



Dental Services in Bury

Healthwatch Bury Survey Report

July 2019

About us

Healthwatch Bury is the independent consumer champion for Health and Social Care in Bury, and it exists to help improve local health and social care for all people living within Bury MBC and to ensure health and social care services in Bury are the best they can be for people of all ages, now and in the future.

Healthwatch Bury also forms part of the national network of 148 Healthwatch, across England, which were established by the Government (Health and Social Care Reforms 2012) and which are funded by the Department of Health.

Every Healthwatch is independent of the NHS and local authority and plays a crucial role in ensuring patients across their locality have a stronger voice in how their services are designed and delivered.

Healthwatch Bury does this in a number of ways which includes gathering views and opinions captured through focus groups, online surveys and outreach events across the borough. By listening to service users' experiences of publicly-funded health and social care services we are able to inform decisions made by the commissioners and providers of services.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bury 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 Bury. 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 between March 2019 and May 2019.

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What have we done in Bury?

Healthwatch Bury received a number of enquiries and feedback relating to patients' experiences of dental care in 2018/19. A significant proportion of this feedback related to their experiences in accessing an NHS dentist. The term 'access' comprises of factors such as: timely access, physical access, ease of booking and choice. It is important to consider a range of factors which may influence people's experiences when accessing dentists.

Methodology

Healthwatch Bury designed, hosted and publicised a survey to gather people's views about accessing their dentist.

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

Summary of findings

Healthwatch Bury carried out a survey about going to the dentist between March and May 2019. We received feedback from 59 people who took part in the survey.

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

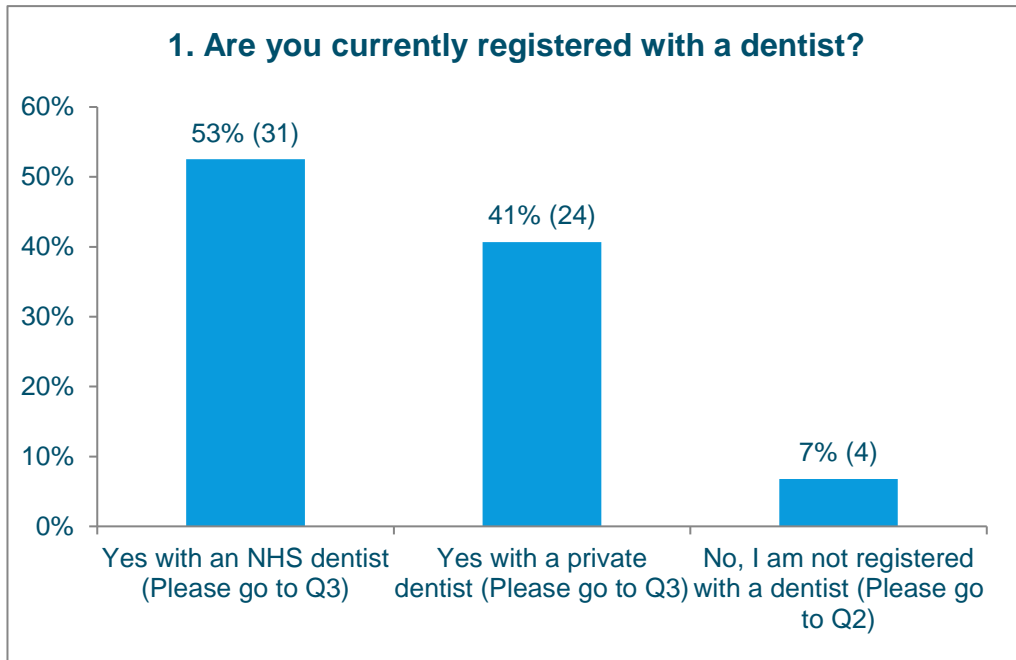
- 53% of people surveyed told us that they are registered with an NHS dentist and 41% said they are registered with a private dentist. 7% of the respondents stated they are not registered with a dentist at all.
- 71% of people surveyed rated their experience with their dentist 'Excellent', 'Very Good' or 'Good'.

Profile of the respondents:

- 74% (42) of people of those who responded were female, and 26% (15) were male.
- 46% (26) of those who responded were 41- 65 years old and 43% (24) were over 66 years old.
- Overwhelmingly 93% (53) of those who responded were 'White British'.

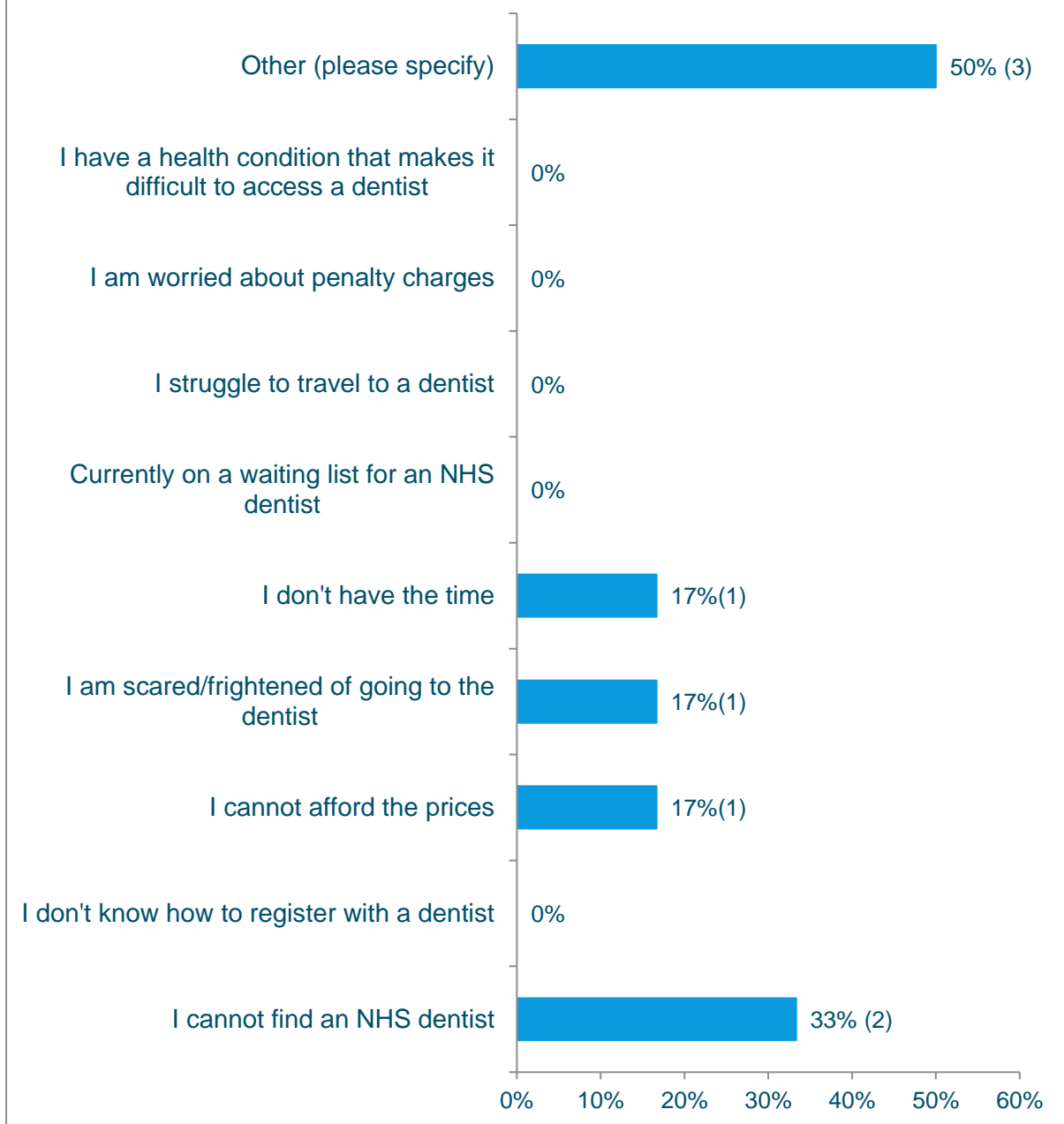
Findings from the Dental Service survey

The questions with results can be found below.



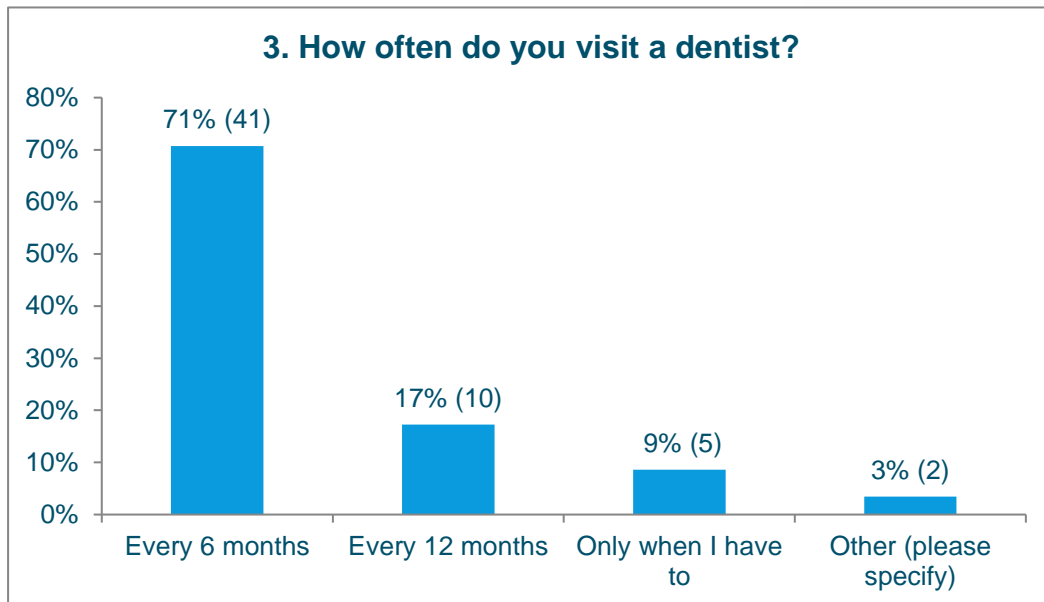
We asked people whether they were currently registered with a dentist. 53% (31) of the respondents said they were currently registered with an NHS dentist and 41% (24) stated they were registered with a private dentist compared to only 7% (4) of the respondents who said they were not registered with a dentist at all.

2. If you answered 'No' to Q1 what are the reasons?



Other responses were the following:

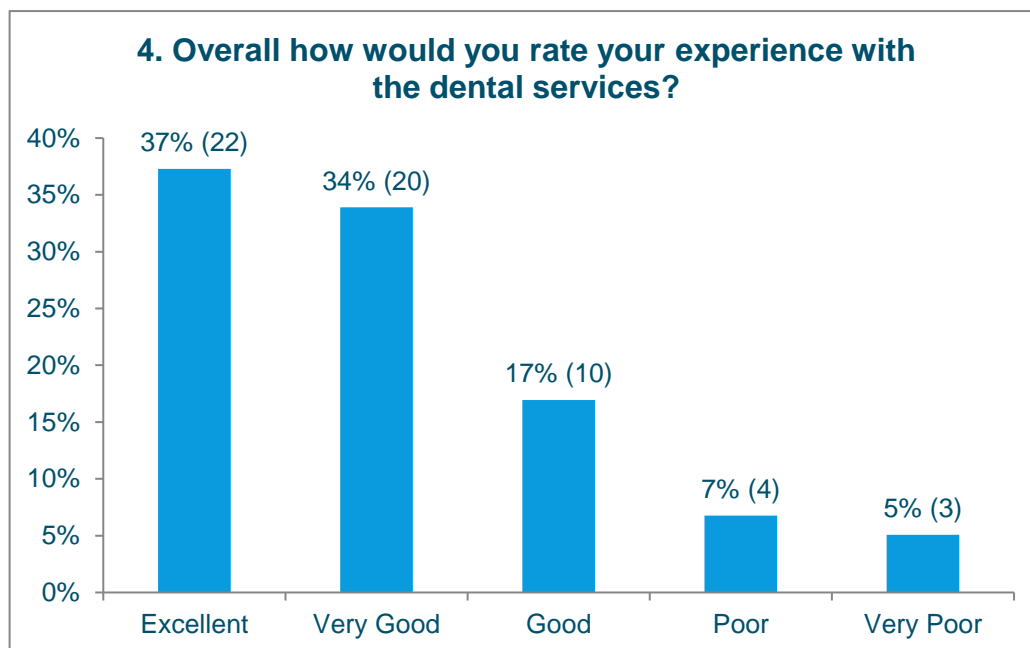
- 'My dentist transferred from NHS to private.'
- 'Was registered with {Dental practice's name} but...oh dear.'
- 'Several years to find one, I was on lists but was told not taking an NHS patient.'



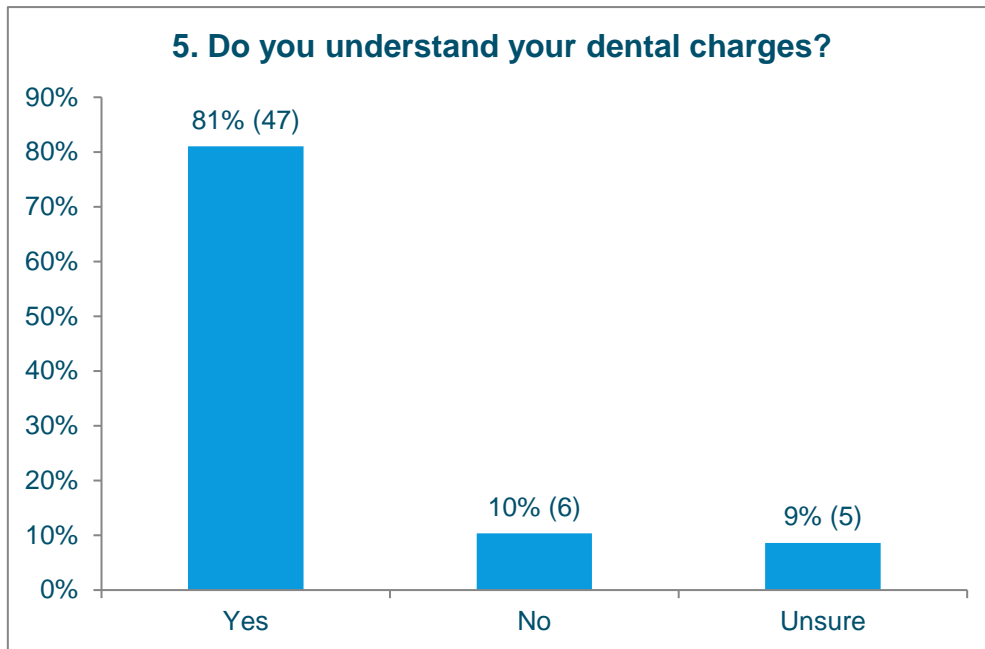
71% (41) of those who responded stated they visit their dentist every 6 months compared to only 9% (5) who said they visit their dentist 'Only when they have to'.

Other responses included:

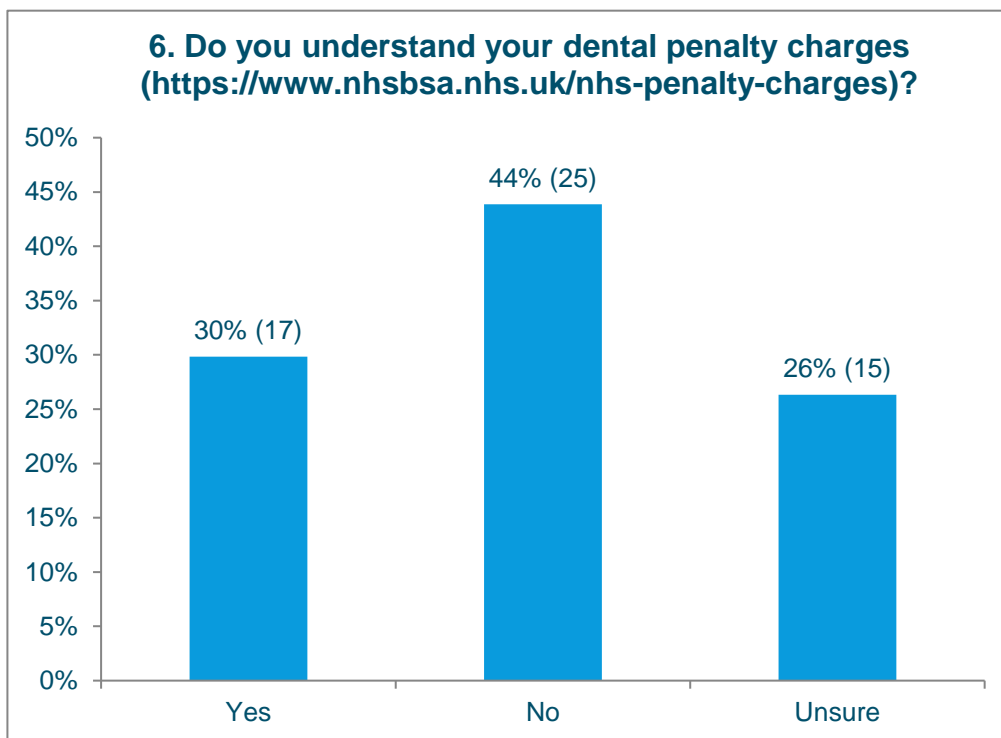
- 'When I can afford'
- 'Every 3 months'



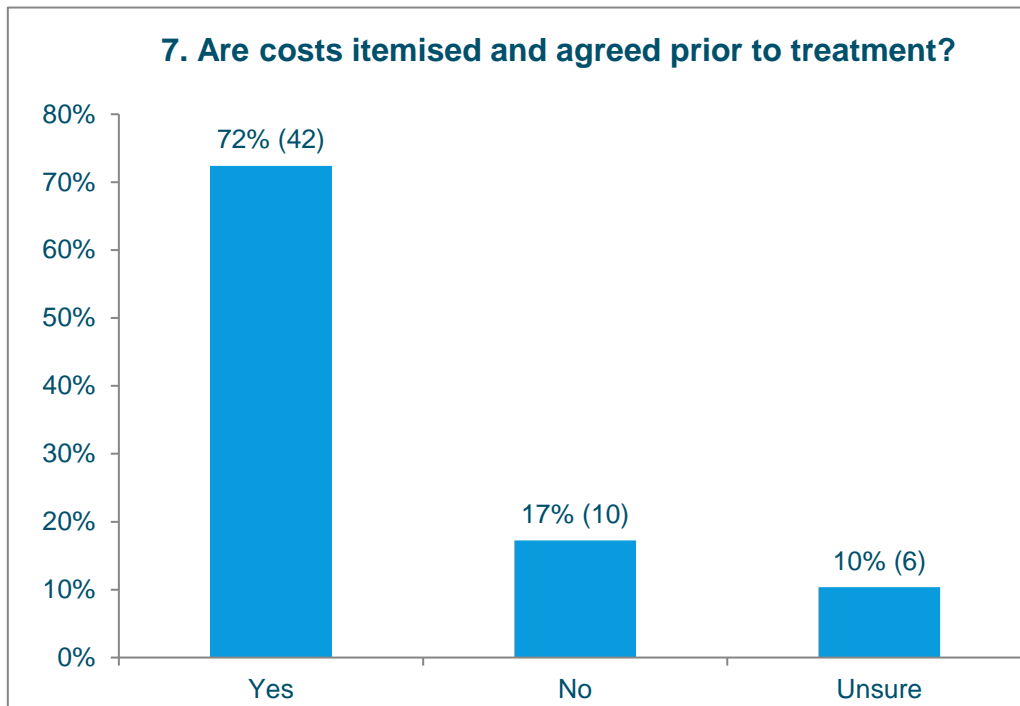
We asked patients to rate their overall experience with the dental services. Of those who responded 88% (52) of patients rated the services 'Excellent', 'Very Good' or 'Good' compared to only 12% (7) people who rated their experience with services 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'.



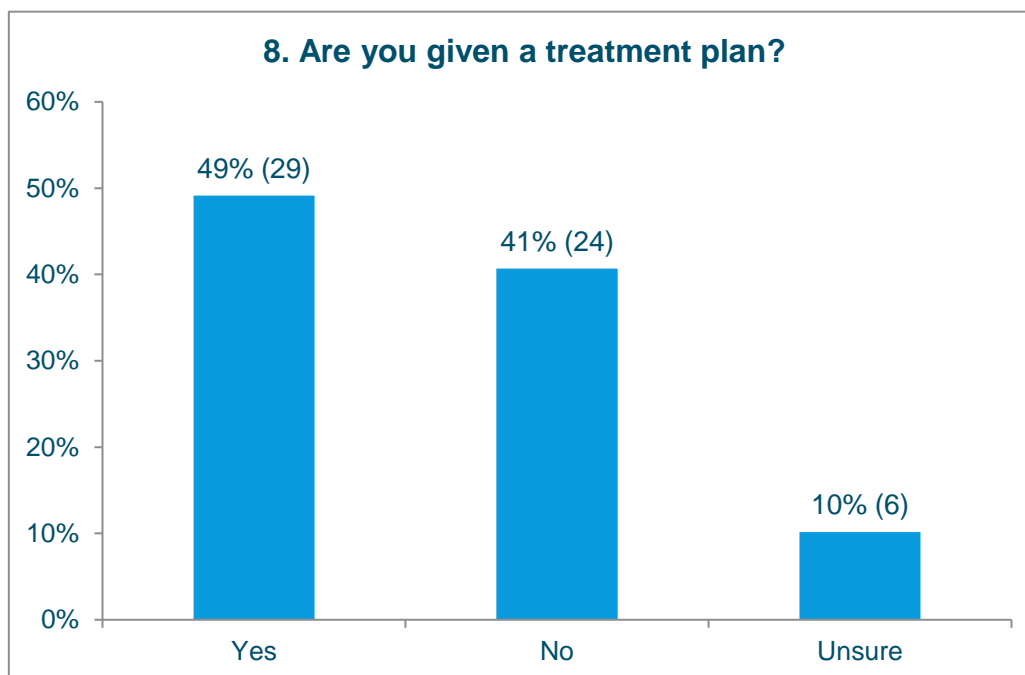
We asked patients if they understood their dental charges. 81% (47) of those who responded stated they understand their dental charges compared to only 19% (11) who said they didn't understand the charges or were unsure of the charges. Please see Appendix 1 on page 14 for more information about NHS dental charges.



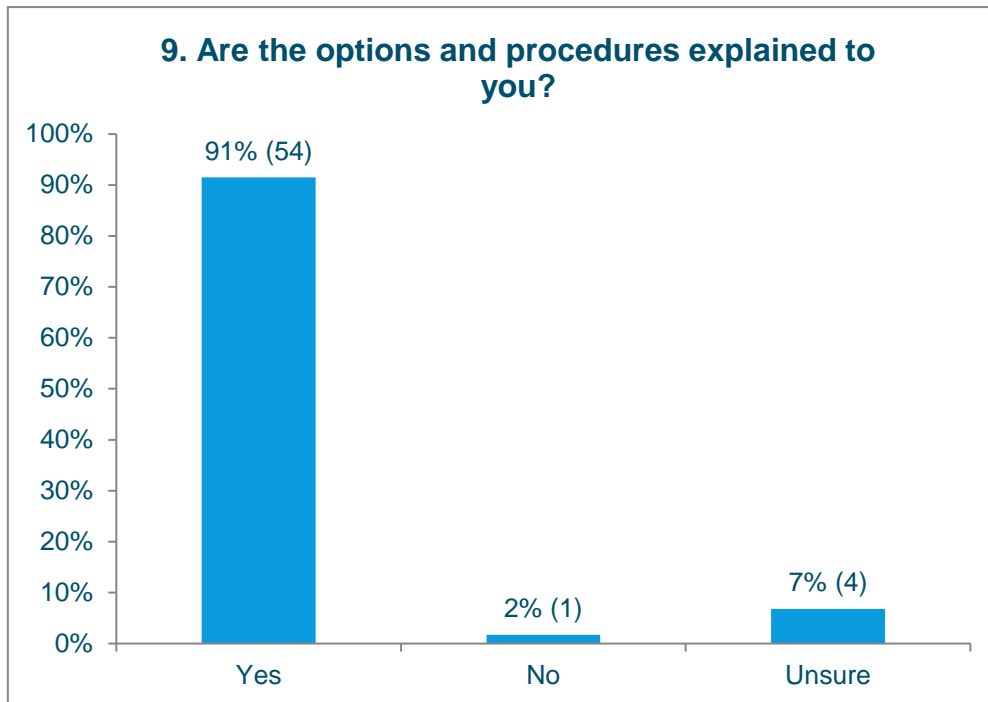
We asked patients if they understood their dental **penalty** charges. 30% (17) of those who responded stated they understand their dental penalty charges compared to 70% (40) who stated 'No' or 'Unsure'.



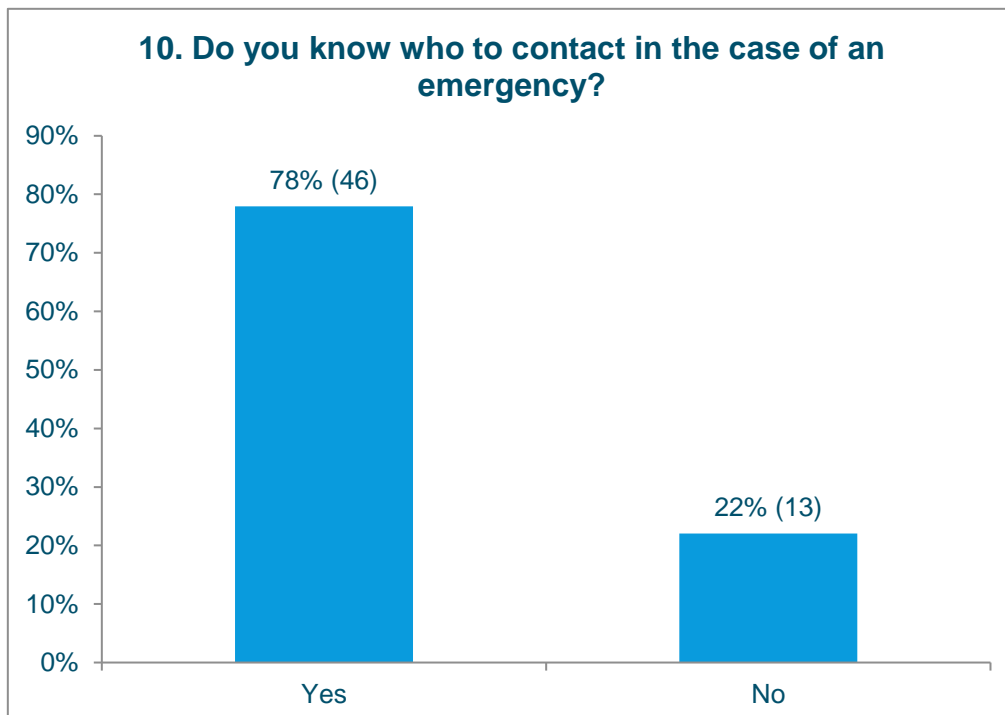
We asked people if the costs are itemised and agreed prior to treatment. 72% (42) of the respondents stated 'Yes' compared to 27% (16) who answered 'No' or 'Unsure'



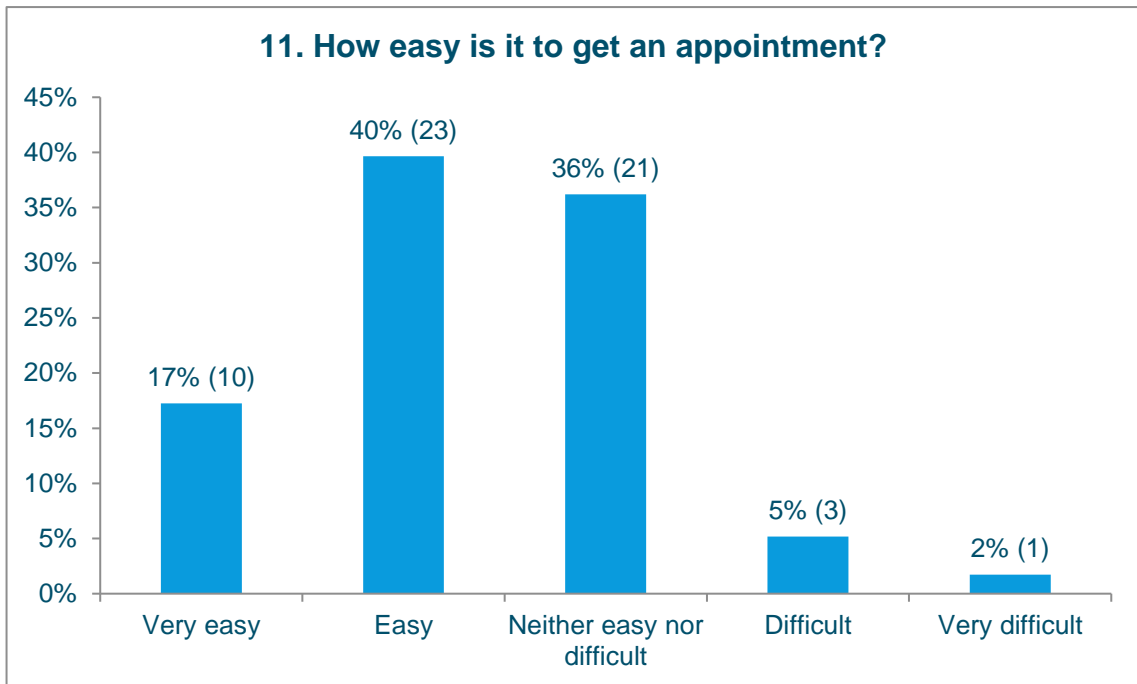
49% (29) of respondents said they had been given a treatment plan compared to 41% (24) of patients who had not been given a treatment plan. 10% of respondents stated they were 'Unsure' whether they had been given a treatment plan.



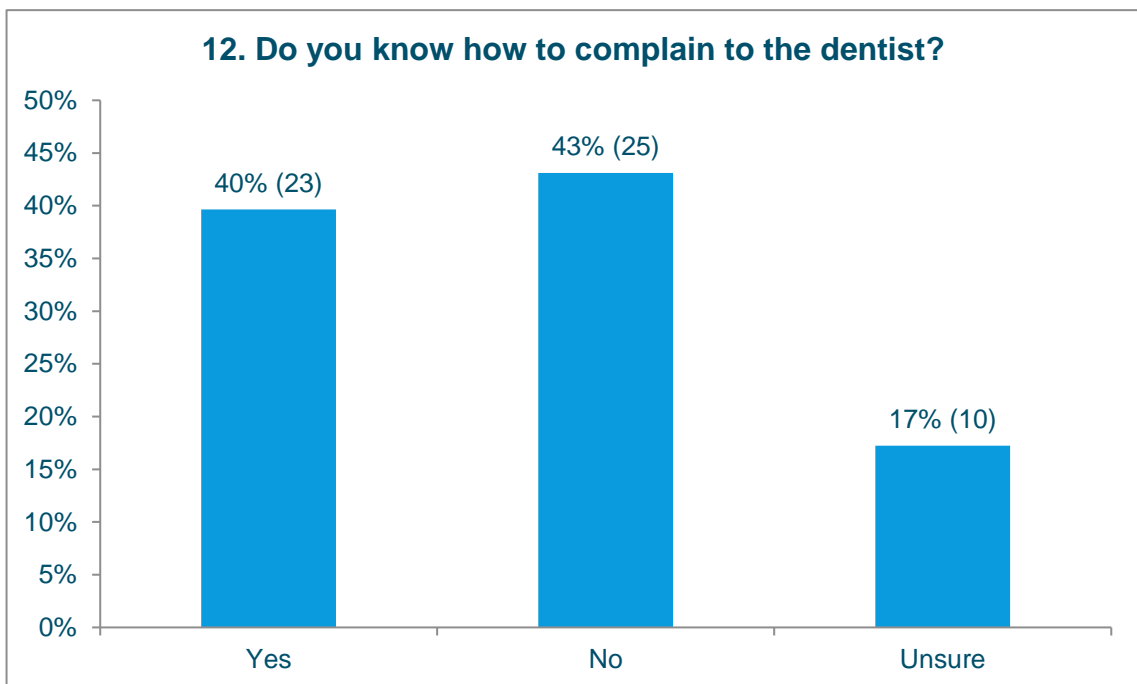
We asked people if the options and procedures had been explained to them. 91% (54) of patients stated 'Yes' compared to only 9% (5) who stated 'No' or 'Unsure'.



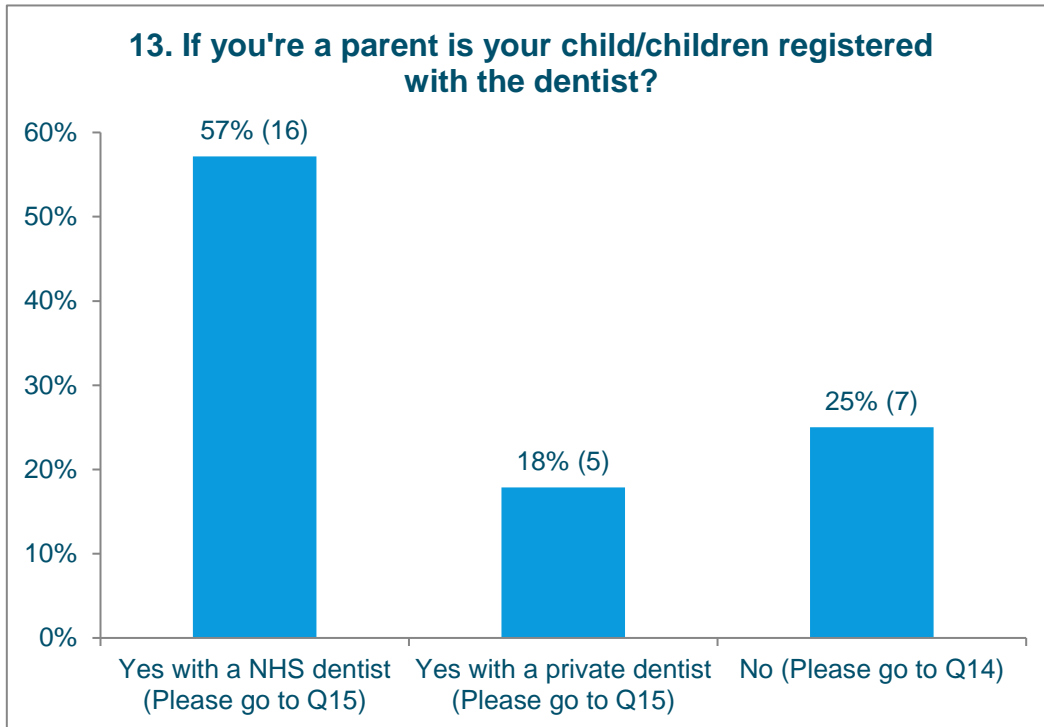
When asked if patients knew who to contact in the case of an emergency 78% (46) of respondents answered 'Yes' compared to only 22% (13) who stated 'No'



Of those who responded 57% (33) said it was easy or very easy to get an appointment with their dentist compared to only 7% (4) who found it difficult or very difficult.



40% (23) of those who responded said they knew how to complain to the dentist compared to 60% (35) who said they were 'Unsure' or didn't know how to complain to the dentist.



Of those who responded 57% (16) stated their child is currently registered with a NHS dentist compared to 18% (5) who stated their child is currently registered with a private dentist and 25% (7) who stated their child is not registered with the dentist at all.

15. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your dental care?

'I feel lucky to be registered with an NHS dentist! Though the turnover of dentists is very high.'

'Excellent service and great outcomes.'

'It's expensive'

'Always been pleased with it.'

'I left NHS dentist as unhappy with provision - too long to wait for appointments and only did minimal.'

'No except my dentist is still in the area I used to live (Oldham) and I can't get one in Prestwich.'

'It is expensive, even on the NHS and experience has led to questioning suggested treatment - often making situation worse.'

'I have to travel to Unsworth for the newest dentist from Prestwich by bus. Very costly.'

'I've been to the dental hospital in Manchester and I've now got dental implants and I've no idea where to go now the dental hospital don't do aftercare.'

'It is a disgrace how dental NHS treatment has been allowed to fade away - we still pay our taxes.'

'I go to a private dentist because NHS are hard to find and I don't trust the quality of the work.'

'I would like dental practices in Bury to be registered for the Pride in Practice quality assurance charter mark in support of LGBT patients.'

'Overall I am happy with my dental care.'

'Clearer and easier access to community dentist for children with SEN. A recent change of dentist within the practice means my children will no longer go there and require a more specialist service. I asked our dentist reception to make a referral but they advised this is not possible without her being examined but she can't come in to be examined. NHS appointments far more restrictive than private - in terms of which dentist we can see, when (times of day - peak times often not available for NHS) and how long the wait is for an appointment. NHS dentist does not offer after school appointments but school advises to make appointments at this time to avoid missing school.'

'Our dentist is excellent and I would recommend him to anybody.'

'My dentist has just gone private but the practice is still seeing NHS patients.'

'There needs to be more NHS Dentists.'

'Very satisfied other than it is becoming quite an expense to visit the dentist, even for just a check-up.'

'It is difficult to find an NHS dentist'

'It took me several years to find a NHS dentists, in this time I had lost several teeth. My old dentist retired about 8 years ago and we were told we would automatically get another NHS dentist. One of my daughters had to go private.'

Summary

Overall, dentists across Bury appear to provide a good service with patient satisfaction at high levels. In addition to this survey, the general feedback we've received on dental services has been positive.

One concern, raised by a few patients, related to lack of information on the cost of treatment prior to the treatment starting.

Another concern that patients have recently raised relates to dental penalty charges.

There doesn't seem to be enough awareness about those charges. Information available on the NHS Choices website, show that 2 of our local dental practices state they are currently accepting new NHS patients and 5 dental practices currently accept children as new NHS patients. 11 dental practices have not supplied that data in the last 90 days. According to the dates shown on NHS Choices some of the information may not have been updated for at least three months. It's difficult for people looking for a new dentist to make an informed choice, if they don't have access to up to date information.

Recommendations

- We would recommend that all dental practices give patients a personal dental treatment plan outlining any information on the treatment and any possible costs that a patient may incur prior to the start of treatment.
- We would recommend that all dental practices display clear current information regarding dental penalty charges.
- We believe it would be beneficial for all information to be provided in plain English and regularly reviewed/updated.

Appendix 1

Useful information

How much will I pay for NHS dental treatment?¹

If you normally pay for NHS dental treatment, the amount you spend will depend on what treatment you need.

Some people do not have to pay for NHS dental treatment. [Find out who's entitled to free NHS dental treatment in England](#)

NHS dental charges

There are 3 NHS charge bands. From April 2019 to March 2020, the costs are as follows:

Band 1: £22.70

Covers an examination, diagnosis and advice. If necessary, it also includes X-rays, a scale and polish, and planning for further treatment.

Band 2: £62.10

Covers all treatment included in Band 1, plus additional treatment, such as fillings, root canal treatment and removing teeth (extractions).

Band 3: £269.30

Covers all treatment included in Bands 1 and 2, plus more complex procedures, such as crowns, dentures and bridges.

[Find out what's included in each NHS dental band charge](#)

What if I need more treatment?

If, within 2 calendar months of completing a course of treatment, you need more treatment from the same or lower charge band, such as another filling, you do not have to pay anything extra.

If the additional treatment needed is in a higher band, you'll have to pay for the new NHS course of treatment.

But once 2 months have passed after completing a course of treatment, you'll have to pay the NHS charge band for any NHS dental treatment received.

Certain treatments (including lost items) are guaranteed for 12 months from the date they were completed.

These are:

- fillings
- root fillings
- inlays
- porcelain veneers
- crowns

¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/dental-health/how-much-will-i-pay-for-nhs-dental-treatment/>

Treatments provided under this guarantee must be similar or related to the original treatment, but they do not have to be like for like.

Emergency or urgent treatment

If you require urgent care, you'll pay a Band 1 charge of £22.70.

Most urgent treatments can be done in one appointment.

Once your urgent course of treatment is complete, you may be advised to make another appointment for a separate course of non-urgent treatment.

In this case, the relevant NHS banding charge will apply.

When you do not have to pay

There's no dental charge:

- for denture repairs
- to have stitches removed
- if your dentist has to stop blood loss
- if your dentist only has to write out a prescription – but if you pay for prescriptions, you'll have to pay the usual prescription charge of £9 when you collect your medicine(s)

Referral to another dentist

If you're referred to another dentist to complete your treatment, the amount you pay is dependent on the type of referral and whether the NHS treatment is carried out as 1 course of treatment.

Your dentist will inform you how much you have to pay.

If you're referred to a private dentist (and you accept this option), you'll:

- pay the appropriate NHS banding charge to the dentist who referred you
- also pay a fee for the dental work carried out by the private dentist you're referred to

What is included in each NHS dental band charge?²

There are 3 bands of charges for all NHS dental treatments.

As from April 2019, the current dental charges are:

Band 1 dental treatment: £22.70

This covers 1 or more treatments (as many as are necessary) from the following list:

- adjusting false teeth (dentures) or orthodontic appliances, such as braces
- applying sealants or fluoride preparations to the surfaces of your teeth
- a clinical examination, assessment and report
- marginal correction of fillings
- moulds of your teeth – for example, to see how your teeth bite together
- an orthodontic assessment and report
- a scale and polish (if clinically necessary)
- coloured photographs
- taking a sample of cells or tissue from your mouth for examination
- treating sensitive cementum (the tissue that covers the root of a tooth)
- [X-rays](#)

Emergency treatment (when you need to see a dentist immediately) also costs £22.70.

Band 2 dental treatment: £62.10

This can cover anything listed in band 1 above, plus any of the following:

- an addition to your dentures – such as adding a clasp or a tooth
- apicectomy – removing the tip of the root of a tooth
- a mouth guard to correct your "bite" (doesn't include a laboratory-made appliance)
- fillings
- free gingival grafts – when healthy tissue from the roof of your mouth is attached to your teeth where the root is exposed
- frenectomy, frenoplasty or frenotomy – surgery to the folds of tissue that connect your tongue, lips and cheeks to your jaw bone
- treatment for severe [gum disease](#) – such as root planing (cleaning bacteria from the roots of your teeth), deep scaling and a polish, or a gingivectomy (removal of gum tissue)
- oral surgery – such as removing a cyst, or soft tissue surgery to the mouth or lips
- pulpotomy – removing dental pulp (the soft tissue at the centre of a tooth)
- relining and rebasing dentures
- removing teeth (extraction)
- [root canal treatment](#)
- sealant to fill small holes or grooves in your teeth
- splinting loose teeth – for example, after an accident (this does not include laboratory-made splints)
- transplanting teeth

Band 3 dental treatment: £269.30

² <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/dental-health/what-is-included-in-each-nhs-dental-band-charge/>

This can cover anything listed in bands 1 and 2 above, plus any of the following:

- bridges – a fixed replacement for a missing tooth or teeth
- crowns – a type of cap that completely covers your real tooth
- dentures
- inlays, pinlays and onlays – used to restore damaged teeth
- [orthodontic treatment](#) and appliances such as braces
- other custom-made appliances, not including sports guards
- veneers and palatal veneers – new surfaces for the front or back of a tooth

Treatments such as veneers and braces are only available on the NHS if there's a clinical need for them (not for cosmetic reasons).

Similarly, other cosmetic treatments, such as teeth whitening, are not available on the NHS.

Appendix 2

Response from the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership

On reading the report, I am pleased to see that the percentage numbers of people accessing NHS Dentistry is quite high and is comparable to other areas across Greater Manchester. For information, the percentage of children accessing NHS Dental services in Bury is 61% of the population.

Our Dental Practices are encouraged to keep the NHS.net website up to date to ensure that they are displaying when they can take on new patients who are seeking treatment, and we are working with the Local Dental Committee (LDC) to support Practices to do this. A point to note is that a patient is only 'registered' with a Dentist whilst the course of treatment is carried out and completed. Patients can visit any Dentist across Greater Manchester to access treatment if they prefer, this could mean that they receive treatment near to where they work, or are prepared to travel a little further for treatment.

I am pleased to note that the satisfaction rate is high at 88%, and also that the majority of patients understand their treatment charges. Again we have asked the LDC to encourage Practices to display the NHS Dental Charges information, and also that charges are fully explained to patients.

Dental Penalty charges - from a National perspective, this is something that does cause confusion to patients. Practices have been asked to ensure that if patients believe they are exempt from paying NHS charges, that full information on the clarity of exemptions is explained.

With regards to treatment plans, patients should be given a copy of their treatment plans, however, it is good to see that although they may not be given a copy of the plan, that the procedures appear to be fully explained in most cases.

Posters should be displayed in all Practices regarding who to contact in the case of requiring urgent treatment, plus all Practices answer machines should have recorded messages detailing the appropriate advice. On this note, Greater Manchester have commissioned a new service for urgent access to dental services. The attached information has been shared far and wide across GM including Leah at Healthwatch Bolton who has been our contact for Dentistry, plus the info@gmhealthwatch inbox. I would be grateful if you could socialise the attached poster amongst your networks.

I am pleased to note that only 4 people found it difficult to get an appointment, it would be useful to understand further detail on why this was.

We will ask our Dental Practices to display information regarding how to complain.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review the report and respond accordingly. There are actions that we need to pick up as a result of the report, and as detailed above we are happy to work with our local Dental Practices and LDC to share the information received, and work with them to improve services.