs with either small or large wheels.

The reception area was equally accessible. There was plenty of room to manoeuvre walkers and wheelchairs, without any obstructions. During our visit, there were two patients in reception (one using a wheelchair and another using a walker), and there was plenty of space to comfortably access, exit, and move around the practice. The reception area, and corridor, were clutter free and felt very clean and spacious.

The practice does have a hearing loop for those with a hearing impairment, however the sign letting patients know about it is hidden away.

An accessible toilet is available downstairs, which provided very easy access for a wheelchair user. The door opened outward and away from the reception area, making it easy to enter when approaching it from the front of the practice. However, it was noted that when the door is open it completely covered the corridor, making it impossible to travel between the treatment rooms and the reception area. Furthermore, it would be possible for someone in the corridor to be hit by the door when opened from the inside.

The accessible toilet was immaculately clean, and had clear signage on the front of the door. A red emergency cord was available and fully extended. The washbasin was low and was at a good height, and there were several rails available by the toilet and wash basin. Two soap dispensers were available and were adequately stocked. A baby change station was also available in the accessible toilet.

The entire practice is located on the ground floor, so there were no considerations regarding the accessibility of upper floors.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

Up to date NHS charges and bandings were clearly displayed in a couple of locations, alongside the costs for private treatments. However, the text was quite small and would be difficult for patients with a visual impairment to read. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, there were posters welcoming NHS patients, and the NHS logo was clearly displayed in the window of the practice, so it was clear that NHS treatment was available. We were also informed that NHS bandings will be explained to patients when booking appointments and that leaflets are also provided. We were also told that dentists use the FP17DC form with patients, which includes pricing information.

4.2 Complaints

Feedback seemed to be encouraged by the practice, illustrated by a comment box on the reception desk which included the statement that “last year 100% of patients would recommend the practice to friends and family”. A Healthwatch Hertfordshire poster was also included on the reception desk and Healthwatch Hertfordshire cards were provided in the reception area. The noticeboard had a poster encouraging feedback. We were informed that copies of the complaints policy could be provided to patients if requested, but copies weren’t readily available.

A poster encouraging patients to leave a Google review was also on the inside of the toilet door.

The practice’s complaints policy is patient-focused. However, there are a few points in need of addressing:

1. There is no named individual responsible for handling complaints, other than ‘the practice manager’.
2. The escalation procedure, with attached contact details, is not clearly separated and formatted to benefit patient understanding.
3. The phone number for the General Dental Council is incorrect.
4. The Private Dental Complaints Service is not included for private patients.

Summary of the Practice's Complaints Policy

Named Responsible person	Acknowledgement Of complaint	Clear timescales for complaint	Additional information about organisations to take complaint to?	Support for complaints? Pophwer or Healthwatch?
No - practice manager	Yes - 1 working day	Yes - 10 working days, with further notification if required	Damira Dental Head Office NHSE* PHSO GDC NRLS	No

*NHSE NHS England

PHSO Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

GDC General Dental Council

NRLS National Reporting and Learning System

4.3 Promoting oral health

A large poster titled 'new year, new you' was visible from behind the reception desk. This was targeted at adults and mainly advertised cosmetic treatments; we didn't see any posters providing advice about more general oral care.

There were some leaflets available on gum disease, and some children's toothbrushes were available to purchase from reception.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

The practice was easy to find on NHS Choices, and has been recently updated with information about services provided, and whether they are accepting new NHS patients. There was also information about what facilities are available, their opening times, and a section of their website was included on the Overview page.

The practice's own website is as part of the larger Damira Dental Studios group. The website is smart, modern, and navigable. However, there is very little information on the staff working at the practice; there are no photos of any team members. In addition to this, on the 'Treatments and Fees' tab within that, the NHS Bandings are not included.

Furthermore, the practice's complaints procedure is included on the website, slightly hidden away on the bottom banner of every page. On this page there are some discrepancies between the complaints policy provided to us, and what is written on this webpage. One key discrepancy is that the phone numbers provided for the escalation procedures are premium rate numbers, when non-premium rate numbers exist for these services. As well as this, the NHS England escalation procedure for NHS patients has not been included, and nor is it clear what distinction there is between the different escalation procedures.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

We were informed that patients' communication needs are discussed with them when registering with the practice. Furthermore, we were assured that communication needs are discussed, and updated, when booking appointments and arranging treatment. We were also informed that any specific communication requirements would be flagged on the patient record, so any adjustments can be arranged in advance.

We were also told that the practice has a daily morning huddle, and that additional patient needs are discussed during this meeting. The staff plan how to support an individual who may have difficult accessing the building, or who has additional communication needs.

More specifically, the practice supports people who do not speak English by using an online interpreter, but also said that often people will bring their own interpreter who can be a friend or family member.

All patient communication needs are recorded electronically on the patient record.

We asked whether there was a private space where patients could speak to staff or where they can recover from treatment, and we were informed that the manager's office could be used in these circumstances. However, the manager told us that the majority of patients wait in the reception area and find this to be suitably quiet and comfortable.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

As previously mentioned, the practice undertakes a daily morning huddle to discuss any specific needs for patients; these can include physical access needs or communication needs. We were told that, due to the lack of parking, staff will plan how to assist disabled patients each morning depending on the appointments scheduled for the day. During our visit, we did notice this support being provided to patients, and staff were very helpful and courteous.

The practice supports people with learning disabilities by encouraging the use of the purple folder. We asked whether patients were responsible to getting their folder completed, and we were informed that dentists are all aware of the folder and will prompt patients if it is forgotten. None of the literature and posters we observed were available in easy read, however, and the font size was also quite small which could potentially present a barrier to those with a learning disability.

The practice informed us that there is no specific support for people with visual impairments, but that they can provide literature in large print if requested. However, the practice did raise that they have had difficulty accessing some NHS literature in large print.

With regard to safeguarding, we were informed that there is a safeguarding lead at the dental group's head office, and we were shown some of the information on safeguarding for staff in the office and on the staff board. However, we did not see any information about safeguarding available for patients in the waiting areas either on the notice boards or amongst any of the leaflets.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

The practice has a first aid trained member of staff, however the staff member was not clearly identified through either a certificate, poster, or a photo.

The practice does have a defibrillator and we were informed that all staff receive annual training on how to use it. We were also told that regular training takes place during practice meetings, and re-enactments, or role plays, for first aid related situations are carried out.

6. Summary of Findings

The Damira Dental Studio in Bishops Stortford displayed a lot of good practice. Some points worth highlighting include:

1. The practice is well signposted and easy to find
2. Accessibility to and inside the practice is good, including the accessible toilet
3. Visible external information

4. Staff are very welcoming and friendly
5. Patient information included on noticeboards
6. Willingness and will to collect and hear patient feedback
7. Clean and welcoming environment
8. Staff's good knowledge of the purple folder
9. Regular first aid training of staff

Some areas for improvement included:

1. Lack of clarity around parking on practice website
2. Drop off area blocked by parked cars
3. No out of hours information is provided on the website
4. Size of font used for practice notices
5. Unclear signage for the hearing loop
6. Accessibility for patients with learning disabilities
7. Information about the trained first aider was not visible

7. Recommendations

2.2 Car Parking

1. Explore working with the local council to improve access to the drop off area directly outside the practice.
2. Ensure that information is provided about where to park and the accessibility of the practice on the website.

2.3 Visible External Information

3. Provide out of hours (NHS 111) information on the website, and improve the visibility of it on the outside of the practice.

2.4 First Impressions

4. Consider providing some literature in larger font, and make it clear that large print, or easy read, is available on request.
5. Provide staff photos for patients.

3.1 Facilities

6. Consider moving the hearing loop sign to a more visible location, and consider having a sign advertising the hearing loop from the outside of the building; this could be in a window or on the front door.
7. Consider placing a sign on the inside/outside of the toilet door to alert patients to be careful when opening the door or passing by.

4.1 NHS Charges

8. Consider placing NHS banding information on the reception desk, and in larger print.

4.2 Complaints

9. Update the complaints policy in accordance with the points in need of addressing discussed in section 4.2.
10. Include the name of the practice manager in the complaints policy.
11. Consider whether the timescales given in the policy are realistic, to manage patients' expectations.
12. Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the complaints procedure, in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.

4.3 Promoting oral health

13. Consider ways of improving the promotion of oral hygiene in the waiting room/reception area for both adults and children.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

14. Improve the visibility of the complaints procedure on the practice website.
15. Ensure that information given regarding the complaints procedure matches up with the practice's own complaints policy.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

16. Display the names of any trained first aiders.

Practice response:

2.2 Car Parking

We are contacting our local council for discussions on how to improve drop off access. There have been more frequent traffic warden inspections to discourage illegal parking.

2.3 Visible External Information

The NHS 111 number is clearly displayed below the practice telephone number and opening times on the plaque outside the practice.

2.4 First impressions

We have put a sign by the notice board for patients to ask for larger font literature if required.

3.1 Facilities

6. The hearing loop sign is clearly displayed behind the reception desk.
7. We have put a safety alert sign on the inside/outside of the toilet door.

4.1 NHS Charges

These are clearly displayed on the notice board.

4.2 Complaints

The practice manager's name is included in the complaints policy. Liaising with head office to incorporate further contact details in our practice leaflet.

4.3 Promoting Oral Health

We routinely change our notice board and display different promotions. During Smile month we had a healthy eating display. There are always leaflets available promoting oral health when our display is not specifically targeting it.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

All complaints policies are now uniform.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

We are now displaying names of trained first aiders.