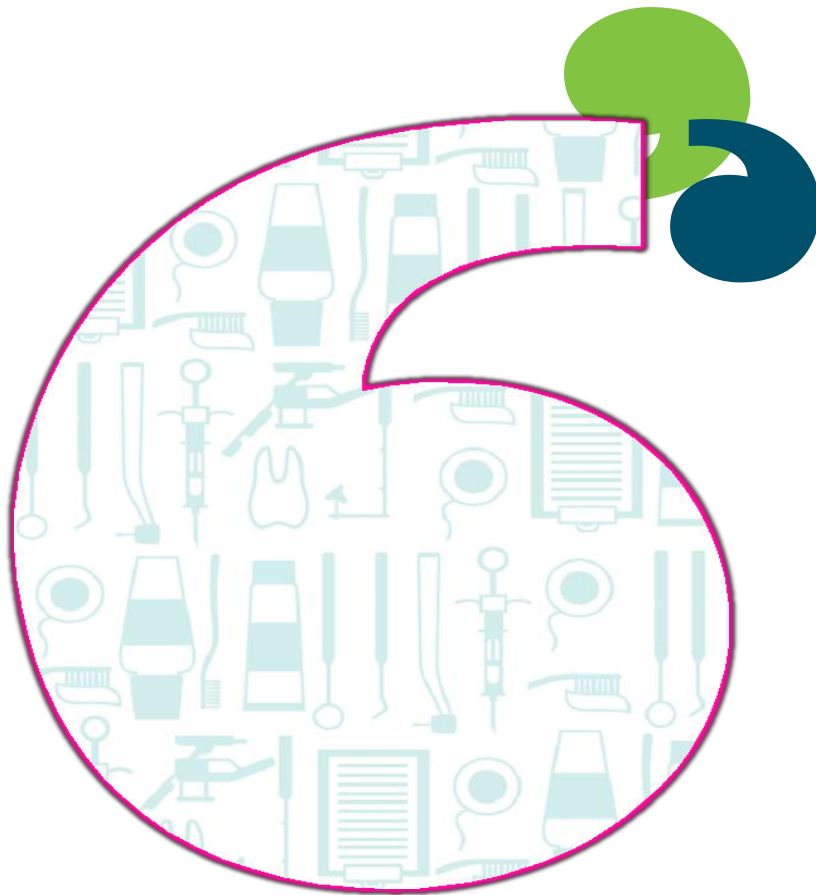


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



Hudson's Dental Care
23 Bull Plain, Hertford, SG14 1DX
East Herts Area

Premises visited: Hudson's Dental Care
Date and Time of Visit: 13/02/18 10:45
Visit Conducted By: Jo Cahill, Catherine Free

NHS Contract Holder: Mr D Hudson

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

Hudson's Dental Care is a dental practice situated in the town centre of Hertford. It is a family practice, and has been run by the same family for four generations. There are currently four dentists, four hygienists, six dental nurses, two receptionists, a practice manager and an administrator working at the premises.

Due to its town centre location, the practice is well served by travel links. There is a bus stop five minutes' walk away that has buses running elsewhere in Hertford, to Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, Ware, and other surrounding rural areas. It is also a ten minute walk from Hertford East railway station, although Hertford North is a twenty minute walk.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

As mentioned above, the practice is in the town centre shopping area. As such, the practice has a large shop front sign, as well as a hanging sign, which were both completely visible.

The practice's website includes an embedded Google Map on their 'Contact' page, with a clear option to expand the map into the full window.

2.2 Car Parking

Although the practice does have a few parking spaces nearby available on the street, these are restricted to 30 minutes. The practice told us that this area is well patrolled by traffic wardens; this is also written on the website. We parked at St Andrew's Street Car Park, a 6-10 minute walk away from the practice. However, the practice does direct patients to park at Sainsbury's car park, or the multi-storey on Gascoyne Way - both 6-10 minutes' walk away.

Included in the restricted parking spaces on the street are a few parking bays for blue badge holders. The practice told us that they offer to check outside for traffic wardens for disabled patients who have parked out there. They also offer to call taxis for patients, as pick up and drop off is easy outside the practice.

2.3 Visible External Information

There is some information visible on the outside of the practice which lets patients know about 111 for out of hours help. However, this is only in small print. The sign for 111 is also the only indication outside that the practice treats NHS patients.

2.4 First impressions

When we arrived the staff were very welcoming. The practice manager came to speak to us at the reception desk, as the receptionist was engaged. The reception and waiting rooms were bright with natural light. We felt there was a very welcoming atmosphere, which was both friendly and professional. There were sofas in the waiting areas which were all of the same height.

The Practice Manager explained: All the seats in our main waiting room are firm tub chairs (with arms) chosen for their comfort and ease of use across a wide patient age and medical condition range. There has always been one of these chairs in the front waiting room too which is used by many senior citizens when they wait for their appointment or for a taxi / relative to collect them.

We saw plenty of information advertising the different services offered, and the NHS bandings were displayed on the reception desk and in waiting rooms. On the whole, the information was in small print and some of the noticeboards had too many notices to be able to read. Information displayed included treatment fees, the complaints procedure, and first aid certificates for first aiders at the practice.

The Practice Manager commented: The amount of information on the notice boards treads a fine line between what has to be displayed (e.g. 'Complaints Policy' and 'Charges') and what we consider helpful to display (e.g. Smoking cessation posters, 'Tell the Dentist if you're Pregnant' notices). We consider we have the balance right between the mandatory and the desirable.

No staff photographs were on display, but there was a list of staff with their roles in the waiting areas. In addition, there was a patient manual with leaflets and policies, and leaflets in holders, as well as a display case showing the levels of sugar in soft drinks. There was no TV in the practice, although there was a corner with children's toys and books in one of the waiting rooms.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

The entrance to the practice is all level from the footpath, with double glass doors that patients must push and pull themselves. We observed that these are quite heavy, and could present a barrier to the physically frail, or wheelchair users. However, there is a clear view from the reception desk to the doors, and there is a doorbell to the right of the entrance, about half way up the door.

The practice manager told us that all dental surgeries are on ground floor level. However, there is one surgery towards the back of the practice that is two

staggered steps down; we were told that the steps are well marked, and a portable ramp is available to those who need it.

Although the reception area itself is uncluttered, there is not a great deal of room for manoeuvring a wheelchair. The reception desk has a lowered section but it does have two monitors placed on it, which could present a barrier to good communication between wheelchair users and the receptionist.

The practice does have a hearing loop for the hearing impaired.

The downstairs toilet is accessible to a wheelchair. There are grab rails on the wall to the right-hand side and a pull down rail on the other side. The toilet, toilet seat, and tiling are white; the walls are also pale with no contrast. This does little to help patients living with dementia or with visual impairments to orientate themselves. There was no red emergency cord in the bathroom.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

The up to date NHS Bandings were on display on the reception desk, in the waiting rooms, in the patient's manual, and in the welcome pack. When asked about how treatment costs are explained to patients, the practice manager told us that this would be explained at the initial visit and written in their records - the Welcome Pack also includes this information request. When asked about the FP17DC form, the practice manager stated that they do use them.

4.2 Complaints

There was complaints information in reception and in waiting rooms, although this was in a small font; there was also information included in welcome packs and the patient manual. The practice does have its own patient satisfaction questionnaire for new patients in the welcome pack, as well as the feedback box for the NHS Friends and Family Test on the reception desk.

When the practice manager was asked how patients are made aware of their complaints procedure, they told us about its availability on the noticeboard in reception, in the patient manual and on the website with a downloadable form.

The practice has a very full complaints policy that covers a number of approaches that patients might like to take when making a complaint. As well as this, they have accounted for organisations that support patients in making a complaint. However, the location of the policy on the practice website is not user-friendly and is quite difficult to find.

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	No - 'as soon as practical', notifying patient every ten days	NHSE* PHSO PDCS GDC CQC	Yes

Summary of the Practice's Complaints Policy

*NHSE	NHS England
PHSO	Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
PDCS	Private Dental Complaints Service
GDC	General Dental Council
CQC	Care Quality Commission

4.3 Promoting oral health

There were leaflets available on both adult and children's oral health, but no posters. In one of the waiting rooms there was a display showing sugar levels in soft drinks including a visual display showing a can of cola with a glass with the number of spoons of sugar it contains.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

The practice's entry on NHS Choices is easy to find, and has been recently updated with information on services and facilities offered at the practice. The practice has also included information about the parking and more detail for wheelchair users on the facilities page.

Hudson's Dental Care's website is professional and friendly. The NHS logo appears on the homepage, although it has to be scrolled down to. NHS Fees are included on

the 'Fees' page, available from the tabs at the top of every page. The 111 service for out of hours treatment is well signposted on a number of pages on the website. There are photos of staff members and bios on the 'Our Team' page to put patients at ease.

As mentioned above, the complaints policy is not placed in an intuitive position on the website. It appears only possible to access it via the homepage on the 'Downloads' page; this title does not clearly indicate what is within the page. However, there is a 'Feedback' page, with an online form for patients to give feedback on.

We noticed also that the 'Blog' page has not been updated since the beginning of 2017.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

When asked about how patients' communication needs are recorded, the practice manager told us that this is taken down at the first visit, and is volunteered by the patient to be incorporated into patient records. When this information has been given, their computer software flags up any reasonable adjustments that are required.

In terms of support provided for patients who do not speak or understand English, the practice manager said that patients usually bring family members to help. But the practice does also use a service called 'Language Interpretations'; information for this service is part of guidance for staff and is available in reception. As mentioned above, they do have a hearing loop, however they did not mention any use of an interpreting service for the hearing impaired.

In cases where patients would like to sit in a private room to recover from treatment or speak confidentially to a member of staff, we were told that they use various areas for this purpose; these include an empty surgery, the manager's office, or one of the waiting rooms.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

The practice manager let us know that, as the practice is accessible, they do have patients referred to them by other less accessible practices in the town. The manager told us that they have not had any problems so far.

With regard to patients with learning disabilities, the practice manager told us that they always attend with a parent or carer. Although the practice manager was not aware of the Purple Folder, they did say that the dentists may be aware.

In terms of support for patients with a visual impairment, the practice manager said they provide information in large print, but that these patients are usually accompanied when they come to their appointment.

We were also told that all staff have mandatory Safeguarding training for adults and children every three years. To complement and accompany this, they use a safeguarding manual with clear information and reporting procedures.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

When asked what the procedure is during a medical emergency, we were told that the staff member dealing with the patient would call for help and then ring 999. All staff have annual first aid training which is reinforced at monthly team meetings, and they use out of date equipment to practice use. This includes a 'Little Annie' resuscitation doll which they practice on each month. Two members of staff are Red Cross trained first aiders, and the practice ensures that one is always on the premises.

The practice does have a defibrillator, which is kept in the decontamination room together with the emergency drugs box - this room is always unlocked and available. Full instructions both for the use of the defibrillator and the emergency drugs are kept updated by the head nurse. The practice has a sign in the front window letting passers-by know that there is a defibrillator on the premises.

6. Summary of Findings

Hudson's Dental Care has many areas of good practice. We found the following areas to highlight:

1. Friendly, helpful staff.
2. Raising awareness of sugar content in soft drinks in waiting rooms.
3. Feedback box in the waiting room.
4. Up to date NHS Choices entry.
5. Clarity around medical emergency procedure.
6. Comprehensive complaints information.

However, we also found the following areas for improvement:

1. Visible external information.
2. Accessibility, and dementia-friendliness of the toilet.
3. Small print on the noticeboards.
4. Awareness of Purple Folders.

7. Recommendations

2.3 Visible External Information

1. Advertise the NHS provision more prominently on the outside of the building, including using the NHS logo.

2.4 First Impressions

2. Consider displaying photographs of staff together with their job titles to enable patients to familiarise themselves with who is who in the practice.
3. Consider having larger print for the information on noticeboards.

3.1 Facilities

4. Consider the possibility of relocating the two monitors currently on the lower section of the reception desk to improve communication for all.
5. Introduce a colour contrast into the accessible toilet between the toilet seat and the toilet, to protect the dignity of patients living with dementia. Also consider creating a contrast between the walls, the floor, and the facilities, in this vein.
6. Install a red emergency cord in the accessible toilet.

4.2 Complaints

7. Consider ways of making the complaints policy easier to find on the website, such as including it on the 'Feedback' webpage.

4.3 Promoting oral health

8. Consider placing dental hygiene posters for both adults and children on the noticeboards in the waiting areas.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices Website

9. Look into whether the documents on the 'Downloads' webpage could be placed elsewhere on the website, to provide effective signposting on the website for patients.
10. Update the 'Blog' webpage.

5.2 Patients with Specific Requirements

11. Improve awareness of Purple Folders across all staff.
12. Consider whether it will always be practical to rely on patients to bring a chaperone to their appointments.

Practice response:

2.3 Visible External Information

1. We have added an NHS logo to our window.

2.4 First Impressions

2. We have already identified the inclusion of a team photographs frame as part of our waiting room refurbishment this year.
3. The notices posted are in size 14 and 16 font with the Practice Information leaflet available in very large font in the innovative *Patient Manual* kept in the waiting room. We will, however, add a dedicated large font folder for the waiting room library.

3.1 Facilities

4. It is not possible to relocate the monitors from the Reception desk as they are essential for appointment booking and patient check in. The reduced height of the desk is 'wheelchair friendly' and there is 60cm between the monitors which enables a clear and open area for the taking of payments and signing of paperwork with good eye contact between patient and Receptionist.
5. We will research and look to add a coloured seat to the disabled access lavatory. Three of our staff are 'Dementia Friends' trained by the Alzheimer's Society but they were not trained with regard to this technicality.
6. We have already instructed an electrician to supply and fit a red emergency cord.

4.2 Complaints

7. Our Complaints Policy is available for patients to download from the clearly accessible 'Downloads' page. We have, however, given this added prominence by incorporating it on the equally prominent 'Feedback' survey page as you suggest.

4.3 Promoting Oral Health

8. Our dental hygienist service is well promoted to patients who'll benefit from it as all our dentists necessarily place heavy emphasis on gum disease, its causes and management.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices Website

9. We are happy with our Downloads facility which already sets us apart from the majority of practices who offer no such facility. Containing medical history forms and post extraction advice it's a page we physically refer patients to and in fact our New Patient page already contains a direct link to download the medical history

form with no need to hop to the Downloads page. We will bear the comments in mind when the website is next overhauled.

10. The 'Blog' page is already under review.

5.2 Patients with Specific Requirements

11. All staff received training on the use of 'Purple Folders' at the March 2018 Practice Meeting

12. Three staff members are recognised 'Dementia Friends' able to help in these situations.