

HEALTHWATCH NEWHAM MYSTERY SHOPPING

DENTAL REPORT

Summary

Healthwatch Newham had feedback about the difficulty of accessing NHS appointments and undertook mystery shopping in January and August to investigate this. We are concerned to see that

- 65% of practices could not offer a routine NHS appointment for children or adults within two weeks in Jan 2017. In Aug 2017
- 29% of practices were not accepting new NHS patients
- 62% of practices could not offer a routine child's appointment within two weeks
- 54% of practices could not offer a routine adult's appointment within two weeks.

This report was sent to the commissioners of the service, NHS England, for its comments. A new dental contract will be established in 2018-19.

We are concerned about the barrier this may create for patients in preventing problems or providing care in the right setting when conditions worsen.

In its 2016 national report, Healthwatch England said, "national surveys and online feedback don't tell the whole story" and there are areas where appointments are not available, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers, disabled people and those resident in care homes and cost and fear was a barrier for patients. Healthwatch Newham is currently carrying out an engagement project to find out local residents' experiences of access, quality and care and charges. Healthwatch Newham will liaise with Public Health Newham about its proposed oral health prevention programme.

JANUARY 2017 (INITIAL)

Introduction

In December 2016-January 2017 Healthwatch Newham carried out mystery shopping to investigate the availability of routine NHS dentist appointments. We had received feedback that people were finding it difficult to get an appointment.

Methodology

NHS England supplied a list of 33 dental practices that are contracted to provide NHS dental services. Healthwatch Newham volunteers and staff called the dental surgeries to ask a series of questions on the availability of NHS dentists.

Dentist Profile

- 33 dental practices were on the NHS England list
- 2 were excluded from the analysis because: 1 provided an orthodontic service only; 1 provided a service to patients with special needs only.

Of the remaining 31 practices

- 1 was always engaged and therefore not contactable.
- 4 practices required prospective patients to register before they were willing to say when the first appointment was available.

Findings from 26 Newham dental practices:

65% (17 practices) could not offer a routine child's appointment within 2 weeks

65% (9 practices) could not offer a routine adult's appointment within 2 weeks

AUGUST 2017 (FOLLOW/UP)

Introduction

We repeated this exercise in August 2017 to see if there were more NHS appointments available. The low availability in January could have been due to the funding allocation running out towards the end of the financial year.

Methodology

NHS England supplied a list of 29 dental practices that are contracted to provide NHS dentistry services. Healthwatch Newham volunteer and staff called the dental surgeries to ask a series of questions on the availability of NHS appointments.

Dentist profile

- 29 dental practices on the NHS England list.
- 3 were excluded because: 1 provided an orthodontic service only; 2 provided special needs services and self-referral was not possible.

Of the remaining 26 practices

- 2 were always engaged and therefore not contactable.
- 24 practices were available to contact.

Findings from 24 Newham dental practices

Are NHS appointments available for adults and children?	
Yes = 17 Of these 17, 5 said a patient must visit the practice first to register.	N = 7 (this includes 1 that only takes adults exempt from charges)

Are NHS appointments available for adults within 2 weeks?	Y = 7 (this includes 1 that only takes adults exempt from charges)	N = 15	No answer to that question = 2
Are NHS appointments available for children within 2 weeks?	Y = 7	N = 13	No answer to that question = 4

29% (7 practices) were not accepting new NHS appointments

62 % (15 practices) could not offer a routine adult's appointment within 2 weeks

54% (13 practices) could not offer a routine child's appointment within 2 weeks.