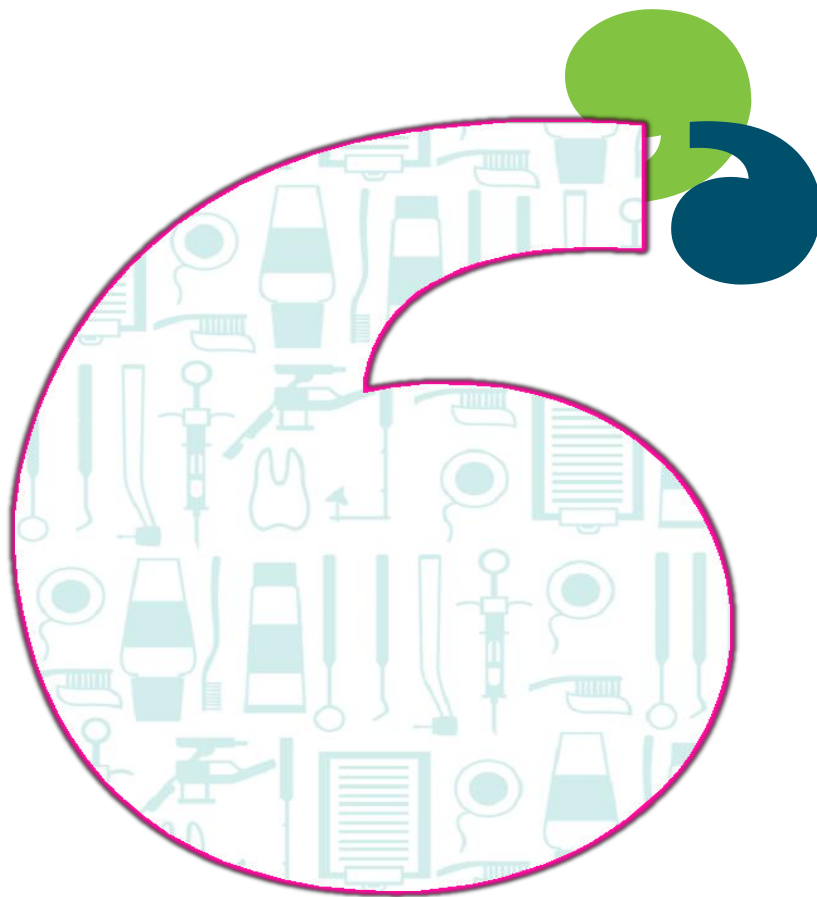


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



The Dentist

63 High Street, Buntingford, SG9 9AE

East Herts Area

Premises visited: The Dentist, Buntingford
Date and Time of Visit: 14.02.18 10:30am
Visit Conducted By: Keith Shephard and Jane Brown

NHS Contract Holder: Dr AJ Amery

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the staff who spoke to us for welcoming our visit, showing us the facilities, explaining their business, and answering our questions.

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

The Dentist, Buntingford, is situated on the town's quiet High Street. It is a well-established facility providing primary care dental services. Currently working on the premises are, one dentist, one hygienist, a dental nurse, and a practice manager. Most NHS patients are children though there is a small number of NHS adult patients who have been treated at the practice for some years but this number is continually reducing and the majority of adult patients are private patients.

Buntingford is a small town with an established community, with some housing growth and associated needs.

Due to the practice's location in the town centre, travel links are good. There are bus stops a few moments' walk away serving buses that go to Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Royston, Stevenage, and other surrounding rural areas.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

The name of the practice (The Dentist) is clearly marked on the windows either side of the front door for passers-by to see.

The practice's website has an embedded Google Map included on its 'Contact' page; there is also a link underneath the map allowing patients to get directions on Google Maps.

2.2 Car Parking

The High Street is pleasant, with a mix of small retail shops and local services. Although not pedestrianised little traffic comes through this street as the town has bypasses on the main route (A10) and access to the public car park is primarily from the west, and not directly from the High Street.

A large public car park immediately to the rear of the premises has ample car parking space (free parking for 90 minutes) and several dedicated accessible parking bays adjacent to a very short walkway onto the High Street.

2.3 Visible External Information

There are no external signs regarding the offer of NHS treatment. However, as no new NHS adult patients are being seen, a sign suggesting the availability of NHS treatment could be confusing. There is another dental practice in the town a short distance away (23 High Street) which does take NHS patients.

The 111 telephone number for out of hours help is not displayed.

2.4 First impressions

The receptionist gave us a warm welcome to the practice. The waiting room and reception area is inviting, bright, tidy and well- presented. It felt friendly but professional.

The building, the main door of which is directly accessed from a wide High Street pavement, is tastefully converted. The reception desk has a lower drop down area for accessibility and is positioned a little way from the seated area so that patients have a degree of privacy when talking to the receptionist. Information leaflets are available in this area.

There are a few laminated posters in the corner of the waiting room (Statement of purpose and qualifications) but these are in quite small print. There is a feedback box on the coffee table though we were told not many people use it. Magazines and children books were also available.

It was a cold day and heaters had been provided to keep patients comfortable.

From our conversations and observations of interactions with patients (including somebody who came into enquire about treatment whilst we there), it is evident that the service offered here is welcoming, and knowledgeable of needs.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

The access door is wide, with a small step. We were shown a portable ramp kept at reception for wheelchair usage as required. The external bell is not easily reached by an unaccompanied wheelchair user. However, visitors at the front door can be easily seen from reception. We were told that the receptionist would be aware of any needs of those with appointments.

The entrance is free of obstacles, as is the comfortable waiting area. The layout enables wheelchair use.

The main surgery is on the first floor via stairs. These are fairly steep, but are in keeping with the building. Further surgical rooms are available on the ground floor enabling treatment for those unable to use the stairs and for general dental care treatments such as oral hygiene.

From the waiting area, a wide doored toilet is provided. This proportionately large facility can be readily accessed by a wheelchair. Soap dispensing and hand drying facilities are accessible.

There is no colour contrast between the toilet seat, flush handles and basin with the walls and flooring. This is potentially a challenge for persons living with dementia or who have a visual impairment, for example.

There are grab rails in place and a red emergency cord. At the time of our visit, the cord was hooked up towards the ceiling. This needs to be near to floor level at all times.

We were advised by the receptionist that when needing to signpost a caller or visitor to an alternative practice, they are given details of the provision at 23 High Street and /or information on the Hertfordshire Community Trust specialist dental service.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

The practice does not cater for new NHS adult patients; due to this, the NHS bandings have not been displayed. Those NHS (long standing and 'remaining') adult patients still using the service are dealt with individually and the costs of NHS treatment is communicated and applied on an individual basis to ensure compliance.

Costs to private patients are displayed at reception with information on the Denplan payment scheme.

4.2 Complaints

A complaints leaflet is available at reception, and easily seen. It is also on the practice website.

We were advised by the practice that very few complaints were made, and when that happens they have all been successfully resolved prior to any need for escalation.

We did note that the complaints leaflet provided is out-dated regarding the escalation procedure should that be necessary. The Local Health Authority mentioned no longer exists and the number given is unobtainable. The General Dental Council has worked with Care Quality Commission, Department of Health, NHS England and Healthwatch England to set out a clear route for both NHS and private patients should they need to escalate a complaint or require help to do this.

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 working day, with further notification if required	Local Health Authority	No

4.3 Promoting oral health

There is information on display promoting oral health, though it is quite limited and not prominent. More could be done notably aimed at, and for, children.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

The practice's NHS Choices website is easily found by entering the address of the practice into the search engine. However, their entry 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. This may be because the practice intends on closing its NHS contract. Information on the facilities appears still to be accurate.

The practice's own website is smart, and well set out. There are clear headings at the top of each page. There are also photos of every member of staff available on the 'Meet the Team' page. There is no indication that NHS patients are treated here, although this is most likely down to the practice's intention of reducing its NHS contract. The complaints procedure is available via a very small link on the bottom banner of every page.

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

There is no stated procedure followed in respect of specific individual communication needs. However, we were advised that staff respond positively to

all patient needs. Where specific needs are identified a note is placed on the computer record for that patient.

We were shown a portable hearing loop kept at reception though it has not yet been needed.

The practice said that there has been no requirement yet for an interpreter to support any patient or potential patient. As this need had not arisen there was no knowledge of what to do, though we were assured that if a case arose they would seek support. Similarly they had no experience of communicating with persons who cannot speak or understand English, but they would investigate if the need arose.

We were told that there are rooms available for private conversations, if required.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

As observed earlier, the external doorbell is not easily reached from a wheelchair but visitors can easily be seen from the reception desk facing the glass frontage. A ramp is available. Otherwise, patient requirements are met through attention to patient well-being. This approach is more about empathy than systems, which the practice says works well currently. This could be improved through a more proactive approach in preparation for eventualities.

We were advised that none of the (3000 or so) patients have learning difficulties. The receptionist is not aware of the 'purple folder' system.

Blind and partially sighted patients would be supported as necessary. As observed the entrance, waiting area, toilet and stairway are clutter free.

As a former nurse, the receptionist is trained and experienced in safeguarding matters. We handed over copies of the Hertfordshire Adults Safeguarding Board leaflet on advice and signposting. Training may help if there was any change in front desk staffing.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

There is a defibrillator, and a sign up in the practice to say so.

They have an internal 'panic system' which was explained to us and Dr Amery is the designated first aider. This is a relatively small setting with a tight team, with good patient knowledge. Staff are first aid trained, including defibrillator usage.

The emergency trolley is kept in the upstairs surgery. We were advised that it can be accessed for use downstairs as necessary in a ground floor emergency.

6. Summary of Findings

The Dentist, Buntingford has many areas of good practice. We found the following areas to highlight:

1. Well-presented and professional waiting area.
2. A knowledgeable, professional and friendly receptionist.
3. Informative website.
4. Good understanding of current patient list.

However we did find some areas for improvement:

1. The complaints policy.
2. Out of hours emergency information.
3. Use of the Accessible Information Standard.

7. Recommendations

2.1 Visible External Information

1. Clearly display, at the entrance, information on the 111 service and details of any other 'out of hours' arrangements.

3.1 Facilities

2. When next decorating, or refitting the toilet, consider the colour scheme to help to differentiate the facilities. This will help those patients with related difficulties.
3. Ensure the red emergency cord in the toilet is untied at all times.

4.1 NHS Charges

4. As NHS Costs are not displayed; for those adults still receiving NHS treatment please confirm that they are given the FP17DC form (brown/beige form) showing the breakdown of their treatment costs.

4.2 Complaints

5. Update the complaints procedure to give clear information of the NHS and private dental escalation procedure.
6. Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the complaints policy in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board advice.

4.3 Promoting Oral Health

7. Ensure the promotion of oral health, with a specific aim towards children.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

8. Update the practice's entry on NHS Choices website.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

9. Review the way in which information is displayed and provided. The CQC statement on the Accessible Information Standard gives a guide on what their inspectors look for in health and social care settings for example.
10. Have a more systematic approach to ensure that current staff, and any new members, are well versed on issues such as safeguarding, equality of access, supporting patients with learning disabilities, and know where to find external advice and /or support.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/disability/learning-disabilities/my-health/my-purple-folder.aspx>

Practice Response:

The Practice was provided with a draft copy of this report to check for factual inaccuracies and to respond to the findings. To date no response has been received.