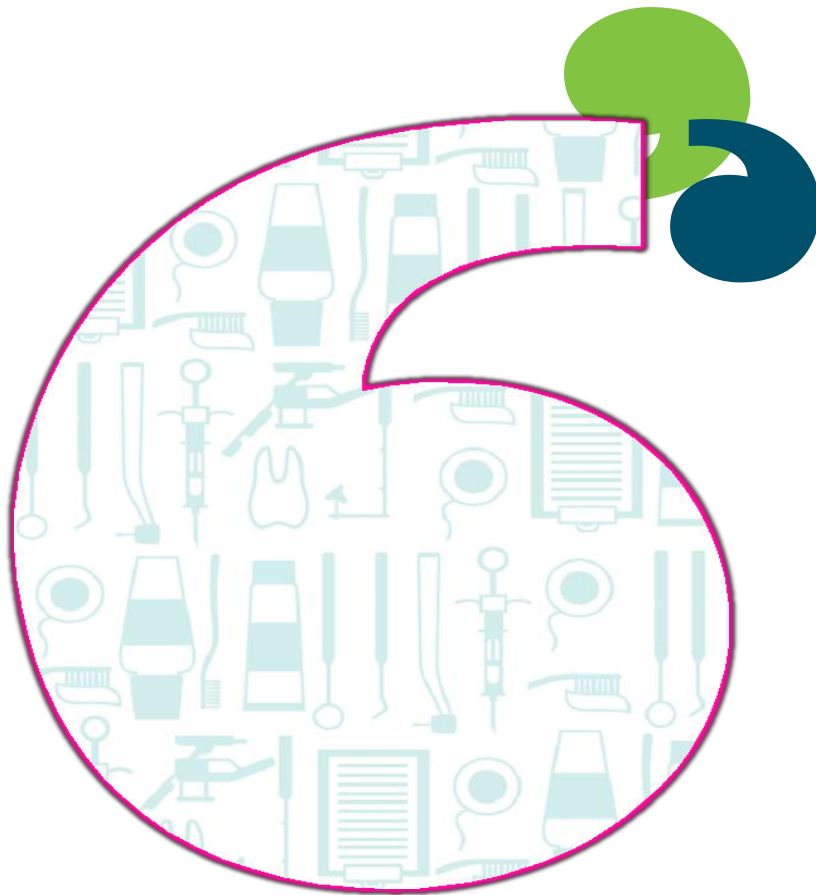


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



Novocare Dental

32 The Avenue, Watford, WD17 4NS

Watford Area

Premises visited: Novocare Dental
Date and Time of Visit: 29.01.19 14.15
Visit Conducted By: Paul Regan and Jane Brown

NHS Contract Holder: Bargain Dentist.Com Ltd

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 practices in the St Albans and Harpenden, East Herts and Stevenage Districts and are now focussing on 25% of dental practices with NHS contracts in the Watford 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

Novocare Dental practice is located in a residential area, but a central location in Watford close to West Herts College, Watford Library and Watford Leisure Centre.

Travel links are good with a number of buses (for example 500 Aylesbury, 318 Abbots Langley, 520 Hemel Hempstead, 319 North Watford routes) stopping close to the practice at Stop Y, Watford Town Hall. Watford Junction and Watford Underground Station is about a mile away.

The main dental team consists of three dentists and an anaesthetist.

We spoke to the Receptionist and the Practice Manager on our visit.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

The signage outside is good and clear and easy to read from the street. The name of the practice is in large lettering on the wall above the front entrance.

The practice's own website provides a Google embedded map for patients on their 'Contact Us' page.

2.2 Car Parking

There is a paid public car park (Hempstead Road/The Avenue Roundabout) with 5 spaces specifically for blue badge holders. This is a short distance from the practice (approached via an underpass) and, though it is mainly on flat surfaces the distance and occasionally gradient would make it difficult without assistance. However, it is possible to arrange to park in the limited space at the surgery, and there is a drop off/pick up point outside. The receptionist also suggested two alternative areas to park close by, with one and two hours of free parking.

2.3 Visible External Information

The visible external information includes the NHS sign, hours the practice is open, the 111 out of hours/emergency number, as well as alternate parking arrangements.

2.4 First impressions

We were greeted in a friendly manner upon entry; the whole practice is open and welcoming. The reception area is high, but the receptionist was observed leaving the area to greet a patient, so this would not form a barrier.

The reception area leads straight into the main waiting area, which is child friendly and full of natural light. The feeling is one of a clean but not clinical space. The practice itself has attractive glassware displayed in a modern, sleek setting, which was very nice.

There were no notice boards, though there was a lot of information on display (including the Healthwatch Hertfordshire poster and cards) around the reception area, with a smaller amount in the waiting area. There were no photos of staff members with their job roles.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

The surgery itself has a wide, sliding door as its main entrance. There is a step up which would make it harder for people with reduced mobility to enter but, upon questioning, the receptionist confirmed that people who need to are escorted to the rear entrance. The way there was clear and accessible.

The high reception desk has already been noted, but otherwise this is a clear space, completely free from any kind of clutter and with wide areas.

Most of the seats were medium hard, but with arm rests, though there were two low and soft ones close to the reception desk. These are used by people who find them easier than the standard chairs, and also by the receptionist to sit in so that they are able to talk to people in wheel chairs on the same level as them.

There is a downstairs toilet that has a disabled logo on the door (though it is not 'accessible' according to the NHS website entry). There are two doors creating a small adjoining room. During the visit the light in the small area appeared not to be working. There was some contrast between the toilets seats, flush handles, and sink, but this could be improved. Additionally the hand dryer and soap dispenser were quite high for wheelchair users. There was a grab rail and also a pictograph of hand cleaning instructions. There was no red emergency red cord.

There are additional male and female toilets on the first floor.

Though not all treatment areas are on the ground floor, the full range of treatment is available here for patients who cannot manage stairs. This includes a recovery area.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

When asked about charges the receptionist was able to thoroughly break down each treatment by banding. Additionally, there were posters displayed explaining charges, as well as ones that warned about incorrectly claiming payment support.

4.2 Complaints

The 'Practice Complaint Procedure' information leaflets are displayed on the reception desk. Additionally there was a notice outlining commitments to patients on the windowsill behind the reception desk. The procedure follows the recommendations in the 'Dental Complaints Statement' from the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.

There is also a good after care customer focused process. The receptionist talks to patients after they have seen their dentist, ensuring that they understand what has happened, and are satisfied with the care they have received. This allows the practice to learn from small things that might not get reported, and also 'head off' issues that might escalate into complaints. This after care was felt to be exceptionally good practice.

The practice also collects feedback for the NHS Friends and Family test.

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? POhWER or Healthwatch?
Mrs Tola Oke	Within 3 working days	Yes	NHS England PDCS GDC CQC HSO	Both

*PDCS Private Dental Complaints Service
GDC General Dental Council
CQC Care Quality Commission
HSO Health Service Ombudsman

4.3 Promoting oral health

There are various posters displayed around reception and the waiting area promoting oral health. There was a television in the waiting area showing a film about oral healthcare though the sound was not on as music was playing instead.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS website¹

The entry on the NHS website is up to date so that patients can see that NHS treatment is currently offered at Novocare Dental as well as what support is available and travel information. However opening times vary slightly to the website and patient leaflet and just need amending.

The practice's own website is easy to find and has a section for NHS patients in the 'About us' drop down menu. The Home page also shows the NHS logo but the link to the information page appears to be broken.

There is information about the Principal Dentist but it would be helpful to also have photos of the rest of the staff at the practice.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

Communication needs are discussed with patients, and any additional needs are flagged and highlighted when the patient's file is accessed. Though the practice does not currently have a hearing loop, they are considering installing one. Additionally, the practice was aware of the interpretation services available. In addition to these services, the staff have a wide understanding of various languages, including Iranian, Hungarian, and Romanian.

The previously mentioned recovery area is also used for patients requiring a more private space. The practice manager gave an account of excellent tailored customer care that showed a willingness of the practice to make extra effort to support their patients, and also an understanding that for some people a trip to the dentist is a very big event. The receptionist did mention that this space was also offered for use by breastfeeding mothers as an option if they ask or want to have some privacy whilst breastfeeding.

¹ From September 2018, the NHS Choices website is now known as the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/>. The NHS website (www.nhs.uk) contains information to help people manage their health and care online.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

Due to the extensive facilities available at the practice, if someone was unable to access dental treatment here, the receptionist said they would be referred to the Community Dental Team run by Hertfordshire Community Trust.

The practice spoke unprompted about the Purple Folder (health information about people with learning disabilities) and clearly understood the needs of people with learning disabilities.

The practice currently has two patients requiring Seeing Eye dogs. These patients attend with their dogs and are then escorted by a nurse to the treatment area while the dog waits in the waiting area.

The staff have regular safeguarding training, though have never needed to make a safeguarding referral.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

The staff all have modern and basic life support, which includes regular practical sessions. The named first aider is the principle dentist, and when he is not there it is the main receptionist. There are emergency packs on the ground and first floor, as well as a defibrillator.

6. Summary of Findings

Novocare Dental seems to be a modern, well-managed, customer focused practice and has many areas of good practice as highlighted below:

1. Facilities are available, and arrangements have been made for patients with a wide range of access needs.
2. Staff seem exceptionally friendly and willing to accommodate the needs of their patients.
3. The decor is modern and attractive, with the glass ornamentation and children's mural felt to be particularly attractive.
4. The aftercare meeting with the patients is an exceptionally good way to deal with issues before they become complaints, highlight areas of learning that might otherwise be lost, and reassure patients after treatment.
5. Comprehensive complaints process.

We also found the following areas for improvement:

1. Ground floor patient toilet.
2. Provision of a hearing loop.

7. Recommendations

1. Consider installing an emergency red cord in the toilet for patient safety.
2. When next refitting/redecorating the toilet take account of colour contrasts and best practice to be more dementia friendly and for patients with sight impairments.
3. Make the minor adjustments to the NHS website and practice website.
4. Review arrangements for those with specific needs to cover:
 - a) Provision of a hearing loop.
 - b) If it is impossible to have a board with staff photos and job roles displayed, it might be useful to offer something like that to patients with a learning disability.

Response from Novocare Dental

Thank you for your visit. We appreciate the feedback and are now working on your recommendations.

1. Ground floor toilet:

We were unable to install a Red cord in the toilet as the contractor informed us it would involve breaking into some walls. We have now found a more reasonable approach and we have been given a date for installation. The light bulb in the small room leading to ground floor toilet has now been replaced.

2. We have noted the recommendation about colour contrast in the ground floor disabled toilet. Next time we are redecorating, we would ensure the toilet has more contrasting colours and is more user friendly for dementia patients and those with sight impairments.

3. Adjustment has been made to match our exact opening hours on our websites and on patients' leaflets. Staff feel reluctant to have their pictures displayed publicly. We are working on the option recommended by you.
4. We are in the process of ordering a hearing loop and Red Cord which will be installed as soon as delivered.

Kind Regards
Tola Oke
Practice Manager