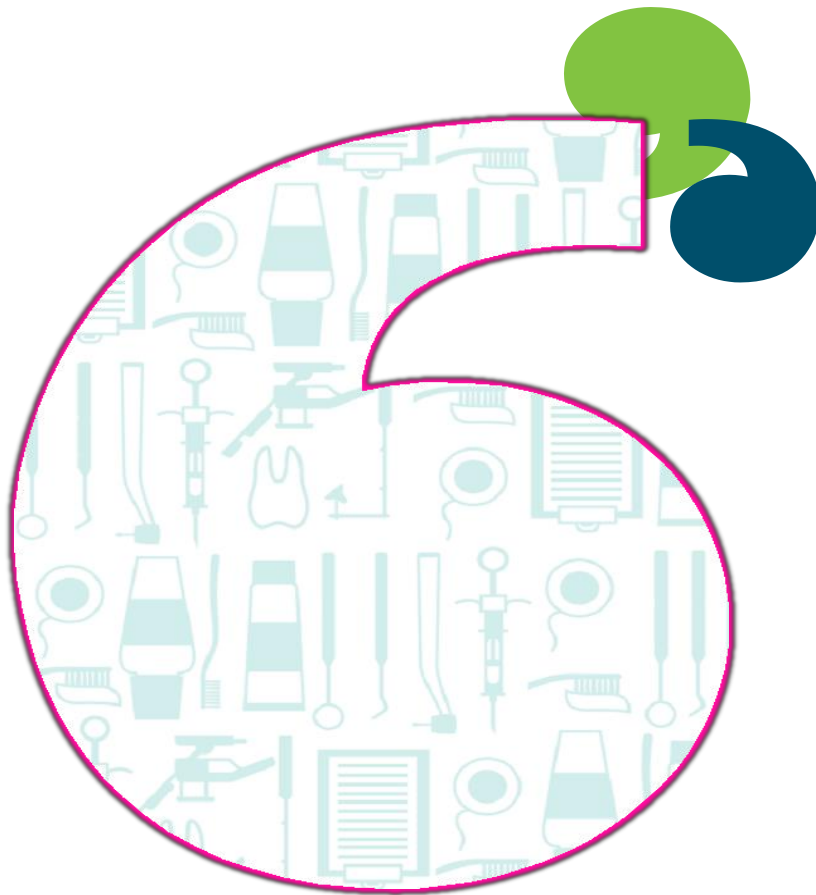


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



The Hertfordshire Centre for Dentistry
9-11b Leyton Rd, Harpenden, AL5 2HU
St Albans and Harpenden Area

Premises visited: The Hertfordshire Centre for Dentistry

Date and Time of Visit: 10.08.17 10:30

Visit Conducted By: Meg Carter and Barbara Birch

NHS Contract Holder: Mr S Bhandal

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

The Hertfordshire Centre for Dentistry is situated in Harpenden town centre on the corner of Leyton Road and Amenbury Lane. The practice has been established for 20 years as a referral clinic for hard to treat dental conditions. Currently eight specialist dentists and a hygienist work from the practice, as well as a practice manager. In the past, the practice has treated NHS patients by referral only.

Due to its location in the town centre, the practice is well served by transport links. It is only a few minutes' walk from Harpenden railway station, and there is a bus stop right outside the practice served by 307 and HA1 buses, which travel to Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. A further few minutes' walk from the practice is Harpenden High Street, which is served by buses that travel to Luton, Stevenage, Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and surrounding rural areas.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

The practice was easy to find and well signposted as a 'dental practice' on overhead signage and in the windows.

The practice has also included a map on their website on the 'Contact Us' page to help find the practice via Google Maps.

2.2 Car Parking

There is no car parking specifically allocated to the practice. However, as it is situated in the town centre, there is a public car park approximately 5 minutes' walk away from the practice, or patients can park on the road nearby the practice. Street parking is limited to a 2 hour stay, or permit holders only.

Provision for accessible parking is available; two blue badge spaces are located about 20 yards away from the entrance to the practice.

2.3 Visible External Information

As you might expect for a private practice, there is no information outside the practice to say NHS treatment is offered here, and nor is 111 given for out of hours help; only the practice's own phone number is given outside the practice for passers-by to see.

2.4 First impressions

When we entered the practice we were greeted warmly by the receptionist, and put at ease. The practice waiting room and reception area is combined into one room, which was smart, light, clean and tidy. At the time of our visit there were no blinds down so patients were able to see out the windows while they are waiting. There were rows of padded chairs placed around the walls. There was also a large noticeboard in the waiting area that gives health information, including a prominent notice directed towards pregnant patients. The notices there were in a good size print, however it seemed overcrowded with so many different pieces of information. There were no photos of staff available in the waiting room.

There was a water dispenser for patients' comfort, as well as a TV showing a Freeview channel in the waiting room. When asked, the receptionist said that a couple of books, pens and paper are available for patients who ask.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

The practice is located in an old, small building that was not designed with accessibility for wheelchair users in mind. As the treatment rooms are up a flight of stairs within the practice, it is not suitable for those with a physical disability. There is no lowered section of the desk, and there is very little manoeuvrability in the waiting room for wheelchair users. However, as the practice is by referral only, the practice manager informed us that they are proactive in signposting to an alternative practice when patients' disabilities make it impossible for them to attend the practice.

The practice does have a hearing loop, and is aware that it can book British Sign Language interpreters for those with a hearing impairment. The practice manager told us that, at the point of referral, any visual impairments would be discussed so that appropriate arrangements can be made to accommodate the service user.

The practice manager let us know that there is a toilet downstairs that service users can access on request, but it is intended as the staff toilet. The patient toilet is located upstairs by the treatment rooms and is not intended as an accessible

toilet with facilities to match. There was no colour contrast between the toilet facilities and the walls and floor to aid those living with dementia, and there was no red emergency cord.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

This practice no longer takes on NHS patients but currently still holds an NHS contract. As such, they did not have NHS charges displayed in the waiting room or reception area. The practice manager told us that they are looking into giving up the contract soon.

4.2 Complaints

The practice's complaints procedure is clear and well set out, and was seen on display on the reception desk at the time of our visit. The procedure is included on their website; however, it is hidden away on the bottom banner of the webpage. Patients could benefit from this being placed in a more prominent position on the website, such as in the menu list. As the practice is looking into giving up their NHS contract and has not treated NHS patients for some time, their complaints policy has not included NHS England in the escalation procedure.

As a private dental practice, the Private Dental Complaints Service has been included, but the phone number provided for the Private Dental Complaints Service is not up to date.

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 - 2 working days	Yes - within 10 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 aimed at adults on the noticeboard in the waiting room, but none for children.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

The practice does not have an entry on NHS Choices as they have not provided NHS treatment for some time.

The practice's website is smart and professional. However, on the front page the title of the 'Patients' and 'Dentists' sections are cut off by the screen. The facility to book appointments online is useful for service users who are pressed for time and unable to call during office hours. The News page is useful to let patients know what work the dentists have been doing recently, as well as let them know the website is being looked at regularly.

Particularly the pages about the dentists at the practice, with photo portraits, is a nice personal touch to put patients at ease.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

The practice manager told us that patients' communication needs would be discussed at the point of referral. This would also include patients who cannot speak or understand English. Reasonable adjustments would be made for that patient as necessary, including access to an interpreter over the phone.

When asked about whether there was a private space for patients to talk with the staff or recover from treatment, the practice manager told us that some office space has been identified for that purpose and would be coming into use shortly.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

As stated above, a patient's specific requirements would always be addressed at the point of referral including for those with a physical, sensory, or learning disability. When asked, the practice manager was aware of the Purple Folder for people with learning disabilities, and said that they would always ensure appropriate arrangements are made to meet the service user's specific requirements.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

When asked about the medical emergency procedure, the practice manager told us that the first thing they would do is call the designated first aider, which is one of

two people. There were notices at the bottom of the stairs which gave the names of the first aiders.

The practice does have a defibrillator on the first floor behind a door adjacent to the treatment rooms for easy access. All staff are trained to use it. We were also told that an emergency trolley is kept with the defibrillator upstairs.

At the time of our visit, in addition to the above, we observed that the Meeting Place in case of fire was faded and difficult to read.

6. Summary of Findings

The Hertfordshire Centre for Dentistry has many areas of good practice, some of which have been identified below:

- 1. Proactive approach in dealing with patients' accessibility requirements.*
- 2. Helpful approach to patients' specific needs.*
- 3. Clear, open and friendly website.*
- 4. Defibrillator training for all members of staff.*

However, we did also identify the following areas for improvement:

- 1. Lack of visible external information.*
- 2. Overcrowded noticeboard.*
- 3. Patient toilet.*
- 4. Lack of a clear designated first aider at any one time.*

7. Recommendations

- 1. On external signage, provide the 111 number for out of hours help.*
- 2. Spread out the information on the noticeboard so that it is more accessible for patients to read.*
- 3. Consider placing the staff photos, as seen on the website, on a board in the waiting room for patients to see.*
- 4. Consider creating a clear colour contrast between the walls and floors and the toilet facilities in the patient toilet to help patients living with dementia.*
- 5. Consider introducing a red emergency cord into the toilet to ensure patient safety.*
- 6. Place the complaints procedure in a more obvious position on the practice website.*
- 7. Ensure that the homepage of the website is accessible to patients, with all the text clear to read.*

8. *Ensure that there is always a clear designated first aider at any given time; this may be done by a rota system.*
9. *Ensure that the Meeting Place sign is replaced and clear to read.*

Practice response:

1. Please see attachment A which reflects the new signage we have available at the practice to our patients.



A Attachment

2. We agree with this recommendation and are currently looking to condense down the information we have available within the notice board accessible to our patients to make it more easy to read.
3. We are currently reviewing all areas of display within the practice and are looking to incorporate this idea in some way in the near future, to also link to our website.
4. This recommendation has been added onto our maintenance requirements for the practice, to be looked into at our next maintenance review this month.
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6. We are currently in the process of launching our new website and reviewing the layout of all areas within the website. This is with our

Marketing team at the moment.

7. We are currently in the process of launching our new website and reviewing the layout of all areas within the website. This is with our Marketing team at the moment and gets reviewed monthly.
8. Please see attachment B to reflect the change made to the signage, accessible to patients and visitors within the practice.



B Attachment

9. Please see attachment C reflecting the change.



C Attachment