



## Report on patient experience of dental services in Stockton-on-Tees

February 2018



## Introduction

Local Healthwatches have been set up across England to create a strong, independent consumer champion with the aim to:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs.
- Support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees works with local people, patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services. This doesn't just mean improving services today but influencing and shaping services to meet the needs of the local communities tomorrow.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is steered by a Board of volunteers, commissioned by the Local Authority and accountable to the public. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees are the only non-statutory body whose sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf.

Healthwatch has:

- The statutory right to be listened to; Providers and Commissioners must respond to Healthwatch within 20 days of submission of requests for information or reports.
- The statutory power to Enter & View publicly funded health and social care services.
- A statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## Rationale

Healthwatch works closely with both the voluntary and public sectors to assist in the delivery of its statutory activities and priorities. These close relationships ensure that the public voice is heard during the service planning processes making sure local services better meet the needs of the people using them. One of the statutory bodies Healthwatch work closely with is Public Health Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (Public Health). Public Health are the lead body for developing and publishing our local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA summarises the efforts of many people through a range of different mechanisms to identify, define, and address the wider health and well-being needs of the people of Stockton-on-Tees. The work, done in partnership, is guided by plans, strategies, and policies that have been developed after needs assessment, data analysis and research, and through

consultation with professionals and residents across the area. The purpose of the JSNA is to bring together in one place the information that this rich resource provides, backed up by a technical compilation of statistics, data, and analysis. This enables the widest spectrum of partners to have the intelligence they need to ensure commissioning strategies work together for better provision of services for those areas of greatest need.<sup>1</sup>

Public Health informed Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees (HWS) that Oral Health was one of its future priorities for 2018/2019, and welcomed any feedback HWS could gather from patients by carrying out a planned engagement activity.

### Objectives

- To gather feedback from patients on their dental service provision.
- To make observations of the dental practices visited.

### Methodology

1. HWS asked all dental providers in the locality to take part in the engagement activity.
2. HWS talked to patients at each dental practice visited.
3. HWS distributed a survey to patients. The patient survey was also placed on social media and in the HWS newsletter.

This engagement work has been the primary source for gathering service user feedback.

HWS received a total of 231 patient responses.<sup>2</sup>

### Observations

HWS observed and engaged with patients at each dental practice, on 1 morning or 1 afternoon, throughout January and February 2018. 21 dental practices were invited to participate to support the work of HWS, and contribute to informing Public Health's future priorities. The following table lists the 16 dental surgeries that participated in this engagement activity:

Dental Practice	Area	NHS Provider
Alpha Dental Studio	Stockton	Yes
Bishopton Lane Dental Practice	Stockton	Yes
Bupa Dental Care	Yarm	Yes – limited NHS services
Grange Dental Practice	Norton	Yes – currently not taking new NHS patients
Hardwick Dental Practice	Stockton	Yes

<sup>1</sup> For more information on JSNA, please follow this link <http://www.teesjsna.org.uk/stockton/>

<sup>2</sup> Quotes in pink are taken directly from patients who were surveyed.

Dental Practice	Area	NHS Provider
Lanehouse Road Dental Surgery	Thornaby	Yes
Leven Vale Dental Practice	Ingleby Barwick	Yes
My Dentist – Greenside Practice	Ingleby Barwick	Yes
My Dentist – Lysander House	Stockton	Yes
My Dentist – Rimswell Parade	Stockton	Yes
My Dentist – Skinner Street	Stockton	Yes
My Dentist – Station Road	Eaglescliffe	Yes
Myton Park Dental	Thornaby	Yes - Children only/limited
Norton Village Dental	Norton	No
Roseworth Dental Centre	Stockton	Yes
Yarm Lane Dental Surgery	Stockton	Yes

HWS received a warm welcome from all staff at each surgery visited. Observations of the waiting room environment and facilities were made at each dental practice visited by the HWS team.

	Access for patients with limited or no mobility	Option for home visits	Dental literature available and visible	How the Practice gathers feedback from patients	TV screen advertising oral health and related information	Text reminder service
Alpha Dental Studio	Yes	No	Yes	Questionnaire	Yes	Yes
Bishopton Lane Dental Practice	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box	No	Yes
Bupa Dental Care	Yes	No	Yes	Satisfaction survey	No	Yes
Grange Dental Practice	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box	Yes	Yes
Hardwick Dental Practice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Suggestion box	No	Yes
Lanehouse Road Dental Surgery	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box	Yes	Yes

	Access for patients with limited or no mobility	Option for home visits	Dental literature available and visible	How the Practice gathers feedback from patients	TV screen advertising oral health and related information	Text reminder service
Leven Vale Dental Practice	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box	Yes	Yes
My Dentist Greenside	Yes	No	Yes	Survey	Yes	Yes
My Dentist Lysander House	Yes	No	Yes	Survey	Yes	Yes
My Dentist Rimswell Parade	No	No	Yes	Suggestion box	No	Yes
My Dentist Skinner Street	No	No	Yes	Feedback text survey	Yes	Yes
My Dentist Station Road	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box and survey	Yes	Yes
Myton Park Dental	Yes	No	Yes	Suggestion box	No	Yes
Norton Village Dental	No	No	Yes	Suggestion box	No	Yes
Roseworth Dental Centre	Yes	No	Yes	Survey	No	Yes
Yarm Lane Dental Surgery	Yes	No	Yes	Survey	No	No

HWS observed that few dental practices had visible dental charges for NHS patients displayed in their waiting areas however, those with online facilities did advertise this or provided a link to the charges.<sup>3</sup>



HWS also observed that parking at some of the practices was limited and not available on most dental practice sites. However, the HWS team did not experience an issue parking to conduct the engagement activity.

All practices were clean and tidy with most having notice boards or posters advertising dental products.

My Dentist at Rimswell Parade in Stockton had lots of informative dental literature available along with a TV advertising dental products, tips on good oral health and posters highlighting the effects of sugar on teeth. Some practices had a visible display of oral health products available to purchase. Yarm Lane Dental Surgery displayed a feedback box and a poster 'We're listening to your feedback' which highlighted ratings of patient experience in the waiting room.

The following dental practices have ensured facilities for children are available in their waiting rooms. A range of children's books, toys and some had a seated area for children with small table:

- Grange Dental Practice- Stockton-on-Tees
- Norton, Hardwick Dental Practice – Stockton-on-Tees
- Lanehouse Road Dental Surgery – Thornaby
- Leven Vale Dental Practice - Ingleby Barwick
- My Dentist, Lysander House – Stockton-on-Tees
- Norton Village Dental – Norton
- Yarm Lane Dental Surgery – Stockton-on-Tees

<sup>3</sup> Please see the attached link to the NHS England website for further details.  
<https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/dentists/Pages/nhs-dental-charges.aspx>

HWS observed that ease of access for those with mobility issues varied throughout the dental practices. Norton Village Dental, My Dentist at Rimswell Parade and My Dentist at Skinner Street have no access for patients who are wheelchair users. Although the other 13 practices HWS visited can provide access, with fixed ramps to the entrance and lifts to consultation rooms, some practices have mobile ramps which need to be put in place for patients to access the building.

During the 4 week period HWS conducted this engagement activity, patients at Queensway Dental Clinic, in Billingham, had been informed of its closure to NHS patients. It was evident that some of the practices, particularly My Dentist in Eaglescliffe and Yarm Lane Dental Surgery in Stockton, had a high volume of patients registering with them due to this closure.

During HWS's engagement activity HWS had confirmation from NHS England that Grange Dental Practice had temporarily closed its registration to new patients. Grange Dental Practice is the closest geographically to Queensway Dental Clinic, therefore many patients were choosing this dentist as a preferred option when forced to register somewhere else.

HWS observed the advertising of a hearing loop to assist patients who have a hearing impairment was only displayed in 1 dental practice the team visited.

### **Feedback**

HWS received 231 responses to the survey (143 females and 88 males) which was circulated in the 16 dental practices HWS visited.

The below chart shows the age ranges of the patients who completed the survey.

Age range	Number of patients who completed the survey
Under 24 years	22
25 – 49 years	70
50 – 51 years	41
60 – 69 years	43
70 + years	55

HWS asked patients if they were NHS or private patients, 213 patients answered this question. 179 respondents confirmed they were NHS patients and 34 private patients.

HWS gathered feedback on how easy patients felt it was to access their dental practice; 192 patients responded to this question. An overwhelming majority of patients commented that access and the appointment booking system was easy.

The responses regarding the length of wait for patient appointments highlighted that most patients feel the length of wait is acceptable. Many book appointments in advance, some commenting that they do not have to wait long for a routine or emergency treatment.

Patients were asked what experiences they have had of dentists, emergency dental care, hospital dentists or community dental services in the last 3 years. 228 patients answered this question, the results are in the table below, and some patients ticked more than 1 box:

Question 4.	Number of patients
I have a NHS dentist and I am happy with the service	194 (85%)
I have a NHS dentist and I am unhappy with the service	6 (3%)
I would like a NHS dentist but I can't find one local to me	1 (0.44%)
I had a NHS dentist but they became private	20 (9%)
I have received hospital treatment for my teeth	15 (7%)
I have a private dentist	27 (12%)
I care for someone who is housebound and cannot find a dentist who will do home visits	1 (0.44%)
I have used an emergency dental service as I couldn't find a NHS dentist	1 (0.44%)
I have a fear of dentists so do not visit the dentist	1 (0.44%)
I don't know how to register	3 (1%)
I have false teeth so do not feel the need to go to the dentist	2 (0.88%)

92 patients provided additional comments to question 4 about the service they received. The overall feedback was positive, some of the comments patients provided can be seen below:

"I can always get an appointment when I need one and the staff at the clinic are fantastic"

"I have been coming to Thornaby for a few years now and very happy with the treatment and care I receive"

"I stayed with my dentist due to their excellence and I travel a lot therefore I value DENPLAN"

"I used to attend NHS practice but prefer my private dentist now as I was seeing different dentists, better now and see same dentist"



“Quick efficient friendly service, always able to find appointment when needed, excellent standard of care”

There were a number of comments referring to patients NHS dentist becoming a private service, 3 of these comments can be seen below:

“My 21 year old son’s dentist has just gone private and we are struggling to find an NHS dentist”

“I am NHS but they are going private so if a parent is not private then the children will be kicked out of the practice”

“Because I am anxious about going to the dentist I did not want to change mine when they went private”

HWS asked patients if they felt their dentist was accessible to all, including people with mobility problems, visual or hearing impairments or those with learning disabilities. 187 respondents answered this question, with 148 commenting ‘Yes’, 2 ‘No’ and 37 ‘Not sure’. 28 individuals gave further information if they answered ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’, some of these comments can be seen below:

“Steep steps”

“All surgeries on top floor”

“Stairs are an issue, I get out of breath”

“There are stairs and no lift”

“Upstairs surgeries only but think they offer home visits”

“Husband has problems with the stairs, so that’s an issue some times. He comes down backwards, I stand in front or behind for safety support”

A number of patients commented on their particular dental practice building being old, commenting that it wouldn’t be possible to make the practice accessible for wheelchair users or put in a lift.

Patients were asked who they would contact if they needed emergency dental treatment. The table shows some of the responses patients made:

Response from some patients	Number of patients responding in the same way
My own dental practice	104
111	37
Don't know	17
999	1
Urgent Care Centre	1
Dental hospital	1

Below are some additional comments made by patients when asked who they would contact if they had a dental emergency?:

“They have a dedicated phone number”

“During normal working hours it would be the practice. I believe there is an emergency service, advertising in the practice waiting room but I haven't made a note of the number”

“Wait and contact the practice, if it wasn't a weekend”

“Out of hours”

“Dentist NHS first then private”

“101”

“Local dentist or 111”

“Don't know, can you ring here and they would put you through, wouldn't be 101 or hospital”

“Don't know, I needed emergency treatment previously and I was given conflicting info from a dentist (not this one)”

“Access the hospital for number”

“NHS”

“Nearest hospital or number on my dental surgeries door”

“My dentist would provide me with an out of ours number”

Patients were also asked if they knew that their dentist looks for general oral health issues such as mouth cancer during consultations. 181 patients said “Yes” and 17 said “No”.

HWS asked patients how dental services could be improved for them. 116 patients responded to this question with a majority of comments being positive. Many patients commented that they were happy with the service they received. Below highlights some of the negative feedback HWS received from patients to this question during the engagement activity:

“More access out of hours but personally haven’t experienced any problems getting into my dental practice”

“Better access to urgent dental care”

“Stick to appointment schedule, have waited 30 minutes for set appointment”

“More appointment slots”

“Better cover for emergencies, had to get cancellation and was in agony for 24 hours”

“Service could be improved by being open on a Saturday or evening for people who work full time”

“A medium to ask dentist questions when needed”

“The improvements to the service over the last 20 have been unbelievable.”

“Longer than would like. Prefer appointment after work or weekend”

“Payment plans for expensive treatment, so the cost could be spread out I think there would be better advice and support for infant dental hygiene. It can also be expensive for dental work to be done”

“Easier access to NHS dentists. We are currently seeking local NHS dentist due to circumstances. Queensway has been my dentist since I was a little girl and I have always received excellent service so I am sad to see it turn private and have to take my son elsewhere”

“Late night / weekend appointments as I work fulltime in another town”

## Conclusion

HWS visited 16 practices across the Stockton locality of which 1 was not a NHS provider. 2 of the NHS provider services had limited NHS services available. Access for patients with mobility problems was seen to be acceptable at most of the dental practices visited; with only 3 not suitable for those with wheelchairs or patients with limited mobility. HWS found that the hearing loop facility was not advertised or available at 15 of the 16 dental practice HWS visited.

HWS observed that dental practices have a commitment to ensuring they gather feedback from their patients on the service they provide with surveys or suggestion boxes. All practices had relevant and informative literature displayed. Half of the practices visited utilised a TV screen to advertise oral health information and advice.

It was found that all but 1 practice had a text reminder service for patients. HWS observed that most did not display dental charges for NHS patients, some did however advertise this on their websites.

HWS noted that home visits were only available at 1 of the dental practices visited.

The majority of patients fed back that they are happy with the booking systems and access to appointments however, some felt that weekend and evening appointments would be beneficial.

If patients needed emergency treatment 64.5% informed HWS that they would contact their own dental practice, 23% would ring 111 and 10.5% don't know who they would contact.

HWS found it very positive that an overwhelming majority of patients are aware that their dentist looks for general oral health issues such as mouth cancer during consultations.

Overall, HWS concludes that patient and staff feedback is largely positive, with 84% (of those patients surveyed) describing the service they receive at their dental practice as good or higher.

## Recommendations

- Clear NHS pricing information advertised in the surgery for those.
- Installation of a hearing loop in the practices which currently do not have one installed.
- Home visit service appears not to be available for housebound individuals.
- Advertising in the practices for what patients should do in case of an out of ours emergency.
- Extend opening hours to evenings and weekends.

## Acknowledgements

HWS would like to thank all of the staff in the dental surgeries visited by HWS for their support and cooperation.

HWS would also like to thank the patients who took the time to complete the survey.

## Response from NHS England

Dear Jane,

Many thanks for sharing the "Report on patient experience of dental services in Stockton-on-Tees". which I assume has also been shared with the practices who participated?

We would like to congratulate Healthwatch Stockton on Tees for their comprehensive report on patient experiences of dental services in Stockton –on – Tees. We note the high levels of engagement that this report achieved both in terms of dental practice engagement (16/21), and also the 231 patient responses.

We were pleased to note the following:

- 85% of respondents were happy with the dental services received.
- 100% of practices had patient feedback systems in place
- The majority of practices (13/16) had access for patients with limited mobility
- 78% of respondents were aware oral cancer checks were part of their dental examination

The following information may address some of the issues raised by patients in the report. It may be helpful for Health Watch to work in partnership with NHS England to disseminate the following information for patients:

1. Home visits: these are not commissioned from every dental practice, but on a Tees-wide basis from certain providers. Services can be accessed on referral by dental practices if they do not provide this service themselves.
2. Unscheduled care: Patients are advised to contact NHS 111 for in-hours unscheduled dental care if they cannot get a suitable appointment with their own or any local dental practice. For out-of-hours dental care all patients should be again advised to contact NHS 111.

NHS England will take the following actions forward to respond to the recommendations of the report:

1. Dental practices will be requested to clearly display patient information on the following ?
  - a. NHS dental charges
  - b. Availability of a hearing loop

- c. Information on access to out-of-hours dental care via NHS 111.
2. Extended working hours – Access to dental care in the evening and weekends is available via the dedicated out of hours service. NHS England (Cumbria and the North East) are currently working on plans to introduce further enhancement to this service with a view to moving toward 24 hour access to dental care and/or advice as clinically appropriate and will keep you updated as these plans progress.

Once again, we would like to thank Healthwatch for sharing this report. We will ensure the recommendations are implemented in partnership as stated above, to further improve the high quality services that are already being provided in Stockton-on-Tees.

Kind regards

Pauline Fletcher

**Primary Care Commissioning Manager (Dental)**

NHS England

Cumbria and the North East

### Appendix one

#### Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Oral Health survey



#### Oral Health Questionnaire

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is here to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use local health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf. Our local commissioners of oral health services are looking at how current services meet the needs of the public, and how future services may look. To ensure your experiences and comments are taken into account, please take a few moments to fill in this short questionnaire:

<b>1. What is your age group? Please tick as appropriate</b>				
Under 24	25-49	50-59	60-69	70+
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2. Are you male or female? Please tick as appropriate</b>				
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>3. Are you an NHS or private patient? Please circle as appropriate</b>				
NHS		Private		
<b>4. What experience have you had of dentists, emergency dental care, hospital dentists or community dental services, delivered in the area where you live, in the last 3 years?</b>				
You can tick as many of the boxes here as you want, and add comments at the end if there is anything else you feel we should know.				
I have an NHS Dentist, and I am happy with the service I receive				<input type="checkbox"/>
I have an NHS Dentist, but I am unhappy with the service I receive				<input type="checkbox"/>
I would like an NHS Dentist, but I can't find one local to me				<input type="checkbox"/>
I had an NHS Dentist but they have now become private				<input type="checkbox"/>
I have received hospital treatment for my teeth				<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a private dentist				<input type="checkbox"/>
I care for someone who is housebound and we cannot find a dentist who will do home visits				<input type="checkbox"/>
I have used an emergency dental service as I couldn't find an NHS dentist accepting NHS patients				<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a fear of dentists so do not visit dentists				<input type="checkbox"/>

I don't know how to register		
I have false teeth so do not feel the need to go to the dentist		
<b>5. Please tell us a little more about why you chose your answers to the questions above.</b>		
Comments:		
<b>6. Please provide the name and location of your dental practice. We may use this information to gather additional intelligence.</b>		
The name of my dental practice is:		
Town or Postcode:		
<b>7. Is your dentist accessible? Can be used by as many people as possible. For example, wheelchair-users, people with visual or hearing impairments or learning disabilities. Please tick one</b>		
Yes		
No		
I am not sure		
If No, please give us further information:		
<b>8. If you needed emergency dental treatment, who would you contact?</b>		
<b>9. As well as looking after your teeth or dentures, did you know that your dentist looks for general oral health issues such as mouth cancer? Please tick one</b>		
Yes		
No		



10. Please tell us how easy the dental practice was to access? E.g. How easy was it to book your appointment / how long did you wait for the appointment?

11. Please tell us in the space below, how dental services could be improved for you.