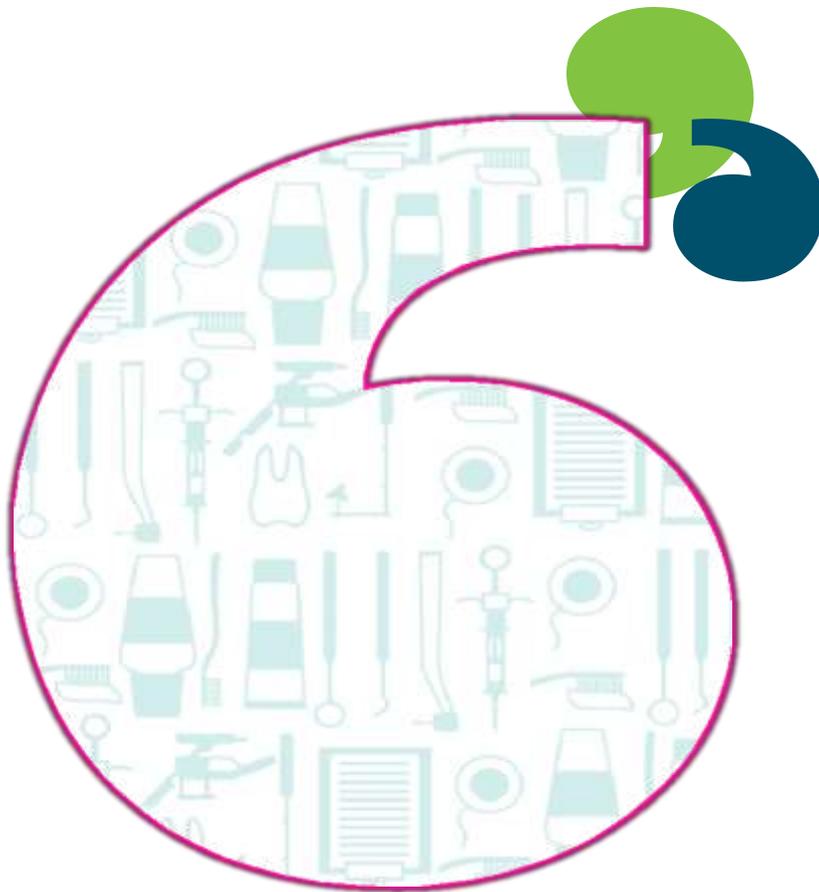


# Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



**Mr G K Rabin & Associate**

**54 The Quadrant, Marshalswick, St Albans, AL4 9RD**

**St Albans and Harpenden Area**

**Premises visited:** Mr G K Rabin & Associate  
**Date and Time of Visit:** 31.07.17 10:30  
**Visit Conducted By:** Sue Bolton & Carol Pillinger

**NHS Contract Holder:** Mr G K Rabin

### **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 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](#). We are currently looking at St Albans and Harpenden, and have plans to visit 25% of the dental practices in the area.

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

*Mr G K Rabin & Associate is a dental practice in the north-east of St Albans. It is situated up a flight of stairs at the rear on the southern end of The Quadrant, a parade of shops in Marshalswick. There are two dentists working on the premises, as well as two dental nurses and two part time receptionists. The practice treats only children on their NHS contract.*

*Due to the practice not being in a central location in St Albans there are few transport links. The practice is served only by the 653 bus, which travels between St Albans City centre, the University of Hertfordshire Campus, Hatfield, and Welwyn Garden City.*

## 2. Environment

### 2.1 Signage

*The practice is difficult to find as the entrance is situated at the rear of the parade of shops; a patient may have to walk past a 'Private Parking' sign in order to reach the practice. The sign for the practice itself is not obvious due to where it is placed on the wall.*

*The practice does not have its own website that patients can search for that gives directions to the practice.*

### 2.2 Car Parking

*As the practice is situated behind a parade of shops there is parking only a short walk away. At the time of our visit there were plenty of spaces for people to use. There was provision for accessible parking as part of the car park outside the parade of shops, but no dedicated spaces for the practice.*

### 2.3 Visible External Information

*There was no external information to say that the practice treats NHS patients; there was also no out of hours information either for 111 or an alternative emergency phone number.*

## 2.4 First impressions

*Upon entering the practice we were greeted and warmly welcomed by the receptionist. The waiting room is combined with the reception area. It is light, airy, clean, and has a friendly atmosphere. There were several chairs, though only two different kinds. There were colourful posters on the wall, and there was a full noticeboard with plenty of information on it. They had displayed First Aid certificates belonging to staff, information pamphlets, and the most recent CQC inspection results. There were no photos of staff members on display in the practice.*

*There were books for patients to read. However, due to concerns around hygiene the practice has made the decision not to have children's toys available for patients. There was also no TV set in the waiting room.*

The practice said that there is a TV set in one of the surgeries.

## 3. Physical Access

### 3.1 Facilities

*The practice is located in a flat above the shops on the parade, up a flight of seventeen steep steps at the back of the shops. There is also a second floor within the practice up a flight of stairs with a handrail on one side, which is not easily accessible for people with a disability. Due to these factors, and the fact that there is no lift or stair lift available to reach the practice, or within the practice, the premises are not accessible. The receptionist we spoke to told us that they always let new patients know that it is upstairs, but said that they do not signpost patients unable to climb stairs onto a more accessible practice. This is contrary to what they state in the Patient's Guide, which is that they signpost to the Care Quality Commission to advise of a nearby practice that is more suited to the patient's needs.*

*There was no hearing loop at the time of our visit, and the receptionist seemed not to be aware that they could book interpreters for hearing impaired patients. The receptionist said that they will provide support as is necessary, but currently they are treating no patients with a hearing impairment. For those with a visual impairment, the receptionist stated that they will try to make appointments on the first floor level of the practice.*

*There is a toilet, but this is upstairs in the practice and as such is not accessible for patients with a disability. However, there is a contrast between the colour of the walls and the colour of the facilities such as the sink and toilet, which is suitable for patients living with dementia. There was no alarm cord.*

## 4. Information Access

### 4.1 NHS Charges

*There was no poster giving information on NHS charges in the surgery. This is not unreasonable given that they do not treat adult patients on the NHS, but only children. Children of course receive treatment for free up until the age of 18, or to the age of 19 if they are still in full time education.*

### 4.2 Complaints

*When asked about how patients are made aware of the complaints procedure, the receptionist told us that they refer patients to the copies of it on the noticeboard. A short form of the procedure is also included in the Patient's Guide, which can be found on the noticeboard, though it is quite small print.*

*The complaints procedure itself is patient-centred and well set out. The assurance that complaints will not affect a patient's treatment is an extra comfort for the patient. However, the policy seems only to serve private patients, due to the fact that if a patient is unsatisfied with how their complaint was handled, there is no signposting to NHS England. The Private Dental Complaints Service does not deal with NHS patients' concerns. Furthermore, some of the contact information for the Private Dental Complaints Service is out of date, including the phone number and the postal address.*

#### Summary of the Practice's Complaints Process

Named Responsible person	Acknowledgement Of complaint	Clear timescales for complaint	Additional information about organisations to take complaint to?	Support for complaints? Pohwer or Healthwatch?
Yes	Yes - 2 working days	Yes - within 20 days with further notification if required	Yes - PDCS*	No

\*PDCS Private Dental Complaints Service

### 4.3 Promoting oral health

*At the time of our visit there was plenty of information on oral health for both adults and children on the walls in the waiting room and reception area.*

#### **4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website**

*The practice's entry on NHS Choices has not been updated since 2010; as such no information on the services provided here can be found due to the website's 90 day rule. However, information on the facilities and its lack of disabled access appears still to be accurate.*

*The practice itself has no website. We relied entirely on the practice's entry on Google to find it, but even with this help it was difficult. It may be beneficial to the practice in terms of showing a public face, and in terms of making the practice more accessible in the digital age, to consider its online presence.*

### **5. Supporting Patients**

#### **5.1 Communication**

*When asked about how patients' individual communication needs are dealt with, they said that this information would be collected in the Confidential Medical Form. Patients are obliged to complete this form every six months. This would be kept on file for that specific patient.*

*The receptionist also told us that if a patient needed a private space to speak to staff, or recover from treatment, they could offer an empty dental surgery for discussions with staff, and the waiting room/reception area for recovery. They stipulated that the dentist would not allow a patient to leave until they were feeling well enough following treatment.*

*The Patient's Guide endeavours to provide a clear description of the kind of treatment a patient can expect from the practice. It details the standard form of contract, as well as a list of things the practice should be doing to protect the privacy and dignity of patients. The section on racial and gender discrimination is helpful. The Guide is transparent and is a good way of building trust between the practice and its patients.*

*The practice's Patient's Guide furthermore states that they carry out an annual formal patient survey to gather feedback on the services they provide, including treatment received, staff attitudes, and the facilities available. The Guide says that the results are analysed and formatted and then given out on request.*

#### **5.2 Patients with specific requirements**

*As stated above, patients with a physical disability are currently not accommodated by the facilities available at the practice. However, the receptionist told us that they do provide support as necessary to patients as they come to the practice.*

*The Patient's Guide states that the practice may ask patients, such as those with a hearing impairment or a learning disability, to attend consultations with a chaperone to ensure both the patient and the dentist have understood everything. There is no mention of the practice hiring their own interpreter if the patient does not have an appropriate or available person for an appointment.*

*In terms of support specifically for those with a learning disability, the receptionist said that those patients will be called the day before their appointment with a reminder, and a card given to them with the date and time of their next appointment written on it. The receptionist was unfamiliar with the term 'Purple Folder' in the context of patients with learning disabilities.*

*In the case of patients speaking a foreign language, they told us that there is a Polish-speaking dental nurse working at the practice who may be able to interpret for Polish-speaking patients. The receptionist also told us that they deal with many nationalities at the practice.*

### **5.3 Medical Emergencies**

*When asked about the procedure in cases of emergency, the receptionist told us that the person dealing with the patient would notify staff. Next, a different member of staff would get the defibrillator (which is on premises), while a different member of staff called the emergency services. This is corroborated in the Patient's Guide.*

*All members of staff have been trained in first aid as recently as two months ago, and as a result of this there is no designated first aider at any given time.*

*The defibrillator is kept upstairs in the practice at the top of the landing. They have emergency equipment in both the upstairs and downstairs dental surgeries, but no emergency trolley.*

## **6. Summary of Findings**

*Mr G K Rabin & Associate has many areas of good practice. Some of these have been identified below:*

- 1. Friendly, welcoming staff.*
- 2. Clean, bright reception and waiting room area.*
- 3. Full noticeboard with plenty of information, including on oral health, for patients' perusal.*
- 4. Transparency around the practice's obligations to the patient in terms of privacy, dignity, and communication.*

We also identified the following areas for improvement:

1. *Clear signage to the practice.*
2. *Meeting the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard.*
3. *Information available on NHS Choices.*
4. *Online presence.*

## 7. Recommendations

1. *Consider improving signage to the practice to ensure easy access for patients.*
2. *On external signage, make it clear that NHS patients attend the practice and provide the 111 number for out of hours help.*
3. *Ensure that patients unable to attend the practice due to their physical disabilities are signposted to NHS Choices to find a nearby practice able to meet their requirements.*
4. *Consider installing a hearing loop for the hearing impaired.*
5. *Consider offering interpreter services, rather than relying on patients to supply their own interpreters and translators.*
6. *Consider introducing a red emergency cord into the toilet to ensure patient safety.*
7. *Ensure that all the practice's literature, such as the Patient's Guide, is available on request in other formats. For example, large print, braille, or Easy Read.*
8. *Update the complaints procedure with current contact information and include NHS England in the escalation procedure. Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the complaints policy, in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.*
9. *Update NHS Choices with current information about the services and facilities offered at the practice.*
10. *Consider building a website to give the practice an online presence, which may increase visibility and improve accessibility for patients.*
11. *Consider whether a dental surgery will always be available at any given time for a private conversation between patients and dentists.*
12. *Ensure that all staff are familiar with Purple Folders.*
13. *Ensure that there is always a designated first aider at any given time; this may be done by a rota system.*

### Practice Response:

- 1-3. I accept these recommendations.
- 4-5. I do not consider these necessary.
6. I will consider this.
7. The Patient's Guide is available in large print.
8. The contact information for the Private Dental Complaints Service has been updated.
- 9-10. I accept these recommendations.
11. A dental surgery/private space can be made available for a private conversation by arrangement.
12. All staff are now familiar with Purple Folders.
13. I accept this recommendation.