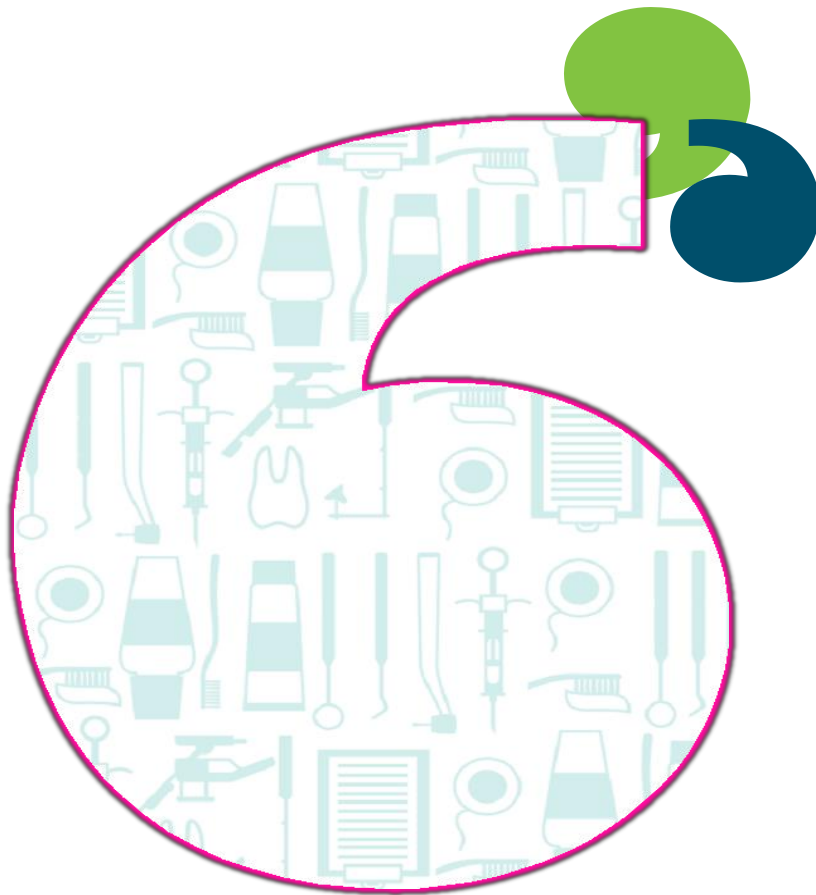


# Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



**St Peter's Lodge Dental Practice**

**7 Manor Road, St Albans, AL1 3ST**

**St Albans and Harpenden Area**

**Premises visited:** St Peter's Lodge Dental Practice  
**Date and Time of Visit:** 21.09.17 11:30  
**Visit Conducted By:** Sarah Clemerson and Keith Shephard

**NHS Contract Holder:** Mr K Siani and Ms N Kerai

### **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

*St Peter's Lodge Dental Practice is a dental practice situated in a residential street near St Albans city centre. The practice gives private treatment to adults, but treats children on the NHS. Currently working there are three dentists, one hygienist, three dental nurses, a business manager and a receptionist.*

*Travel links are good due to the practice. The nearest bus stop is five minutes' walk away, with buses travelling to Luton, Dunstable, Welwyn Garden City, and surrounding rural areas. The high street is a further few minutes' walk away from the practice, with more bus routes to a larger number of towns nearby.*

## 2. Environment

### 2.1 Signage

*The practice was easy to find as there is a clear sign on the front of the building to say that 'private dental care and wellbeing' is offered there. There is also a sign explicitly calling it a 'dental practice'.*

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

### 2.2 Car Parking

*There is some patient parking available at the back of the building. However, it is a small car park and at the time of our visit, there were few spaces available.*

*We did not see any accessible parking at the practice; indeed when the business manager was asked about those spaces, they let us know that there are none attached to the practice.*

### 2.3 Visible External Information

*As you might expect from a private dental 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. However, children are treated on the NHS here, and so it may be confusing that that hasn't been incorporated.*

### 2.4 First impressions

*When we entered the practice the receptionist warmly welcomed us. The waiting room and reception area are combined into one room, which is clean, modern and brightened by natural light. The room had several upholstered chairs for patients to sit in, though they were all one size. There was no clutter anywhere in the waiting room, and no noticeboard for patients to read from. What information there was on the wall, was intended to promote products available at the practice. There were no staff photos available for people to see in the waiting room either.*

*There was a TV showing BBC News 24 in the waiting room, as well as a water dispenser for patients' entertainment and comfort. We were informed that toys are available for children if they are asked for by a patient.*

### 3. Physical Access

#### 3.1 Facilities

*The practice has steps up to the entrance but does not have a fixed ramp; we were informed that there is a portable ramp that they bring out when a patient rings the external bell. The waiting room was spacious enough as to allow a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and not be disruptive to other patients in the room; in addition, all treatment rooms are on the ground floor of the practice and the desk was low enough not to hinder communication between a wheelchair user and the receptionist. The business manager let us know that if a patient cannot access the practice, they will simply use the ramp to help them in.*

*There is no hearing loop for the hearing impaired.*

*The practice does not have an accessible toilet for those with a disability. At the time of our visit, there were no rails to aid a wheelchair user, and there was no red emergency cord to alert staff of a problem in the toilet. There was also no colour contrast between the toilet seat and the toilet pan, nor the toilet facilities and the walls and floor, to aid those with visual impairments. We did not notice a step for children to use to reach the facilities in the toilet, either.*

### 4. Information Access

#### 4.1 NHS Charges

*As the practice only treats children under the NHS, the NHS Fee Bandings were not on display in the practice as they are only relevant to adult patients. Children receive free treatment under the NHS.*

#### 4.2 Complaints

*The practice's complaints handling policy is clear, and well set out. However, at the time of our visit we could not see the policy on display in the practice. We observed that there was a leaflet on how to complain aimed at private patients available in amongst a number of other leaflets in a stand in the waiting room. When we asked the business manager about how they make patients aware of the policy, they said that they would give a patient a copy of this leaflet.*

*The practice does not appear to have a complaints policy that can be applied to NHS patients, such as the parents of children who are receiving NHS treatment. As such, the escalation procedure to NHS England, and then the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman should be included in their private patient policy to benefit NHS patients. In addition, to aid private patients, the address for the Private Dental Complaints Service needs to be updated, and the non-premium rate number provided for the Service, and the General Dental Council. It may also be useful to include the web addresses of all of the possible escalation routes to be as accessible as possible for patients.*

#### 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?
Yes	Yes - 3 working days	Yes - within 10 days with further notification if required.	Yes - PDCS* GDC	No

PDCS            Private Dental Complaints Service

GDC             General Dental Council

*At the time of our visit we noticed a feedback box in the waiting room, but could see no paper or pens to go with it.*

### 4.3 Promoting oral health

*At the time of our visit, there was some information available in the waiting room aimed at promoting oral health to adults. We could not see any oral health promotion aimed at children.*

## 4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

*The practice does have a page on NHS Choices, however, this 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. Information provided on the facilities available at the practice appears to be accurate for the most part. Service users could benefit from the practice keeping this information up to date, so as not to cause confusion.*

*The practice's own website is smart and easily navigable. Photos of the staff working at the practice is a nice touch to put patients at ease ahead of their appointments. They have also included their complaints policy on the website; although this is on a small link hidden away at the bottom of each webpage, which could be a barrier for some service users unfamiliar with web design.*

*Furthermore, the text on the website appears quite small, with a stylised typeface on headings that could both be quite difficult for service users with a visual impairment. In addition, the contrast between the text and the background on the front page is good enough for most service users, but could be enhanced to ensure it caters to all service users, such as, people with cognitive, neurological and visual impairments.*

*The 'Contact Us' page on their website does not include 111 for emergency out of hours treatment, which would be useful for NHS service users. We noticed also that the 'News' page on the website has not been updated since August, and that the lunch hour is not included in the opening hours given on the practice website.*

## 5. Supporting Patients

### 5.1 Communication

*When asked about how patients' communication needs are dealt with, the business manager let us know that when these are identified, a record is kept. It was not mentioned how often a patient's communication needs would be checked with the patient.*

*When asked how the practice would deal with patients who cannot speak or understand English, the business manager was aware of an interpreter service but told us they had so far never needed to use it. This was the case for patients with a hearing impairment as well; as mentioned above, the practice does not have a hearing loop.*

*In cases where patients would like to sit in a private room to recover from treatment or speak confidentially to a member of staff, the business manager said that there is a room available for this purpose.*

## 5.2 Patients with specific requirements

*The practice has taken measures to be accessible to wheelchair users by having a ramp available, and a bell for assistance on the outside of the building. The business manager let us know that so far they have not come across patients with a visual impairment, and so have not put any measures in place for when this may happen.*

*The business manager was aware of Purple Folders for people with learning disabilities, and told us they had experience of them.*

## 5.3 Medical Emergencies

*The business manager let us know that all staff at the practice were recently trained in first aid, but did not share the medical emergency procedure. The identity of the first aider was unclear, although the business manager let us know that it is in fact them.*

*The practice has its own defibrillator and emergency trolley, which are all kept in a storage cupboard on the ground floor.*

## 6. Summary of Findings

*St Peter's Lodge Dental Practice has many areas of good practice. We found the following examples to highlight:*

- 1. Light, comfortable waiting room.*
- 2. Training all staff in first aid.*
- 3. Wheelchair accessibility into the practice.*
- 4. Warm, friendly staff.*

*We also found the following areas for improvement:*

- 1. The Complaints Procedure.*
- 2. Practice's NHS Choices entry.*
- 3. Accessibility of practice website.*
- 4. Accessibility for patients with specific requirements aside from physical disabilities.*

## 7. Recommendations

### 2.2 Car Parking

- 1. Consider creating one or two designated accessible parking spaces in the practice's car park.*

### 2.3 Visible External Information



- 2. Include the NHS logo and 111 for out of hours emergency help on signage outside the practice.*

### 2.4 First Impressions

- 3. Consider installing a wider variety of chairs in the waiting room, to benefit service users less able to rise from a seated position.*
- 4. Consider creating a noticeboard and a board with photos of staff members in the waiting room for patients' information.*
- 5. Ensure it is clear to all service users that they can ask for toys for their children via a sign in the waiting room.*

### 3.1 Facilities

- 6. Consider installing a ramp for entrance to the practice, rather than relying on patients to ring a bell.*
- 7. Consider installing a hearing loop.*
- 8. Look into installing grab rails, and creating a colour contrast between the toilet facilities and the walls and floor to protect the dignity of patients living with dementia.*
- 9. Install a red alarm cord in the toilet to ensure the safety of all patients using the practice.*
- 10. Consider introducing a step in the patient toilet so that children may reach the facilities.*

### 4.2 Complaints

- 11. Create a Complaints Procedure that is suitable for everyone, private or NHS patients.*
- 12. Ensure that the Complaints Procedure is clear for everyone to see in the waiting room.*
- 13. Update the contact details of the services included in the escalation procedure of the practice's complaints procedure.*
- 14. Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the Complaints Policy, in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.*
- 15. Ensure that there are pens and paper accompanying the feedback box available in the waiting room.*

### 4.3 Promoting Oral Health

- 16. Consider placing posters in the waiting room for the promotion of oral health aimed at adults and children.*

### 4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

- 17. Update the practice's entry on NHS Choices.*

18. *Place the complaints procedure in a more obvious location on the website, so as not to present a barrier to service users.*
19. *Improve the typeface size, and font, as well as the contrast ratio to ensure the website is accessible to all.*
20. *Include the practice's lunchtime in the opening hours on the website.*
21. *Include 111 for out of hours help on the 'Contact Us' page to inform NHS service users.*
22. *Update the 'News' page on the practice website.*

### 5.1 Communication

23. *Ensure that patients' communication needs are checked regularly in order to meet the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard.*
24. *Consider how the practice will act to help patients with communication requirements, and ensure these needs are met. Examples may be needing to have information printed in large print, or an SMS text reminder of their appointment.*

### 5.2 Patients with Specific Requirements

25. *Consider how the practice will act to help patients with specific requirements, such as patients with a visual impairment or a learning disability. For example, ensuring they have longer appointments, or that the practice calls the patient to remind them of their appointment.*

### 5.3 Medical Emergencies

26. *Ensure that the identity of the first aider is clear for patients to see in the waiting room.*
27. *Ensure that a medical emergency procedure is clearly set out for all staff.*

## Practice Response:

- 1-2. We will consider this.
3. We will consider this.
4. This is something we are looking into doing.
5. We already offer toys to every child that comes into practice or offer children's channels.
6. The portable ramp is always ready for patients before they arrive.
7. We accept this recommendation.
8. We will consider this.

9. We have a clear sign for patients to press an emergency bell located in the toilet, which goes straight to reception.

10. We will consider this.

11-15. The complaints procedure is suitable for everyone. We have taken on-board your recommendations and will look into this.

16. We have Medivision video which we play on TV which promotes oral health aimed at both adults & children. Posters are also available in the surgeries.

17-22. We will consider this but our surgery does not close over the lunch period. We have someone on reception at all times. We are relaunching our website so all relevant news will be updated.

23-24. The Patients Guide is available in large print.

25. This is already in place.

26-27. All Medical emergency is clearly set out for all our staff.