



2017 Dentist Schedule: Bramingham Dental Clinic

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

1.2 Acknowledgments

1.3 Disclaimer

2. What is Enter and View?

2.1 Purpose of visit

2.2 Strategic drivers

2.3 Healthwatch Luton's interest in Dentists

2.4 Methodology

2.5 Summary of findings

3. Results of findings

3.1 Additional findings

4. Recommendations

5. Service Provider response

6. NHS Dental Treatment in England

1. Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service Address:	1 st Floor Freeman Ave, Luton, LU3
Service Provider:	Bramingham Dental Clinic
Date and Time:	15 March 2017, 9am-11am
Authorised representatives:	Lucy Nicholson, Phil Turner
Contact Details:	01582 490410

1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Luton would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution to the Enter and View Programme.

1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

2. What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in

accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the practice manager, ending the visit. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

2.1 Purpose of visit

- To engage with service users of dental surgeries and understand how NHS costs are communicated to the public
- Identify examples of good working practice
- Observe patients engaging with the staff and their surroundings
- Capture the experience of residents and relatives and any ideas they may have for change

2.2 Strategic drivers

- CQC dignity and wellbeing strategy
- Healthwatch England's 'Access to NHS Dental Services' report
- Healthwatch Luton's increase in intelligence and feedback on Luton dentists after speaking with Seldom Heard groups in Luton (Sept-Dec SH Report 2016)

2.3 Healthwatch Luton's interest in Dentists

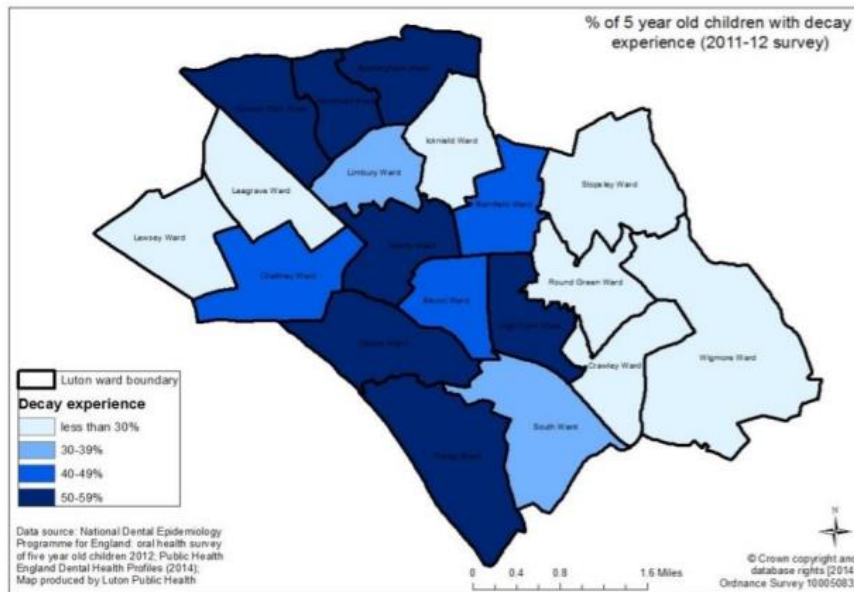
Healthwatch Luton target their engagement on seldom heard groups in Luton. In 2016, we targeted young, those with mental health and the homeless to gather their feedback on health and social care services in Luton. Over the course of 3 months, experiences from these groups on dentistry increased showing a trend Healthwatch Luton wanted to investigate further.

Healthwatch Luton also ran a community event in High Town in 2016, bringing together people of different cultures to experience feeding their children in the school holidays nutritional cheap foodⁱ. During this funded fun day, we captured feedback from parents where it was mentioned the confusion over costs of dental care prevented some people attending their dentists, and prevented them taking their children.

Healthwatch Luton contacted other local Healthwatch who had used Enter and Views, and other work on dentists in their areas. We were contacted by Healthwatch Herts, who had worked with Public Health England on dentist care in Hertfordshire in 2015-2016. Public Health England and Healthwatch Luton agreed to begin a year long project on dental care in Luton, initiated by Healthwatch Luton's Enter and Views.

Healthwatch Luton Enter and View Report 2017: Dentists Schedule

Luton has one of the worst dental disease in East of Englandⁱⁱ. Information below on dental care in children is highlighted by Public Health. Results from Public Health show that in Luton, by age 5, there is a sharp increase in tooth decay and active disease, and while statistically dental care is improving in Luton, there are still areas where there are issues, which fitted with our intelligence and feedback trends. The wards with the highest child decay experiences are Bramingham, Dallow, Farley, High Town and Northwell, Saints and Sundon Park.



Healthwatch England also did a national report on ‘Access to NHS Dental Services’, highlighting issues across the country where people were struggling to access dental care or were inhibited due to NHS costings, or understanding of the cost bands.ⁱⁱⁱ

The report highlighted some emerging issues relevant to the feedback Healthwatch Luton had gathered, such as:

- People in particular groups who may find it difficult to access a high-street dentist
- People who don’t currently do to the dentist, or who attend only when they are having problems

Cost of treatment also was highlighted as an issue nationally, where more than a third (36%) of those who had not been to a dentist in the last two years said it was because it was too expensive. 46% of 18-24 year olds nationally said they did not think going to a dentist was necessary. The most common question highlighted by some local Healthwatch nationally was ‘How do I get an NHS Dentist?’

Healthwatch Luton, with their feedback, and with the above information decided to use Enter and View on 3 dental surgeries in Luton we had received feedback from

(both positive and negative) and also attend the Community Dental Service available in Luton.

2.4 Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit.

We wrote a letter to a member of management before we spoke to anyone in the surgery and took their advice on whether any patients would be available as well as staff.

Authorised representatives conducted short interviews with members of staff, patients and relatives.

Topics such as experience of dental care, access, costs and the patients themselves were explored. We also informally noted observations on environment.

Our representatives explained to all those interviews why they were there and took minimal notes.

A large proportion of the visit was observational, involving the authorised representatives walking around the public and waiting areas, observing the surroundings to give an understanding how the surgery works and how the patients engaged with staff and facilitates.

2.5 Summary of findings

We visited Bramingham Dental Clinic between 9am and 11am. We spoke with 7 patients and 5 members of staff.

Of those patients we spoke with most were white/British background, and one was Bangladeshi.

Overall, everyone we spoke with on the day, including staff and patients thought the service was run very well.

Clear information was provided regarding costs and structure of costs, as well as how to make a complaint. The surgery displayed lots of information regarding various elements of dental treatment and care.

Bramingham Dental Clinic has over XXX patients registered, which the practice manager highlighted around 80% were NHS patients. This clinic had a large NHS contract and opened Saturdays to support their patient's needs.

The staff could speak a wide range of languages. We were told that this clinic had low numbers of DNA's (did not attend) due to their reminder services through texts, emails or calls.

3. Results of visit

Environment

Overall the environment of this dentist was clean, light and airy. From the outside, the only access to this clinic was via stairs from the street and shops below. The stairs had a stair lift fitted, which we were told was used mainly by the elderly. For disabled patients, the reception staff assisted.

The reception area had room for up to 10 patients to wait for their appointment, and there were many and varied information posters for patients to read regarding treatment, care, costs and complaints.

AED and hearing loops were available and promoted, and the recent CQC report was available on the reception desk for patients to read.

The Dentist and staff

Everyone we spoke to liked their dentist and found making an appointment easy. The responses from the patients were overwhelmingly positive regarding their 'like' for their dentist, and all found the staff friendly and approachable.

When asked if there was one thing the dentists did well, the responses were 'they communicate changes well', 'the whole lot is brilliant', 'very pleasant' 'sign in system' and 'they help you on arrival'. It was noted that this clinic had a tablet sign in system, and the staff were more than happy to assist those patients who were unsure on how to use the system.

When asked if the clinic could improve anything, 5 out of the 7 patients could not suggest anything, with one stating 'very satisfied' although one patient did state 'staff could smile more'.

Access

Everyone found the distance they had travelled to their appointment satisfactory and had chosen the dentist mainly because of its location.

When asked if the building met their needs, all responded that it did and one commented 'there is nice new seating today'.

Everyone felt that the clinic provided reliable, accessible information about their dental service, and everyone understood the communications they received. Everyone responded that they were contacted on average every 6 months by the clinic.

Healthwatch Luton Enter and View Report 2017: Dentists Schedule

One lady (aged 73) said she found the stairs easy to walk, but wondered if that would continue. She was aware of the stair lift and said she would start to use it in the future.

Costs

We informed patients (all of which were NHS patients) of the banding prices of NHS costs for dental care. We asked them if they knew what these banding costs were for, or whether they were aware of them. 4 out of 7 patients did not know about NHS banding costs and the maximum they would pay.

When asked if they understood what the banding meant, and what treatment could be expected under the bands, 6 out of 7 did not know what treatment was covered. One thought that they did. Healthwatch Luton observed posters in the reception which explained the banding, and explained the treatment per banding.

6 out of 7 patients said that their dentist explained the costs and charges to them, but one said that they did not.

For those patients who had children under 18, all were aware that they would receive free NHS dental treatment. When asked how often they attend a dentist, 2 patients responded with 'hardly ever' or 'once' (for a 4 year old). When asked why they do not bring their children more often, both replied with 'I did not think they needed to'.

Nobody out of the patients had heard of the NHS Low Income scheme. It was observed that there was information regarding this scheme available on the notice boards.

Other

When asked if patients knew where to make a complaint regarding any treatment they had received, none of the patients knew where to or how to make a complaint. We observed a complaints policy on the notice board.

3.1 Additional Findings

The staff were all friendly and happy to work here, and seemed to genuinely enjoy the teams they worked in.

Staff had a changeable understanding of how much dental disease was seen within this surgery with one staff thinking (on average) it was a round 30% of all patients, and one staff thinking it was around 75%.

The staff felt that overall they looked after patients well and most rated patient care as an area they thought the clinic did well with. Some staff felt that information, such as the complaints policy was available on the notice board (it was) and some felt it was in a cabinet and could be asked for on request.

4. Recommendations

Healthwatch Luton observed the patients at this dentist and felt overall the surgery was efficient and well run.

Healthwatch Luton would like to suggest some recommendations to Bramingham Dental Clinic to consider when developing their surgery:

- As all those patients we talked to did not understand the banding structure of NHS costs, or the treatments available per band, Healthwatch Luton would recommend this clinic promotes this further to their patients. Despite having posters on the notice boards, the patients still seem unaware.
- Communications on the importance of children's dental care is essential, with two patients at this clinic (one with a 2 year old and one with a four year old) not understanding the important of dental care at this age, and not bringing them to the dentist.
- Communications to both staff and patients on the complaints process. Although Healthwatch Luton saw the complaints process on the notice board the patients we spoke with were still unaware of how to make a complaint.

TO NOTE:

Healthwatch Luton were delighted to note that Bramingham Dental Clinic were the only dentist we viewed who had NHS leaflets available on NHS costings. They also had a comments area in reception, with results of improvements and changes made and we felt this was a good tool to use to show patients voices had been heard within the clinic setting.

5. Provider Response

Changes or outcomes agreed with the provider are as follows:

- We have displayed more leaflets and posters including information regarding the bandings to make it clearer for the patients to read and understand. Also, whilst the patient is in surgery the dentists are making sure the patient understands clearly the charges.
- We are advertising children's check-ups in and around the practice to help parents/guardians understand the importance of regular examinations. We already send out recalls every 6 months to every patient as a reminder.
- Communications with staff regarding the complaints procedure have improved by discussing in recent practice meetings and if patients ask about making a complaint the staff know how to deal with it correctly and promptly.

6. NHS Dental Treatment in England^{iv}

You do not have to pay for NHS dental treatment, if, when your treatment starts, you are:

- Under 18
- Under 19 and in full-time education
- Pregnant or you have had a baby in the last 12 months before treatment starts
- Staying in an NHS hospital and the NHS dentists carries out your treatment
- An NHS Hospital Dental Service outpatient (although you may have to pay for your dentures or bridges)

You can also get free NHS dental treatment if, when the treatment starts or when you are asked to pay:

- You're included in an aware of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and Pension Credit guarantee credit and Universal credit
- You're named on a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- You're names on a valid HC2 certificate

If you receive any of the following benefits you will not be exempt from paying for NHS dental treatment unless you also fall under one of the categories listed above:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit
- Pension credit savings credit

Proof of your entitlement

You'll be asked to show your dentist written proof that you're entitled to financial help with dental treatment. This will vary depending on your circumstances. To check what documents you need, see the NHS HC11 leaflet.

NHS Low Income Scheme

The NHS Low Income Scheme provides financial help to people not exempt from charges, but who may be entitled to full or partial help with healthcare costs if they have a low income. Anyone can apply as long as they don't have savings or investments over the capital limit. In England, the capital limit is £16,000 (or £23,250 if you live permanently in a care home). Help is based on a comparison between your weekly income and assessed requirements at the time the claim is made. Entitlement broadly follows Income Support rules to decide how much, if anything, you have to pay towards your healthcare costs, including dental treatment.

ⁱ Family Cooking Taster Session, Healthwatch Luton, www.healthwatchluton.co.uk

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https://www.luton.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/JSNA/6.3%20Oral%20health%20in%20children.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Access to NHS Dental Services: What people told local Healthwatch', Evidence Review, November 2016

^{iv} www.nhschoices.uk