Dental Website Review

July 2020

In May 2020 Healthwatch Wokingham launched a survey to understand more about how people in the Borough were experiencing the changes in health and social care due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Early analysis showed that access to information about dental care was proving difficult for 22% of respondents.

To find out more we reviewed 25 dental websites spread across the Borough in July 2020 following the resumption of dental services on 8th June 2020, with the aim of providing public information and sharing best practice. A mystery shopping approach was taken and included members of CLASP a local learning disability charity to ensure that the information provided was accessible.

The findings of our review indicate inconsistencies in the quality and reliability of the information provided by high street dentists. This included information related to service changes due to Covid-19 and important information regarding charges, access to emergency care and NHS status. This could make it difficult for members of the public to access the dental treatment they need.

This report will be shared with the public, service providers and commissioners and we hope it will be useful for the on-going Covid-19 response and when planning for similar events in the future.

Top Findings

- At the time we conducted our review 29% of dental websites still did not give up to date information about the changes to services due to Covid-19.

- One of the most common dental issues people approach Healthwatch with is help with finding an NHS dentist. 43% of websites did not clearly display this information.

- There were some examples of excellent information that was accessible to our volunteers with learning disabilities. However, there was little consistency between dental practices.

Mystery Shop Results

**Is this Practice listed and up to date on NHS find a dentist website?**
https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist

We reviewed NHS and private dental websites, so we have only included practices that offer NHS services in this data.

20%

20%

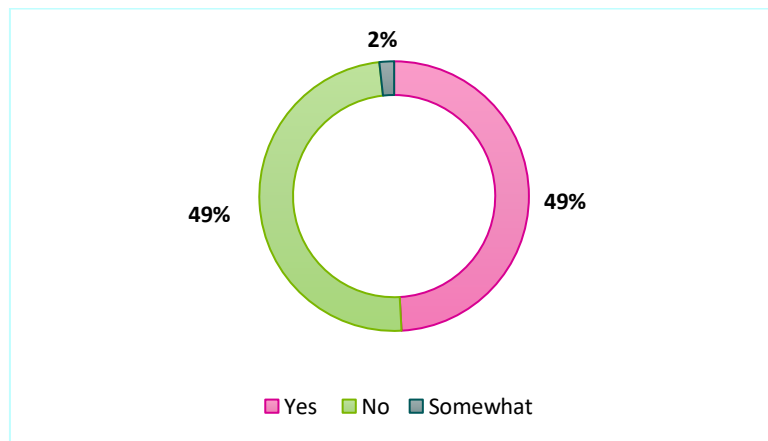60%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Some details incorrect
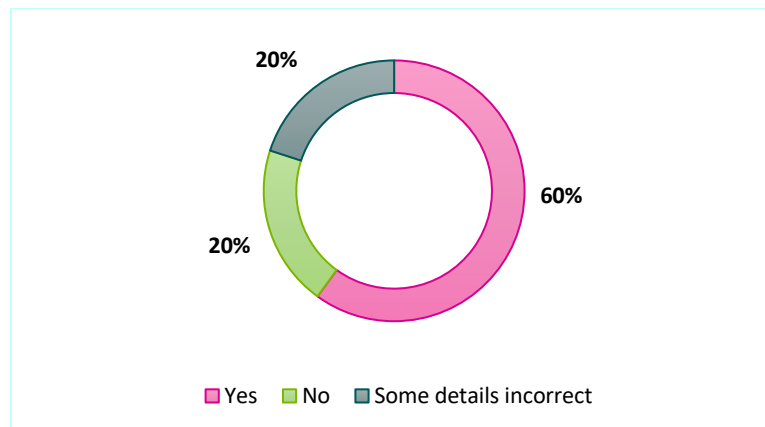
Does the website clearly display whether they offer NHS treatment or not?
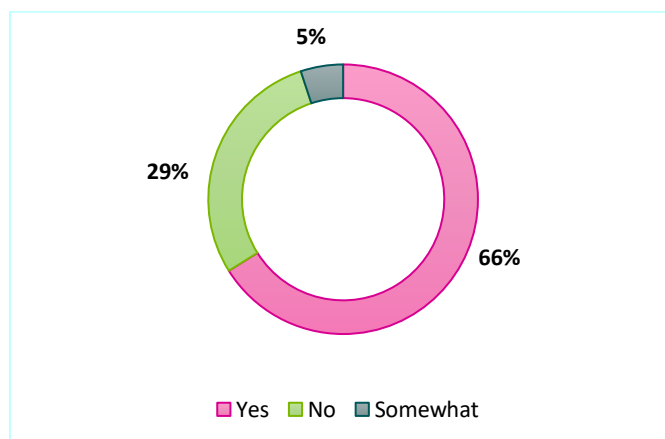

43%

57%

■ Yes ■ No
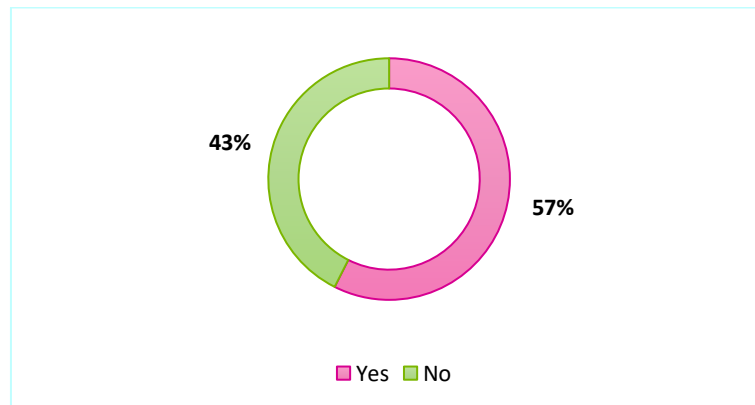
Website clearly displays any charge and it is easy to find.

42%

58%

☐ Yes ☐ No
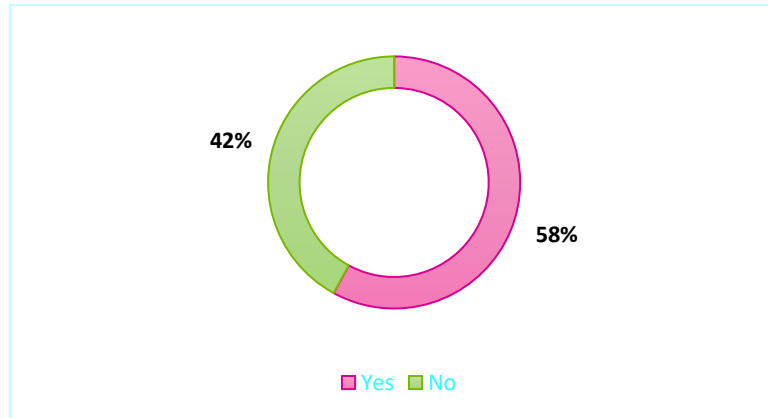
Website gives clear guidance about what people should do if they have a dental emergency

2%

49%

49%

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat

Website has up to date information about service changes due to Covid-19

5%

29%

66%

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat

The information given is factually correct and easy to understand

25%

75%

■ Yes ■ No
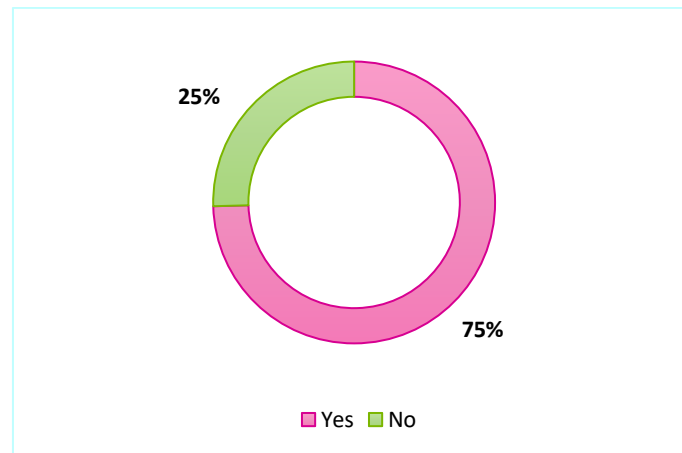
Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on health and care services. Rapidly changing government guidance has affected the public and service providers alongside difficulties with the practical aspects of providing routine and emergency dental care such as PPE and staggering appointment times.

Providing quality, timely information in digital form has never been more important. This looks set to continue as we navigate the continuing response to the pandemic as well as preparing for possible future outbreaks.

We are committed to continuing to hear the voices of those people who have found it difficult to access dental information especially where they are from a disadvantaged community. We hope that recommendations from this report will be considered by commissioners and service providers in the NHS and private sectors when planning their digital strategy.

Recommendations

Service providers should regularly review the quality of the information on their website and ensure that it is updated as soon as changes are made.

Dentists that provide NHS services should

- Clearly display the NHS logo.
- Provide accessible information on NHS charges and exemptions.
- Provide clear information about additional private services and charges.
- Provide contact details for dental emergency treatment and 111.
- Accessible information about changes to procedures and safety measures in place. (such as wearing masks or waiting outside until called in)

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

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