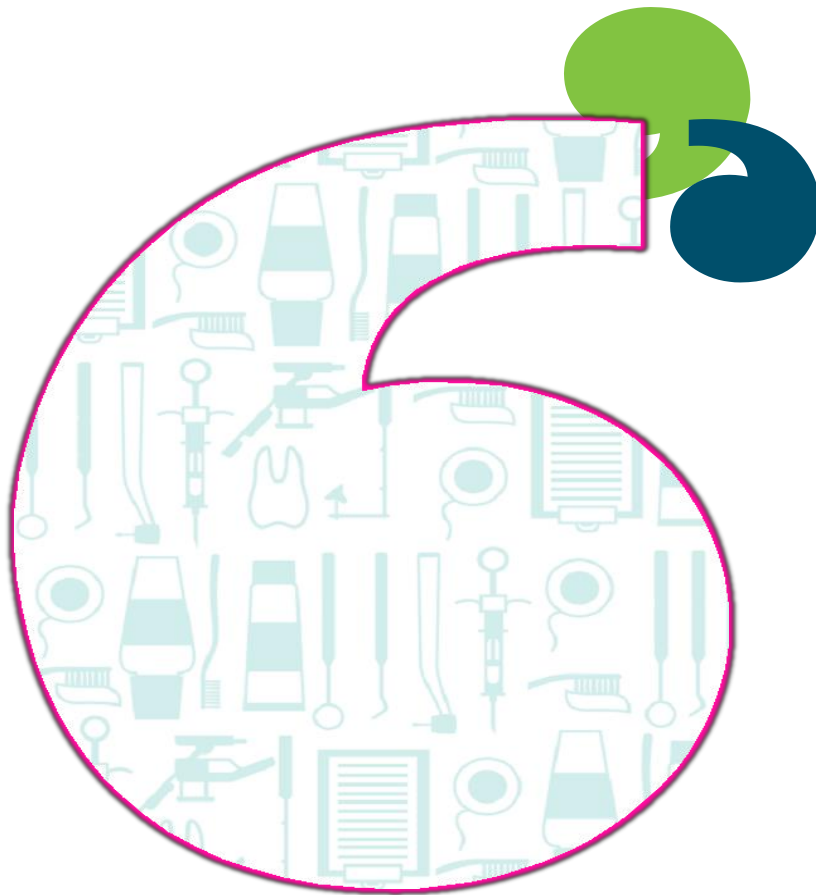


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



Hatfield Dental Centre

28-30 Market Place, Hatfield, AL10 0LN

Welwyn and Hatfield District

Premises visited: Hatfield Dental Centre
Date and Time of Visit: 28.02.17 11:00
Visit Conducted By: Alice Lovell and Priya Vaithilingam
NHS Contract Holder: Mr Patel

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the staff who we spoke to on our 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 England and have informed NHS England locally, the Central Region Inspection Manager for Dentistry at the Care Quality Commission, and the Local Dental Committee. We will be sharing our reports with all of these bodies.

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 District at a time beginning with Welwyn and Hatfield, where 50% of the practices have been randomly selected for an Enter and View visit.

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 not give a specific date or time. Authorised HwH representatives use an observational checklist to record their findings and have five specific questions to ask the person on duty at the Reception desk.

To minimise disruption to the delivery of the service, a pre-visit questionnaire is sent to the practice to gather additional information.

Desktop research is carried out on the web site 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

Hatfield Dental Centre is in a central location in Hatfield town centre on the upper level of shops in Market Place. The practice has existed on the site for many years, but has been part of Experdental since 2014. Staff are shared between Hatfield Dental Centre and Hilltop Dental Surgery; six dentists work for Experdental, as well as a hygienist, three dental nurses, three trainee dental nurses, a practice manager, and three receptionists.

As the practice is in the town centre, it is well served by transport links. There are multiple bus stations in the vicinity going to the surrounding area and further afield. Hatfield train station is a fifteen minute walk away. The area immediately outside the practice is pedestrianised, and accommodates a market on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

The practice was easy to find as it has large signage on the outside that can be seen from a distance across Market Place.

2.2 Car Parking

We parked in Dog Kennel Lane car park at the back of the town centre shops and Asda. This offers three hours of free parking and is only a few minutes' walk away from the practice. There were disabled spaces in the car park, but for a person who is unable to walk very far this would be a difficulty.

2.3 Visible External Information

The practice welcomes new NHS patients on its signage, as well as including a large copy of the NHS logo. They also signpost that they provide emergency appointments on the main sign above the door and window. Additionally, the phone number for the practice is located on the outside, though 111 was not included.

2.4 First impressions

We approached the practice up a staircase and walked through a transparent glass door to enter; this would be helpful for the receptionist to see when a person needs help in accessing the practice. We walked into a clean, professional, and welcoming environment; the receptionist was friendly and very accommodating, though she was sitting behind a high desk.

The waiting room was light, and attached to the reception area. Immovable cushioned benches were available around the edges of the waiting room, and a

table was situated in the centre of the benches with magazines and children's toys available for patient use.

To the right of the reception desk, out of obvious patient view, there was a feedback box with NHS branding on it, as well as a separate box which was personal to the practice.

There was a clear noticeboard in easy view of the seats in the waiting room, which was full of useful information. 111 was included on the noticeboard for out of hours help. However, a large number of the available sheets were in small print, and high enough that it would be impossible to see from a wheelchair.

We thought that the display at the end of the waiting room of smiling children, each of them personally known to the practice, was a great way of making patients feel they are in a patient-centred environment.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

By virtue of its location on the upper level of shops on Market Place, it is not an accessible building. There is no access ramp to the practice, but only sets of stairs. The receptionist told us that when a patient wishes to access their service and is not able to climb stairs, they would advise that patient to attend Hilltop Surgery instead (this is a five minute drive, or a half hour walk away.) She also said that some patients who have limited mobility are willing and do in fact climb the stairs to reach the practice.

The waiting room and reception area are quite small and not very manoeuvrable for wheelchair users, especially as there is no variety of seating for patients. None of the seating can be moved to accommodate someone in a wheelchair.

At the time of our visit, we observed no hearing loop for the hearing impaired. When we asked the receptionist about the Accessible Information Standard, she was unaware of its existence, at least by that name.

At present there is no accessible toilet available at the practice.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

The NHS Bandings were up to date and clearly on display in the practice at the time of our visit.

When asked about how treatment costs would be explained to a patient, the receptionist referred to the NHS Bandings on the wall. When prompted, she showed us the FP17DC form, known as the ‘purple form’ in the practice. She said that patients are offered to keep a copy of this at the end of treatment, but that patients do not always want it.

The NHS Bandings can also be found on the practice’s website on the ‘Dental Fees’ page, which drops down from the ‘About Us’ tab.

4.2 Complaints

When asked, the receptionist said that if a patient wishes to make a complaint, they should do so in writing to the complaints manager. The complaints policy is also displayed in the practice. They would offer to discuss the complaint in a private room at the back of the practice.

The Complaints Policy is available to read on the website but offers no further recourse if a patient is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled. However, the copy that is on display in the practice offers further referral to: NHS England, the General Dental Council, the Care Quality Commission, and the Dental Complaints Service.

Summary of the Practice’s Complaints Procedure

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 - 3 working days	Yes - within 10 days with further notification if required	None online	No

4.3 Promoting oral health

At the time of our visit, we could not see any information for the promotion of oral health for children or for adults in the practice.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

Until recently, NHS Choices was displaying correct information on the services that are offered at the practice. However, now NHS Choices no longer displays that information if it has not been updated for 90 days.

The information displayed on the facilities appears to be accurate, although disabled parking availability is some distance away to be considered accessible parking.

The practice's website is professional and clearly signposts the fact that it treats NHS patients. It is navigable and user-friendly. The opportunity to give feedback to the practice is clear when 'Contact Us' is scrolled over by the cursor.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

This has been left blank as the clinic did not return its questionnaire.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

This has been left blank as the clinic did not return its questionnaire.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

In the case of a medical emergency, the receptionist told us that she would call the dentist over, clear the area around the patient, and call for an ambulance. The receptionist knew where their onsite defibrillator is kept, and said it was easy to get to.

The receptionist told us that the identity of the first aider should be clear even to patients in the waiting room, as it is written on a sign on the wall. We did not observe this. She told us that a group of people working at the practice are trained in first aid every year.

Further information has not been included as the clinic did not return its questionnaire.

6. Summary of Findings

Patient feedback to the clinic has not been included as they did not return their questionnaire.

However, we found the following areas of good practice:

1. *Transparency around NHS Fees.*

2. *Signposting of NHS treatment at the clinic.*
3. *The clinic's website's clear navigability.*
4. *Focus on patient feedback.*

On the other hand, there were some areas for improvement:

1. *Accessibility to the clinic.*
2. *Parity between the complaints policy on display in the clinic, and on the website.*
3. *Promotion of oral health.*
4. *Accessibility of information on display in the clinic.*

7. Recommendations

1. *Consider printing the policies available on the noticeboard in larger print, as well as writing these up in more accessible language.*
2. *Make sure that all staff are aware of the Accessible Information Standard and what it means for how they communicate with patients.*
3. *Consider improving accessibility in the reception and waiting room by creating a lowered section in the desk.*
4. *Consider installing a hearing loop.*
5. *Print 111 for out of hours help onto the outside of the building.*
6. *Place the feedback boxes in more prominent positions in the waiting room.*
7. *Update NHS Choices with current and correct information for the practice.*
8. *Include the complete complaints procedure on the website.*
9. *Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the complaints policy, in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.*

Practice response:

1. All policies are readily available in large print on request. All policies on display as hard copy are retained in digital format as such large print production can be done with immediate effect.

With regard writing up documents in a more accessible language, we are currently in the process of updating policies and procedures, and with that we will ensure that all policies are:
written in plain language;
as concise as possible; and
where possible designed to be as legible as possible (for example using a larger font size).

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2. I am currently familiarizing myself with the Accessible Information Implementation Guidance, following which new policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure compliance; improved behaviors of the practice and its team; and increased accessibility for our service users.

Once developed the new policies and procedures will be incorporated into our staff induction program to be followed up by annual training as necessary.

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3. We are currently in the process of re-modelling a number of areas within the practice to offer an overall improved, comfortable and more accessible environment for our service users. As part of this re-model we are taking into account the results of annual access audits carried out at the practice and whilst there does not appear to be an immediate requirement for this change serious consideration will be afforded to this recommendation when we move into the reception area phase of the re-model.
4. As part of our annual access audit the requirement for a hearing loop is reviewed annually. To date we have not identified a requirement (based on patient feedback and recommendations), however following your recommendations we have started researching hearing loop systems for installation at our site.
5. Posters for NHS 111 out of hours service are now displayed outside of the building. Additionally information on the out of hours service contact details are available on our practice answerphone.
6. At present feedback boxes are situated in the main area of the waiting room in the seating area and fixed to the right hand wall where entering the area where the surgeries are for hand written feedback. In addition to this there is a tablet in open view for patients to leave digital/online feedback on the reception desk. Whilst re positioning the fixed feedback boxes and tablet will need to be considered when remodel of reception area takes place in the future (due to all furniture and fixtures being fitted) the use of colourful signage being introduced should increase prominence in the waiting area.
7. Monthly update of the NHS Choices site will now feature in my personal duties.
8. We are currently in the process of updating policies and procedures, following update and approval the complete complaints procedure will be published on our company website.
9. We are currently in the process of updating policies and procedures, as such will ensure the above recommendation is applied to our annual update.