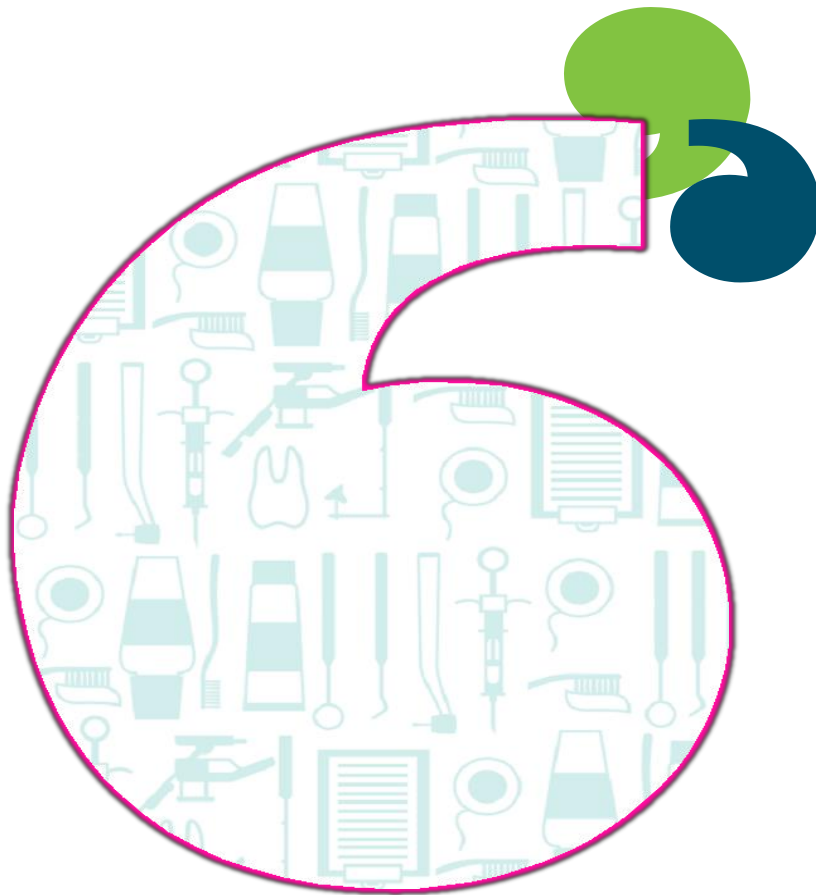


# Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



**Watford Dental Practice**

**205 St Albans Road, Watford, WD25 5BH**

**Watford Area**

**Premises visited:** Watford Dental Practice  
**Date and Time of Visit:** 11.02.19 14.00  
**Visit Conducted By:** Alice Lovell and Priya Vaithilingam

**NHS Contract Holder:** Mr A Shah

### **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

Watford Dental Practice is located on a busy high street near Watford town centre. The practice faces onto the road, with a pavement and loading/parking bays directly in front of the front door. The practice is across two levels, with dental surgeries both upstairs and downstairs.

The practice has a large team. Currently there are eight dentists, seven dental nurses and two hygienists working there, in addition to the practice manager, there are two receptionists. We spoke to the practice manager and a receptionist on this visit.

Due to its location on a main road, the practice is well served by bus routes stopping only a minute's walk from the front door. Routes from this bus stop include destinations such as Abbots Langley, Harlow, and Hatfield, but the buses do travel more local routes within Watford. The closest train station is Watford Junction, which is approximately 10 minutes' walk away.

## 2. Environment

### 2.1 Signage

The practice was easy to find as there was an overhanging sign protruding from the building in clear black and silver writing, which stated "dental practice". There was also a large sign above the shop front, which shows the name of the practice, its phone number, and the web address.

The practice's website includes a Google Map of the practice's location, which can be found on the 'Contact', and then, 'How to find us' page.

### 2.2 Car Parking

There is a loading area with bays directly outside the practice, with parking slightly further along the road. Although these are restricted to 30 minutes at a time, the practice manager told us that patients have never had any complaints about the availability of parking. The loading area seemed ideal for drop off, but at the time of our visit all the bays were in use. The practice manager stated that if those were unavailable, then patients tend to park on the nearby side roads or in the car park for The Range. The car park for The Range is 10 minutes away on foot, across the busy high street.

In terms of blue badge parking, we could see none available. The practice manager stated that there are some disabled spaces further down the high street on a side road, but there are none allocated for the practice itself.

## 2.3 Visible External Information

There is plenty of information displayed outside the practice, including its opening hours, the NHS logo, and its registered dentists, on a glass plaque at eye level. The NHS 111 number for treatment out of hours was also clearly displayed on the glass plaque.

## 2.4 First impressions

The shop face is made of glass, which is frosted up to eye level to protect the privacy of patients in the waiting area by reception. The reception desk is directly in front of the front door, although it is quite high. The receptionists were welcoming, and seemed very happy to leave the desk to assist a patient through the door if need be.

There are two waiting areas in the practice: one upstairs, and one downstairs. The same type of seating is used throughout for patients, which was cushioned and had arms to help patients rise from a seated position. There is ample natural light in the downstairs waiting room, although artificial light tended to dominate the upstairs waiting room.

The practice was tidy and spotlessly clean at the time of our visit, with a selection of magazines available in both waiting areas and three TVs on the wall in each area set to Sky News. In addition, there was information posted all around the reception desk for patients to read, including the '9 Principles' supplied by the General Dental Council. However, much of this information was in small print.

We felt comfortable in the practice, and assured by the professional and friendly manner in which we were dealt with.

## 3. Physical Access

### 3.1 Facilities

There is clear access to the front door from the street, with a small step ramp to cross into the practice. Although the rest of the shop face is frosted glass, the front door has been left clear so that receptionists can see patients who may need assistance entering the practice. The practice manager told us that they have not

had an issue with assisting wheelchair users, and that they always make sure those patients are treated on the ground floor.

Although there is a change in level from the front to the back of the practice on the ground floor, a ramp is available to enable wheelchair users to attend either surgeries on that floor. The ground floor waiting area is clear of any clutter, and there is ample space for wheelchair users to turn and move through the practice.

The patient toilet, located on the ground floor up a step, is not an accessible toilet (e.g. no grab rails, red emergency alarm cord or space to turn a wheelchair), which the practice manager was aware of. To ensure patients are aware of this ahead of time, staff make this information available to patients ahead of any appointment.

There was a colour contrast between the walls and the floor, but no contrast between the facilities and the colour of the walls to protect the dignity of patients living with dementia.

## 4. Information Access

### 4.1 NHS Charges

The NHS Banding fees were displayed clearly throughout the practice, and were up to date. The practice manager told us that they direct patients to the NHS website, which has more detailed explanations of the three bandings, if they ask for this. They also use the FP17 treatment plan form, and provide patients with these after their treatment is complete.

### 4.2 Complaints

The practice's complaints procedure was on display by the reception desk at the time of our visit, and was readily available to print off when we asked for a copy. The practice manager referenced the fact that the procedure is on the website and displayed in reception, when asked how they make patients aware of the complaints procedure. The procedure can be found on the practice website under the 'Contact' tab, although this is a previous version to the hard copy provided.

The practice's complaints procedure is written clearly and lets the patient know what they can expect from the practice in handling their complaint. However, there were a few points to consider:

1. Complaints about dental treatment cannot be addressed to the local Clinical Commissioning Group, only NHS England may deal with NHS dental complaints.
2. The Private Dental Complaints Service is not signposted to for private dental treatment complaints.
3. No reason is given for why a patient may wish to speak to the Care Quality Commission about any complaint they may have.
4. The General Dental Council is not provided in the Contacts list.

### 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 - 3 working days	Yes - within 10 working days, with further notification if required	Yes - NHSE* HVCCG CQC HSO	No

\*NHSE      NHS England

HVCCG      Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group

CQC      Care Quality Commission

HSO      Health Service Ombudsman

The practice does have a patient feedback box at reception for the Friends and Family Test, but this was obscured by other items at the time of our visit.

### 4.3 Promoting oral health

There was a small amount of material promoting oral health on display in the practice. There was a poster aimed at adults in the ground floor waiting area about the impact of smoking on oral health. There was also a box of free samples of branded toothpaste on the reception desk. When asked about how they promote oral health, the practice manager stated that they provide educational sheets sent by the toothpaste companies to children who attend the practice, in addition to suggesting patients regularly attend the hygienist.

Oral health promotion seemed like an area the practice could do more on, especially for their young patients.

### 4.4 Dental Practice and NHS website<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to find the practice's entry on the NHS website, and appears to be kept regularly up to date with the accurate information on facilities available at the practice.

The practice's own website is also easy to find, and is laid out in a clear, professional format. A wealth of information is available on the website, including NHS fee bandings, photos of the dentists, and a complete 360 photographic tour of the dental practice via Google. All of these measures will do a great deal for putting patients at ease before they have yet set foot in the practice.

## 5. Supporting Patients

### 5.1 Communication

When asked about how the practice would deal with patients' communication needs, the practice manager told us that their computer system flags up any requirements the patient has made them aware of. The receptionist did let us know that when a new patient is registering with them, they ask for any access or communication requirements and then make an assessment of whether they can support this patient.

The practice is able to call the Language Line translation service for patients who speak English as a second language, however they generally rely on patients bringing friends or relatives with them to aid understanding.

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



In terms of how the practice supports deaf and hearing impaired patients' needs, there is a hearing loop available for use and the practice manager told us that so far they have not had any issues with this. They tend to manage by exchanging notes with a notepad and pen, or else the patient may be able to lip read; the staff would then support them by speaking slowly.

The practice manager and staff seemed to understand their patient population and needs very well, and came across as very active in seeking ways to support their patients more. This resulted in positive stories about patient interaction/communication.

Through our observation, it was also clear that there was a very good rapport between the patients and the staff.

## 5.2 Patients with specific requirements

As stated above, the practice's computer system flags up any specific requirements that a patient has made them aware of, this is then taken into account ahead of appointments, appointment booking and communication. When asked specifically how the practice supports patients with learning disabilities, the practice manager said that they try to book them in with a trainee dentist who can give them more time; this then helps to ensure they have an understanding of the treatment they are having, and prevent any anxiety. The practice manager also stated the use of/referral to the Special Care Dental Service where necessary. The practice manager had not come into contact with the Purple Folder scheme for people with learning disabilities, but could see it's benefit and was very keen to learn more about it.

In terms of support for patients with a visual impairment, the practice manager told us that reception staff would always ask if they needed help to get to the surgery.

When asked about staff training on safeguarding adults and children, the practice manager told us that all staff complete annual safeguarding training online. This provides them with a certificate that is valid for 2-3 years. In addition, a video is shown and leaflets are provided at staff meetings to remind everyone of the process and keep them up to date.

All staff we met at the practice demonstrated passion in providing a positive and equally accessible service for all their patients. This was supported by the practices

and procedures described, as well as the literature displayed around the reception area.

### 5.3 Medical Emergencies

The practice manager told us that all staff are trained in CPR and first aid on an annual basis, however the two principle dentists are the designated first aiders, with one principle dentist on site at all times. In an emergency, there is a clear procedure that the dentist in charge of the surgery would direct reception to phone for an ambulance and manage the situation.

The practice does have a defibrillator on site, which is kept on the ground floor in the decontamination room. The emergency trolley is kept in the same location. We were told that there is never any reason why the first aider would be unable to access this equipment.

All staff we spoke to demonstrated confidence and knowledge in the procedures.

## 6. Summary of Findings

Watford Dental Practice has many areas of good practice. We found these particular areas to highlight:

- Warm, welcoming, and professional staff - very good rapport with patients and strong patient focus
- Clear, visible, external information
- Awareness and support in place for patients' communication requirements
- Staff committed to training, and knowledgeable about relevant policies and procedures
- Transparency around NHS dental charges

We also found the following areas for improvement:

- Complaints procedure
- Promotion of oral health
- Lack of accessible toilet

### 7. Recommendations

#### Accessibility:

1. Ensure that all information displayed in the practice is in a good size of print and easy for patients to access.
2. Increase staff awareness of Purple Folders for patients with learning disabilities. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/adult-social-services/disability/learning-disabilities/my-health/my-purple-folder.aspx>
3. Consider ways of converting the patient toilet into an accessible toilet, with grab rails, a red emergency cord, and a contrast between the walls and facilities within next time a refurbishment is taking place.
4. Investigate the possibility of blue badge parking being made available directly outside the practice.
5. Consider creating a lowered section in the reception desk to ensure good communication for all.
6. Consider including all staff on the 'Meet Our Team' webpage on the website.

#### Complaints/Feedback

7. Update the complaints policy in accordance with the statement published by the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.
8. Ensure that the patient feedback box is easy to access for all patients and placed in one or both waiting area(s).

#### Promotion of Oral Health

9. Ensure that the oral health of both adults and children are promoted via posters or displayed on screens in surgeries.

### Response from Watford Dental Practice

Thank you for the email and report.

With regards to the recommendations:

- We have spoken about the Purple Folders on our latest staff meeting and I can confirm that all members of the team are familiar with it now.

- We have also discussed a few times in the past with staff whether they would like to have their pictures on our website, however the majority voted against this therefore we will keep pictures of our clinicians only. - all staff names are available in our statement of purpose though.
- One of our nurses is currently pursuing advanced Oral Hygiene education therefore she is happy to create some oral hygiene posters for us on monthly bases as part of her portfolio.
- We do have a few patients in wheelchairs, however we have never received complaints of suggestions to have a lower section on the reception desk, and also if any patient needs any help reception is very happy to attend and/or come around and carry on conversation in the waiting area.
- We have displayed some new information regarding our complaints policy in the waiting area.
- Blue badge parking is available at the parking bays outside the practice under normal rules in the pay and display area, which is about 10-30 meters away from our front door (depending on which one is available).

We look forward to having our report published.

Thank you again for visiting us.

