



2017 Dentist Schedule: IDH/ MyDentist

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1. Introduction

1.1 Details of visit

Details of visit:	
Service Address:	1 Dunstable Road, Luton LU1 1BB
Service Provider:	My Dentist (formerly IDH)
Date and Time:	15 March 2017, 12pm-2pm
Authorised representatives:	Lucy Nicholson, Phil Turner
Contact Details:	01582 722 131

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

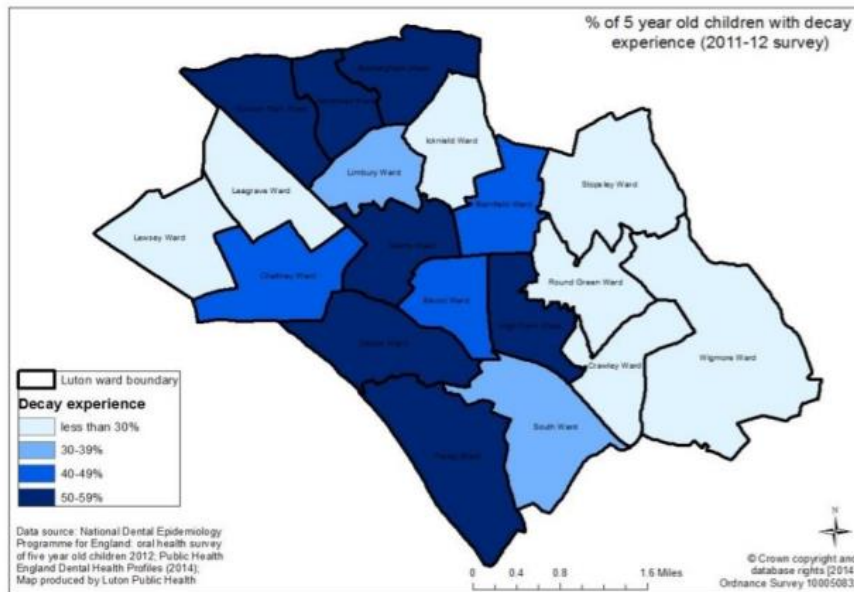
Healthwatch Luton target their engagement on seldom heard groups in Luton. In 2016, we targeted young, those with mental health and the homeless to gather their feedback on health and social care services in Luton. Over the course of 3 months, experiences from these groups on dentistry increased showing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

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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 My Dentist between 12pm-2pm. We spoke with 5 patients and 4 members of staff.

Of those patients we spoke with 3 were white/British, one was African, and one was Pakistani.

Overall, everyone we spoke with on the day, including staff and patients thought the service was run very well. Two of the patients were registering with the surgery that day so could only provide an overview experience of their registration process.

My Dentist is part of a 600-European wide dental provider, but IDH are the trading style.

The surgery overall was very professional and friendly, with around XXX patients. The manager confirmed around 60% of the patients were stable, and 40% were transient. Approximately 90% of patients were NHS. All those we spoke with on the day were NHS patients.

3. Results of visit

Environment

Overall the environment of this dentist was clean, light and airy. From the outside, there were two access points to this clinic both via stairs from the street and main road below. There was no access for disabled patients, but the manager confirmed that if needed, they would refer to a sister site up the road that had access.

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. There was also a lot of information provided regarding treatment and care beyond the dental care in clinic.

The dentist was clearly signposted to the street and main road (A505), however one patient did recommend the surgery signposted themselves better.

The environment looked professional and branded, but it was noted that a leak or damp could be seen with a missing panel to the ceiling in one corner. This revealed some wires from the ceiling, but the staff informed us that they knew of this condition and were having it mended.

The Dentist and staff

All the patients we spoke with spoke highly of their dentist, and of the staff. Most people chose this dentist due to location, and everyone found making an appointment easy. All patients found the staff friendly and approachable.

When asked if there was anything the patients thought the surgery did well, we received comments such as 'they are very helpful and accommodating' and 'very polite and friendly'. When asked if there was anything the surgery could improve on, most people said no, bar one who expressed 'they could do more to make people who fear the dentist feel safe'. When asked more details on this, the patient had fears regarding seeing a dentist and felt no one addressed that. It was unknown if she has informed anyone.

It was observed that the staff uniform and branding of the building looked very professional.

Access

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

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When asked if the building met their needs, all responded that it did and one commented 'parking would be nice'.

Nearly all those we spoke with felt that the clinic provided reliable, accessible information about their dental service, and nearly all understood the communications they received. Everyone responded that they were contacted on average every 6 months by the surgery.

There were two patients we spoke with who struggled with communications. One was Pakistani and told us the reason he attended this surgery was because one of the dentist's spoke his language so he got all the information verbally. Another one informed us he could not read, so could not understand anything sent. It was observed that this patient was assisted without asking by one of the reception staff in completing a form.

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. 3 out of 5 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, 4 out of 5 did not know what treatment was covered. One thought that they did but couldn't explain further. Healthwatch Luton observed posters in the reception which explained the banding, and explained the treatment per banding.

4 out of 5 patients said that their dentist explained the costs and charges to them, but one said that they did not. One divulged the dentist only explained costs relative to him in Band 1.

For those patients who had children under 18, all were aware that they would receive free NHS dental treatment for their children and brought their children regularly.

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 that we observed.

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 were proud of the professionalism and community work the surgery provided.

Staff had a good understanding of the dental disease within their practice, all rating around 70-90% of patients had some form of disease or decay. It would be good for staff to know the actual figure within their practice for information.

The staff felt that overall they looked after patients well and most rated patient care and customer service as an area in which they do well. A few staff mentioned parking and disabled access as an area for the surgery to improve on, but all staff said they liked working at this Dentist's, with one saying 'Love it!'

It was noted that some patients are confused over the Exemption for Tax credits documentation - The actual form asks if patients have a NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate/Card - but they would only be exempt with a card. Some patients find this confusing and difficult to navigate.

4. Recommendations

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

Healthwatch Luton would like to suggest some recommendations to My Dentist 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.
- **We entirely understand the importance of ensuring that all patients are aware of the NHS Dental charges and we will make this information more visible in our waiting room and on our practice documentation. Our mydentist website <https://www.mydentist.co.uk/dentists/practices/england/east-of-england/luton/1-dunstable-road> does show the NHS and private pricing options for patients.**
- **It may interest Healthwatch to know that mydentist did engage with Which? in 2015 to promote public awareness of NHS dental charges however we recognise there is further work to do and we thank Healthwatch for bringing this issue to our awareness.**
- The patients also mainly told us the dentists do not always explain the costs relevant to their care, so this would be an area of suggested recommendation.
- **We apologise to any patient who have not had a clear explanation of the costs relevant to their care and agree that this is a vital part of the patient journey. The Practice Manager will be discussing the Heathwatch report at their next practice meeting to ensure that the practice policy of giving a full explanation to each patient of treatment options and costs is continued. Patients that are exempt from NHS charges would also be given private treatment options and costs.**
-
- It would be suggest to promote to staff internally the level of decay from patients within this surgery, to understand the main areas of concern around costs for patients.
- **This issue will be raised at each of the practice's team meetings so that the entire team is always aware of the needs and levels of decay of our patients.**
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- Further communications to patients on the complaints process. Healthwatch Luton saw the complaints process on the notice board the patients we spoke with were still unaware of how to make a complaint.
- **This issue is very important to us as we understand the importance of understanding how our patients feel about the service they are receiving and it also allows us to improve the services we provide. We will ensure that action is taken to improve our patient's knowledge of how to raise a concern or leave feedback. All of our reception staff are trained to deal with complaints and feedback in the first instance. Staff will continue to strive to improve our patients dental experience.**
-
- To address the ceiling hole and wires exposed as soon as possible.
- **I have reported this to our facilities department who have advised that they will be visiting in the imminent future to fix the hole in the ceiling.**

5. Provider Response

Provider response below.

Changes or outcomes agreed with the provider are as follows:

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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 dentist 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 award 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
- Your name is 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

ⁱⁱ

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