



Oral health and dental services in Swindon survey

October 2017



healthwatch
Swindon

About us

Healthwatch is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Swindon thanks all of the people who have provided their feedback and views to us and took part in our survey which forms the basis of this report.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to experiences and views of local people about oral health and going to the dentist in Swindon. It is not a representative portrayal of the experience of all service users, patients and staff, only the accounts of what has been experienced by the people who have taken part in our survey during September 2017.



Executive Summary

The national picture

Broadly speaking, people report in national surveys that they are able to make an NHS dental appointment when they try to, and are satisfied with their experience of NHS dentistry. The Healthwatch network national polling corroborates this. We also know that people leave positive reviews of NHS dentists on local Healthwatch websites and can be extremely loyal to dentists that they trust.

In 2015, Healthwatch England published a series of reports from across the Healthwatch network about people's experiences of primary care services including general practice, community nursing, pharmacy and dentistry.

The Healthwatch network identified a number of common themes including variations in ease of access to services, and suggested areas for improvement, which were reflected in the GP forward view, the Government strategy for improving quality of and access to GP services, published in March 2016.

Role of local Healthwatch

The Healthwatch network is working to hear whether the dental system works for all who use it, including those who are not having their needs met. The network will work with people who provide and commission and regulate NHS dentistry to share our insight, and to ensure that the system works for everyone. Some of the ways we are already doing this include:

- Highlighting to NHS England where there are gaps in provision, so that demand can be addressed
- Working to ensure that those at risk of missing out on services - such as those in care homes - are not forgotten about
- Signposting people to accurate and useful information about where to go for dental treatment and what they can expect from their dentist

To find out more, please go to www.healthwatchengland.co.uk and take a look at the Access to NHS Dental Services: What people told local Healthwatch - Evidence Review (November 2016).

What have we done in Swindon?

In 2017, Healthwatch Swindon were asked to support and work with local health services and the local authority in Swindon to gather views from people in our area about oral health and going to the dentist.

Methodology

Healthwatch Swindon designed, hosted and publicised a survey to gather people's views about oral health and going to the dentist.

One aspect of our survey looked at 'infections in the mouth which can be linked with problems in other parts of the body.'

The survey was promoted on Healthwatch Swindon's digital media platforms including, website, Facebook, Twitter and monthly bulletin (newsletter). It was also used as an engagement tool at various community outreach events in Swindon which encouraged people to complete the survey in person and engage face-to-face.

Summary of findings

Healthwatch Swindon carried out a survey about oral health and going to the dentist during September 2017. We received feedback from 78 people who took part in the survey.



Here are some of the highlights of what people told us:

- 56% of people surveyed told us that oral health is very important to them
- 56% of people surveyed told us that they go to an NHS dentist and 33% said they go privately
- 61% of people surveyed told us that they have had a good experience of going to the dentist
- 84% of people surveyed told us that they would recommend their dentist to a friend or family member

General themes from the survey included:

We asked: What could be improved about your dentist? A general theme from the responses gathered show that people would like an improved environment at their dentist which includes both in the waiting and clinical areas of the building(s).

We asked: What would help you look after your teeth? A general theme from the responses gathered show that people would like to see a focus to improve information provided around prevention & education.

The majority of people who completed our survey were Female (76%), and 24% were Male.



Prevention is better than cure - What would help you look after your teeth?



“Free toothpaste and mouthwash” “Knowledge”

“Nothing I look after my teeth very well” “Regular check-ups”

“Gargling” “Regular cleaning flossing etc”

“Free toothpaste to small children pre-school” “Cleansing and Diet”

“I brush, floss and use mouthwash. I don't need anything further to help me”

“Correct information to the individual which I get with my dentist”

“Have a check-up every six months” “Cheaper electric toothbrushes”

“Better education on oral hygiene”

“product recommendations/information for maintenance at home”

“Education on best tooth brushes/toothpaste, oral health”

“Dentist to advise properly on conditions”

“Availability with my dentist on a regular basis. Incentives to look after my teeth”

“Availability of a quality NHS dentist - my old one was excellent and did not believe in unnecessary work!”

“The NHS should provide hygienist appointments (at a reduced cost), for NHS patients. I have had to pay for these for my teenage children (NHS patients). This would be a prevention measure and helps children to look after their teeth properly”

“free tooth brushes including electric and cheaper check-ups”

“Brushing twice a day, flossing, and using a good toothpaste”

“I wish years ago that dentists were more available. Children today are able to see dentists at an early age”

“I feel I do the majority of things to help look after my teeth”

“I do clean my teeth three times a day”

“Advice on best things to use or not use from dentist or pharmacist”

“More information about preventative measures”

Improve prevention through education



From individual dental providers to the Chief Dental Officer, we all need to take responsibility for public education regarding oral health, with national bodies and local networks including voluntary and charity organisations working together effectively.

The aim is to ensure that people have a better understanding about why visiting the dentist is important and receive clear, consistent and accessible information about treatments they can get and the costs they will need to pay. They also need to receive clear messages about how often they should be re-attending, based on their individual oral health.

Help people to resolve issues more quickly when care goes wrong

People need clear and up-to-date information about how to give feedback and make complaints. It is important that the NHS welcomes and values feedback including that shared through complaints.

All dental practices, whether they are NHS or private or both, should have a clearly signposted complaints procedure to encourage a timely response to people's concerns.

Healthwatch Swindon provides an NHS Complaints Advocacy Service which can people with some guidance and information to help with new or existing complaints. The advocacy service is free, confidential and independent of the NHS.

Healthwatch Swindon can support people through the NHS complaints process should they feel unable or overwhelmed by their complaint, the advocacy service can;

- help to support and guide people through the process
- discuss the complaint and help to put the complaint into a complaint letter and/or support people at a local resolution meeting

More information about our advocacy service can be found at www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk or by calling 01793 497777

What next?



Healthwatch Swindon can make a real difference by working with local people, dentists, local NHS England teams, and the local authority to identify areas where people's needs are not being met and look for solutions. Collectively we can listen to and celebrate good practice and experiences and where people's needs are being met.

This report will be shared with Swindon Borough Council's Oral Health Strategy Steering Group in October 2017. It will also be published on the website of Healthwatch Swindon - www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk

Share your feedback...

Healthwatch Swindon wants to hear from you about your experiences so that we can tell services about your needs in order to create the best local services.

Listening to you



01793 497777 or Text us on 07860 021 603 start your message SW



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