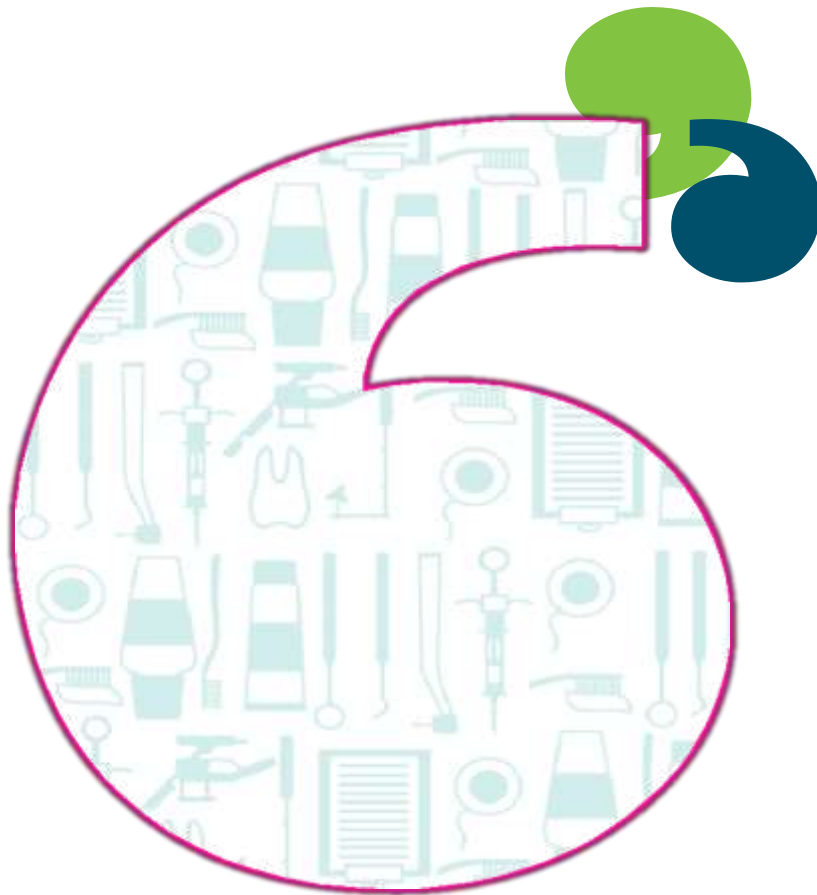


Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



The Maltings Dental Surgery
54 The Maltings Shopping Centre, St Albans,
AL1 3HL
St Albans and Harpenden Area

Premises visited: The Maltings Dental Surgery
Date and Time of Visit: 21.09.17 13:30
Visit Conducted By: Sarah Clemerson & Keith Shephard

NHS Contract Holder: Mr C Quail

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 Maltings Dental Surgery is located in the city centre of St Albans on the upper level of the pedestrianised Maltings shopping centre. The practice was founded in 1997. Currently there are seven dentists and a practice manager working at the practice, in addition to seven other team members and three receptionists.

Travel links are good as a result of the practice's location close to St Albans High Street. A few minutes' walk away are buses to Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, and surrounding rural areas. A further few minutes' walk away are buses to more far out places such as Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage, and Heathrow Airport. The taxi rank is also located on St Albans High Street.

2. Environment

2.1 Signage

Due to the location of the practice, it was somewhat difficult to find. The practice is located upstairs in the pedestrianised shopping centre, with only a small frontage to place a sign on.

The practice does include an embedded Google Map on their webpage for patients' convenience. However, the map is heavily stylised with unclear directions on how to zoom in, which may leave some patients confused.

2.2 Car Parking

As the practice is located in the shopping centre, there are no dedicated parking spaces for patients, and there is no drop-off facility as a result of this. The Maltings car park is a few minutes' walk away at the other end of the shopping centre.

There is accessible parking within The Maltings car park mentioned above, however this is some distance away from the practice.

2.3 Visible External Information

There is some information on the outside of the practice to let patients know that NHS treatment is available here. However, 111 for out of hours help was not included.

2.4 First impressions

We were warmly greeted by the practice when we arrived. The reception and waiting room area are combined into one room, which is cosy, open, and calm. There is a selection of seating, between soft armchairs and sofas at two different

seat heights. There was a noticeboard including some information near the entrance of the practice; however, the information provided was in a small typeface that could present a problem for some service users. At the time of our visit, we could not see a board giving the names, titles, and photos of staff members at the practice. The Friends and Family Test was available for patients to fill in and post in a box.

There was a TV on the wall of the practice, although this was turned off. There was no water dispenser for patients, and nor were there any toys for children's entertainment.

3. Physical Access

3.1 Facilities

As the practice is located on the first floor of the building, access to the practice becomes a difficulty for wheelchair users, or patients less able to walk. Patients must climb a steep flight of stairs with a single handrail at the front entrance to reach the practice. Wheelchair users are required to use 'the service lift' at the rear of the building to reach the practice. However, once inside the practice, the various changes of level between the waiting room and the treatment rooms would be challenging for less mobile patients, especially as no ramp is provided for the steps. In addition, the reception desk is quite high, and may create a barrier to communication between the receptionist and a wheelchair user.

There is no hearing loop for the hearing impaired at the practice.

The practice does not have an accessible toilet for those with a disability. In fact, at the time of our visit the toilet was not in a good state; ensuring regular cleaning of the facilities needs some care and attention. We did not see a red alarm cord in the bathroom.

4. Information Access

4.1 NHS Charges

The NHS Bandings for treatment costs were on display and up to date, visible in the reception area and on the noticeboard. However, the typeface, as mentioned above, is quite small. Information on when patients are eligible for free treatment was also available on the noticeboard. When asked how treatment costs are explained to patients, the practice manager told us that there is a handout available at reception for patients to take away with them and that the bandings are clearly displayed at reception. The practice manager seemed to have a very

clear understanding of what types of treatment fall into which banding. However, the FP17DC form was not mentioned.

The NHS Bandings for treatment costs are available for patients to see on the practice's website.

4.2 Complaints

The practice's complaints procedure was on display in the practice, although this was in a small typeface. The procedure itself is positive and open in its tone; the assurance that complaints will not affect a patient's treatment is an extra comfort for the patient. In addition, the paragraph stating that the practice regularly reviews the feedback it has had to improve services shows the practice as always keen to improve.

However, it should be made clear that patients can also escalate their complaint to NHS England rather than it simply being a separate route for patients to follow to complain about the treatment they received. Patients could also benefit from the escalation procedure being more clearly set out, and separated by the type of concern each complaints service will deal with.

The procedure does not appear to be included on the practice's website.

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	No - date of response will be proposed by Complaints Manager	Yes - NHSE* PDCS CQC PHSO GDC	No

*NHSE NHS England

PDCS Private Dental Complaints Service

CQC Care Quality Commission

PHSO Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

GDC

General Dental Council

4.3 Promoting oral health

At the time of our visit there was clear information on oral health for both adults and children on the walls and in leaflet stands in the waiting room and reception area.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

It was easy to find the practice on NHS Choices; however it has not updated its NHS Choices entry since 2016. As such, no information on the services provided here can be found due to the website's 90 day rule. Despite this, information provided on the facilities available at the practice appears still to be accurate.

The practice's own website is smart and navigable. The NHS logo appears on their 'About' page, to make it clear to service users that NHS treatment is available on the premises; as mentioned above, the NHS treatment fees are given on the 'Fees' page to make it clear that NHS treatment is given to adults. The staff photos and bios on the 'Meet the Team' page are a nice personal touch, however it would be beneficial for patients' information if all staff, including dental nurses, the practice manager, and receptionists were included on that page rather than just the dentists.

Despite all of the above good practice, there are a few points that may need to be addressed.

- 1. The spinning circle when loading the website, and when loading various pages within, could make the site difficult for people with autism, especially when it runs for a prolonged period of time due to a slow internet connection. If it was possible to freeze it by clicking on it, this would improve the experience for those service users.*
- 2. The colour change when the cursor is over the navigation bar at the top of the page, and the colour contrast between the background and the text in the search bar, could be improved to help those with a visual impairment.*
- 3. It could be quite confusing for some service users when all of the promotional images on the website appear to be of an American hospital, and stock photos of doctors, rather than the practice itself.*
- 4. One of the feedback comments on the homepage refer to a dentist no longer included on the website.*
- 5. On the 'Services' page, the symbols that change colour for each kind of dentistry are not links; patients must click on 'Read More' to reach the next page. For some service users it might be beneficial if the cursor did not change when it is over the circles.*
- 6. The 'Blog' page on the website appears empty.*

7. *It might be beneficial to service users if it was clear on the front page that they treat children at the practice, as well as adults.*

5. Supporting Patients

5.1 Communication

When asked about how patients' communication needs are dealt with, the practice manager told us that they are collected and recorded on the patient's medical notes. 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 practice manager told us that they access an interpreter service to ensure everyone is being understood. This is also the case for patients with a hearing impairment.

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 practice manager said that there is a room, but it is not actually a closed space.

5.2 Patients with specific requirements

As stated above, due to the layout of the building, it is difficult for the practice to accommodate patients who have difficulty walking or are in a wheelchair.

When asked how patients with a learning disability are dealt with at the practice, the practice manager told us that they are aware of Purple Folders and the role of support workers, who may accompany patients with learning disabilities.

In the case of patients with a visual impairment, the practice manager told us that they would change the font size when they provide the standard information to a patient.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

When we asked the practice manager what the procedure is in a medical emergency, they showed us the emergency equipment cupboard. It was not clear if they have a written medical emergency procedure. There is a range of equipment in there, including a defibrillator, oxygen tank, and basic emergency kit. The practice manager identified themselves as the first aider, and told us that all staff are aware of this. However, this information was not on display in the practice for patients to see.

6. Summary of Findings

The Maltings Dental Surgery has a number of areas of good practice. We found the following areas to highlight:

1. *Friendly staff.*
2. *Comfortable, open, waiting room.*
3. *Patient feedback box in the waiting room.*
4. *Approach to accessing interpreter services for patients.*

We also found the following areas for improvement:

1. *Accessibility for people with specific requirements.*
2. *Practice NHS Choices website entry.*
3. *Practice's website.*
4. *Clear external signage.*

7. Recommendations

2.1 Signage

1. *Consider ways of improving signage to the practice, for example by having a portable A-Frame outside the entrance.*
2. *Ensure that the Google Map embedded on the website is accessible to all service users.*

2.2 Car Parking

3. *Ensure it is clear to service users that the car park is a walk away, perhaps by including it on the website, or mentioning it when a new patient signs up.*

2.3 Visible External Signage

4. *Ensure that 111 for out of hours help is included on external signage.*

2.4 First Impressions

5. *Consider installing a board with the names, titles, and photos of all members of staff in the waiting room.*
6. *Increase the size of the typeface of all information available on the noticeboard, and include treatment tariffs and the complaints procedure on the board.*
7. *Consider introducing more child-friendly items into the waiting room for children's comfort and entertainment, such as children's books and smaller seats.*
8. *Consider installing a water dispenser in the waiting room for patients' comfort.*

3.1 Facilities

9. *Consider installing a handrail on both sides of the stairway at the entrance to the practice for patients' safety and comfort.*

10. *Look into ways of improving accessibility within the practice, perhaps by replacing step level changes with ramps, to ensure wheelchair users can always reach treatment rooms.*
11. *Consider ways of improving the décor of the back entrance where wheelchair users enter the practice via the service lift.*
12. *Consider creating a section of the desk that would be wheelchair accessible to improve communication for all.*
13. *Consider installing a hearing loop.*
14. *Consider converting the patient toilet into an accessible toilet and install a red alarm cord in the toilet to ensure the safety of all patients using the practice.*
15. *Ensure the regular cleaning of the patient toilet in the practice.*

4.1 NHS Charges

16. *Ensure the NHS Bandings are always clearly displayed in a large typeface for patients to see.*
17. *Ensure that a copy of the FP17DC is always given to patients so that their treatment is always clear to them.*

4.2 Complaints

18. *Update the complaints procedure with a clear outline of the NHS escalation procedure.*
19. *Incorporate Healthwatch Hertfordshire and POhWER (a patient advocacy organisation) into the complaints policy, in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.*
20. *Include the complaints procedure on the practice's website.*

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

21. *Update the practice's entry on NHS Choices.*
22. *Consider changing the website in accordance with the points given in need of addressing in section 4.4.*

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 ways of creating a private space for patients who would like a confidential conversation, or need to recover after treatment.*

5.2 Patients with Specific Requirements

25. *Ensure all staff are carrying out equality and diversity best practices, for example, offering longer appointments to patients with learning disabilities, to ensure the practice is catering to all service users.*

5.3 Medical Emergencies

26. *Ensure that there is a clear written protocol for medical emergency situations.*
27. *Ensure that the identity of the first aider is clear for patients to see in the waiting room.*

Practice Response

2.1 Signage

1. Not allowed by Centre Management due to Health and Safety reasons as this would be outside the practice and within the general public area of the shopping centre. We have placed an A board on several occasions and Centre Management Security have removed it and placed within our premises.
2. We will look into this.

2.2 Car Parking

3. This is usually mentioned by our reception team if a new patient rings in over the telephone. If a new patient comes into the practice, then will already be aware.

2.3 Visible External Information

4. Noted for action.

2.4 First Impressions

5. We do not believe that this is practical as we have over 20 staff members including clinicians and do not have available space on a large enough notice board.
6. Noted for action.
7. We have smaller seats within the waiting area.
8. Our clinical director has advised that on a recent update in cross infection by Michael Lewis, Professor of Oral Medicine and Dean of the School of Dentistry at Cardiff University, he stated that they have removed all of their water dispensers as they were found to be a reservoir for Pseudomonas despite periodic cleaning.

3.1 Facilities

9. Will obtain quotes for doing this.
10. Will be considered but have never had a problem with anyone accessing the treatment rooms if they have been able to get into the practice.

11. This is outside of the demise of the surgery itself and The Maltings Centre Management will not allow any work external to the premises to be undertaken. Once the patient enters the back door they will be within the surgery premises.
12. This will be in our capital plan when the reception desk is being changed.
13. We are currently obtaining quotes from suppliers to install this.
14. This will be considered when the toilets are being renovated in due course.
15. There is a cleaning schedule signed by the cleaner daily and checks are made at intervals. There are a large number of patients using the facility daily.

4.1 NHS Charges

16. This is on display in reception but also on the TV which is above reception and displays the NHS bandings within a loop of information for patients.
17. A written treatment plan is always given to the patient before treatment commences which they sign. We are a paperless practice using the Exact software (SOE) system so the treatment plans are generated by our software to comply with the requirements of the FP17DC, signed by the patients and then scanned back into their records. We do not use the NHS paper FP17DC forms.

4.2 Complaints

18. Noted for action.
19. Noted for action.
20. Noted for action.

4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

21. We are currently having problems accessing the NHS Choices website so will update as soon as we can access.
22. We have obtained a new website only in the last year, so will change any items which can be changed but it will be difficult for all of the changes recommended to be implemented without having a new website. The points will be actioned wherever possible.

5.1 Communication

23. Noted.
24. We do have private space available for patients who would like a confidential conversation, but due to space constraints we do not have dedicated areas for patients recovering after treatment. If any patient feels unwell after treatment, they will be kept in the treatment room until

they feel well enough to leave, and any patients waiting to be treated will be advised accordingly.

5.2 Patients with Specific Requirements

25. Noted.

5.3 Medical Emergencies

26. Noted.

27. The first aider is noted on the notice board in the waiting room as well as on the front door of cupboard with the Emergency Drugs. Both of these are in public areas of the practice.