

# healthwatch

Kingston upon Hull



## Dental Feedback Report



**Contents**

1. Introduction	3
2. Opinions of Local Dental Services	4
3. Conclusion	12
4. Recommendations	13

## 1. Introduction

Before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch Kingston upon Hull has heard from our local community regarding their ability to access NHS dental services. As we progress into a world more familiar with COVID-19 however, we have seen the difficulties faced by those in need of treatment continue.

In December 2021, Healthwatch Kingston upon Hull contacted 16 dental practices in Hull to enquire about the following:

- Whether they were accepting NHS Patients
  - If so, are there any particular criteria for new patients
- Whether there was a waiting list for Patients
  - If so, how long would it likely be before patients are seen

We found from the dental practices contacted, six practices were accepting patients, two of these however were only accepting NHS Patients on a referral basis or only in select circumstances. Out of these practices, we found there were the following wait times:

- 18 months
- 8 - 12 months
- 4 months
- Under 1 month (Young People Only)

From the 10 practices that weren't accepting new NHS patients, we found the following waiting times:

- 12 - 18 months
- 13 months
- 5 - 6 months

Two practices told us the number of patients instead of waiting times with one practice having over 1,000 patients on their waiting list and another over 800 patients.

One of the biggest issues highlighted to us during the pandemic was the lack of urgent treatment for refugees.

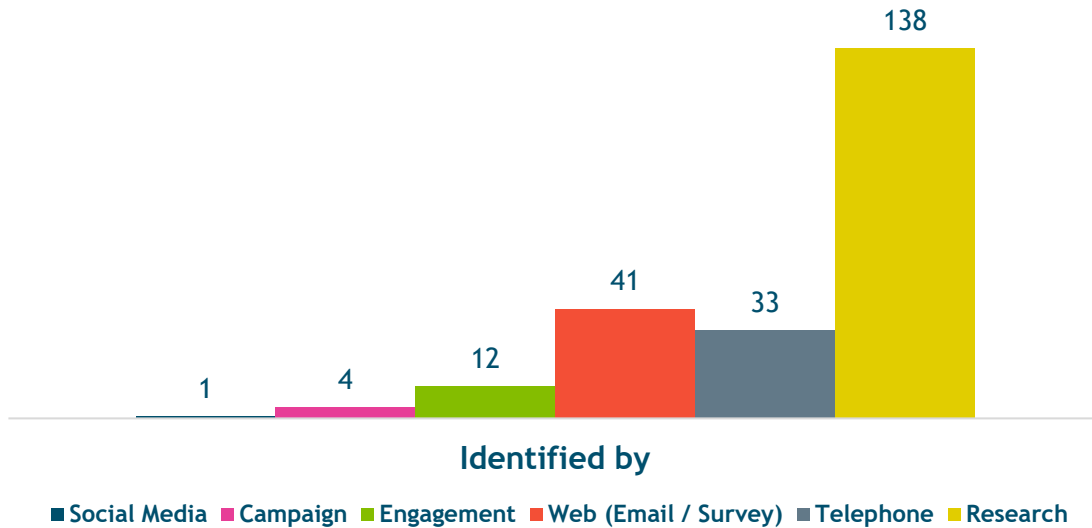
We have been in regular contact with Doorstep of Hull who have routinely informed Healthwatch throughout this year of the very difficult circumstances their clients were living in and despite best efforts, there was no simple solution in sight for them to get the treatment they need. This affected both adult and children refugees and resulted in other health conditions, such as severe weight loss, due to the amount of pain they were in.

The information that follows is a breakdown of the contact Healthwatch Kingston Upon Hull has received prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Opinions of Local Dental Services

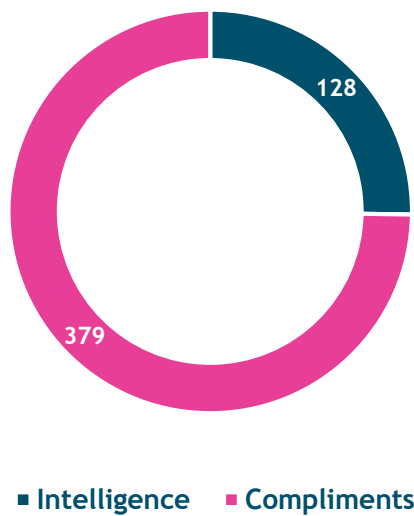
From January 2020, Healthwatch has received and identified a total of 229 experiences regarding Dentistry services. The majority of these experiences were found through conducting research online.

### Experiences Breakdown



Out of the 229 experiences, we identified 128 intelligence and 379 compliments with the most common piece of intelligence relating to Access (Appointments) (60) and most common compliment relating to Quality of Service (105).

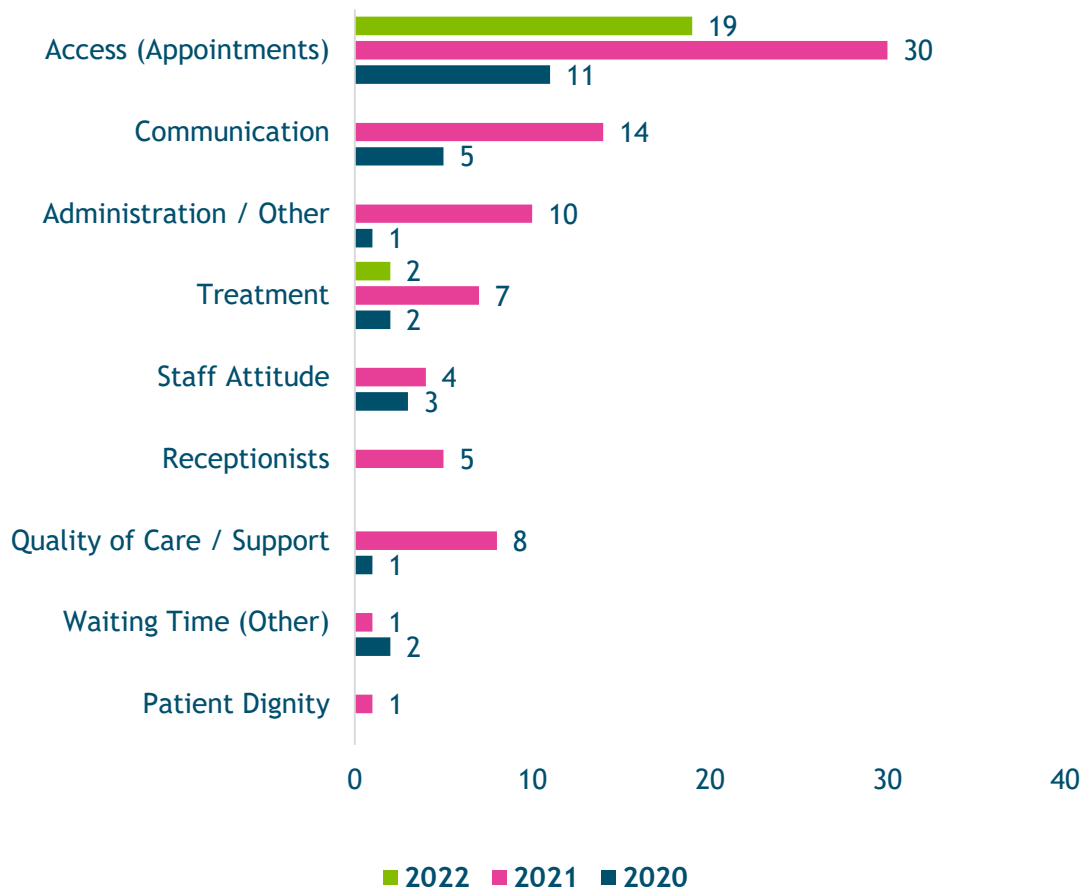
### Themes Identified



## Intelligence Identified

From 2020 to 2021, Healthwatch Hull has identified more intelligence in most areas than in the previous year.

In the case of appointments, we identified twice as many ‘Access (Appointments)’ issues in 2021 than 2020 and by February 2022, we have identified almost two thirds of the total amount in 2021, demonstrating an increase in issues faced by our local communities.



## Examples of Experiences Received

“Impossible to find a Dental practice who will take on new patients. Weekly ring around all the practices in the area. Some are put on the waiting list to be registered. Ringing 111 for emergency dentists, usually only out of town available, although I did have one who managed to get an appointment at the CHP, Jameson Street. Had a tooth extracted but not able to register as full. Many complaining weekly of dental pain and taking too many over the counter pain medication, and some are buying under the counter anti-biotics from Polish shops. Advised against this but they don’t care, they just want to be pain free. Many unable to sleep or eat due to pain, this is then impacting on their mental health, which is another problem!! Accessing any mental health help is also a massive problem.”

“Most have their first appointments months away and I have also had residents who have given up trying to register and it is taking so long for me to ring round different dentists to find one that is taking on. 2 residents who have moved from other Cities were unable to register in Hull, so they travel back to the old city for treatment, one of these is in Birmingham!! I also have a resident who has just had to have three teeth out last week and is having two more next week. mainly because he was unable to register a year ago when toothache first started. He has used emergency dentists for this, and they told him he needs to stop doing this and get registered at a Dental Practice, which I thought was highly impractical advice given the situation!”

“First bad experience using this Dentist and been a patient for long time now, my Dentist has left and was put with someone else, had a clean and polish and found her to be a little rough and my mouth, teeth and gums were very sore afterwards which I have not experienced in the whole time I have been coming to this Dental Surgery also felt rushed in and out the door. Reception and dental nurses cannot fault just the Dentist saw this time!”

“Caller rang to explain had some recent dental treatment which involved some teeth out and possibly two more to be removed - a pallet offered by dentist not a bridge which would be patient's first choice. Wants second opinion preferably by another dentist within the same practice who may be able to explain things more clearly to her.”

“Information received from local community support group : ' Ringing around now for nearly two years now to access dentists - managed to get one of my refugees in for emergency appointment but they could not register him so just took out. Another guy been waiting since March 2020 when the practice made an appointment and cancelled it in November. Made another one for him which they cancelled again as they do not have a dentist available!”

“Information received from local community support group: ' As soon as a dentist opens its door for new registrations they receive so many referrals they quickly refuse anymore. The problem for our residents is that they may have been without any dental services now for some considerable time - maybe a couple of years dependent on how long they have been in transit trying to get here - so their dental care is not of a high standard. This leads to a higher frequency of accessing emergency dental treatment when the person is in pain rather than a more positive preventative approach.”

“Last able to successfully register someone for a dentist in August 2021 - that is the last time a resident got a registration and it was with the Jameson Street, Hull dentist.”

‘Since Christmas, have rung all the dentists in Hull and Beverley area and been told four year waiting list, some said two. We are now having to ring as far afield as Grimsby which just isn't really feasible for transport for people.

“Over the past year and a half, I have tried numerous times to ring almost all the Dental Practices in the city to register refugees who need dental care. This is mainly due to the fact they have not seen a dentist since leaving their country, in many cases this is years. I have one who I registered in March 2020. Managed to get a appointment for August which was cancelled, a new appointment for October which was cancelled. He now has a new appointment at the end of January 2022, almost 2 years since I made the first appointment. I have managed to get a Emergency dental app for one who had constant pain and could not eat, he lost so much wait and his mental health was at breaking point. Another example is one who had a bad car crash in Iraq and had to have emergency treatment on his jaw and face this includes his teeth. This was 2 years ago and he still has a temporary palette in his mouth which has now affected his jaw and face, ringing non-emergency for an appointment is a long procedure. Number 48th in the queue at times and then the only emergency dentists are out of town. One resident travelled to Doncaster and spent almost all his benefit money, once there he got lost and did not make the appointment. Another one got a emergency app in Scunthorpe, on arriving at the bus station he realised he did not have enough money for the return journey. One did manage a emergency app in Doncaster and this cost him more than he could afford but he was so desperate to get treatment he went ahead.”

“I have been trying over the last few days to call many different dentists around the area to see whether I can register as an NHS patient for some fillings that I desperately need (not classified as urgent currently, but without the treatment soon I am definitely looking at irreversible tooth damage). Every dentist I have called has told me that the NHS waiting list is around 9 months to 2 years. This is so horrible because I know that I will not be able to wait that long without my dental hygiene degrading. However, I have been told that they can see me through private almost instantly which I feel is extremely extortionate. I am a student struggling to get by day to day and will never be able to pay private fees.”

“Caller rang to say that Trenton Dental Practice are now closing and any patients must travel to Grimsby for treatment now. She has a problem with her crown but unwilling to travel to Grimsby although she has called over fifteen dentists in the local Hull area to see if any are taking on new NHS patients and advised none of them are.”

“Having rang 111 to arrange an appointment, I was slotted in at this practice. Extreme pain and loose teeth top and bottom . On examination the dentist said “well I’m not taking three out “ ... then proceeded to tap all loose teeth and wiggle them ...asking repeatedly which is the most painful ... I understand the need for an examination however ... so I stated the bottom was the most painful at that point ... dentist says “ that’s impacted tooth it will be very difficult to remove I’m not sure how to do it “ Now correct me if I’m wrong but that hardly puts a patient at ease . I have previously had 8 extractions in one day and immediate dentures fitted, at a different practice, believe me that procedure was painless carried out

by professional staff. I would not recommend a visit here unless it was the last dentist in Britain.”

“I am not particularly happy that my issues are not considered an emergency and I have been advised today that I have to wait until my oral issues are to quote the receptionist "unbearable" and book an emergency appointment. Several years ago, I had a root canal treatment done on one of my maulers and that filling, along with some of the surrounding tooth has shattered, leaving my tooth with sharp shards and with almost the entire centre missing. I constantly have throbbing in the gum above the tooth and occasional bleeding, my teeth have shifted at the back and are cutting into the sides of my mouth and that's in-addition to the sensitivity I feel in other maulers and front teeth. I would consider this an emergency but when I advised the receptionist of this today, apparently, I had to wait until it was unbearable when at the moment, I'm contemplating pulling the tooth with missing filling out myself. I had my appointment delayed from March last year and now it's delayed again until August. I am completely furious about this.”

“Incredibly rude and unhelpful. I registered following the online process in November/December, rang to book an appointment in March and was told I was not registered and online 'doesn't count.' I have left my old dentist, believing I had registered at a new one, and am now left in great pain with no option but to pay for a private emergency dentist. Told I can't register until August. The receptionist was so rude and unkind. Not what you expect from a customer facing job role.”

“The telephone just rings out all the time it can take hours before you get through. You have to wait at the bottom of the stairs outside now in all weathers and then ring them to say you have arrived, I rang them but no answer as usual so went up the stairs to let them know I had arrived, the staff member told me haughtily (even though its January and snowing ) that I need to go back downstairs and ring to tell them I have arrived, no smile, nothing, I said is this how you treat your patients then as I can't get through no-one answers the phone, I then said to the dentist that the telephone service is awful and stressful and takes hours for someone to answer , the dentist said 'it's expensive and if I wanted to pay for it then they would improve the service! I was appalled at her unprofessional response and will never go back to this dentist again, awful, you have been warned. I am also making an official complaint about their service , disgusting!”

“Having cracked a tooth at beginning of lockdown I experienced numerous abscess following this. The tooth had cracked at gum level putting strain on surrounding teeth. These have also now shattered at gum level. I managed to obtain an emergency appointment which grateful for, however apart from coat them in calcium he advised there was nothing he could do in an emergency appointment I needed to register with a dentist ASAP as my teeth are crumbling and I need them extracting and dentures. I have phoned / emailed all dentist in my area and surrounding district but not one is taking on NHS patients. Yet they can fit me in privately. Unfortunately, I don't have the £1000 quoted for the treatment, it is just distressing that the same dentist can't do it on NHS but would fit me in in three days if had the money to go private. I understand the pressure they are working



under because of COVID, but I am being told it be at least a year before they open their books to NHS patients again. In the meantime, I'm left struggling to eat, control abscess and having to work in a public sector key working job with my front teeth missing.”

“Information received from local community support group: 'Many of mine are suffering with pain and need dental work - this has impacted on their mental health too. Readily available Amoxicillin at many shops which residents are buying for between £10.00-£25.00 which is a lot of money when in receipt of benefits but they say they don't care, just want to be pain free. Two of these people are now on anti-depressants because of the pain and lack of dental services in Hull. Ringing NHS 111 is time consuming just to possibly be sent to another city which is also an additional cost for the residents.”

“Information received from local community group: Just had to register one of my clients at a dentist in Grimsby, will have to take him now because it's so far for him to travel and the cost is too much! Rang NHS 111 every day last week and all in Doncaster, Grimsby & Scunthorpe. I have to take him to Grimsby which is time don't have but his mental health has deteriorated with the pain. He has been buying under the counter anti biotics for the pain but has become so sick with them - he has been in pain for around a year now.”

“Information received from local community support group: Since Christmas, have rung all the dentists in Hull and Beverley area and been told four year waiting list some said two. We are now having to ring as far afield as Grimsby which just isn't really feasible for transport for people.”

“I haven't got a dentist and it seems that due to covid19 situation none of the dentistry clinics are taking any new NHS patients. I rang 20 or more clinics in 15mile radius and although they can't offer any services through NHS, they are always prepared to offer appointments through private sector within couple of days.

The issue is that I chipped my veneer at the front and my tooth started to get really sensitive underneath. I can't afford to pay over £1000 for the fix by going private and I am not able to smile or even leave the house due to my chipped tooth as it's now effecting my mental health. Luckily, I'm still able to work from home.

I need help but there's nothing available for me out there unless I find the way to pay private fees.”

“I had a failed dental bridge top front 2 teeth that I paid £3,000 for as part of treatment. This happened on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 during lockdown. Despite several telephone calls I am being told I am on a 'waiting list' for assessment for a partial denture I am still waiting to be reviewed. I accessed the emergency dental hub through 111 and was given an emergency extraction by a wonderful dentist at a different practice. Following that extraction, I tried to access follow up care for myself. There has been no information anywhere either on social media or

elsewhere from my practice on when I might possibly be seen. This has had a big impact on my mental health.

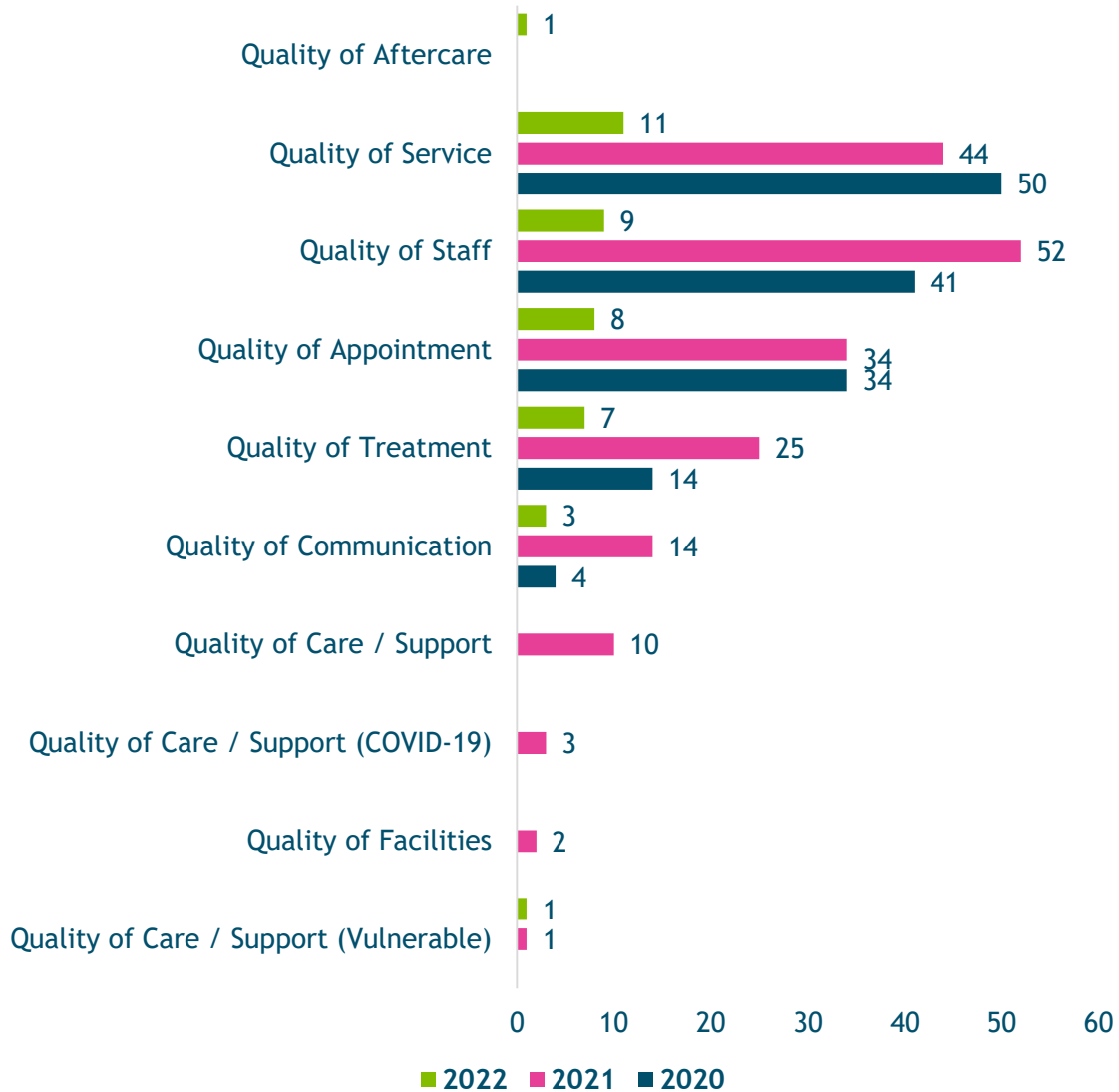
Can you imagine what it's like to have no front teeth? It affects my speech, my ability to eat and I am embarrassed to interact with anyone. I understand this is an unprecedented situation. The lack of information regarding when dental services will resume has compounded my situation. The experience I have had has been intolerable.”

“I made an emergency appointment I had been up all night. I am a support worker and work with a lady with autism and learning disabilities. I was at work so had to arrange for a staff member to meet me there the lady I look after was having issues and it took me longer to walk with her, due to the fact there's a pandemic and cannot go on a bus. I arrived 9 mins late and the receptionist appeared to get great pleasure in telling me I was late and could not see the dentist. I was extremely upset and she said I was shouting at her but I was just upset. I eventually saw the dentist and apologised and she rolled her eyes at me. No compassion or empathy for me. Definitely need more training I cannot be the first person to arrive upset. The dentist was amazing.”

## Compliments Identified

From 2020 to 2021, Healthwatch Hull has identified the same amount or slightly more compliments in most areas than in the previous year. With Quality of Service and Quality of Staff being praised 90 or more times, over both years.

This trend has continued in 2022, by February, we are still finding Quality of Service the most common praise given to dental practices.



## Examples of Experiences Received

“I struggle with dentists in general, however my dentist has really looked after me, took their time and had a lot of patience for me. I would recommend them to anyone. Everyone is so lovely and they do everything they can to help you.”

“The staff are friendly, informative and deliver information in a way that is easy to understand. I know what to expect going forward which helps as I am incredibly anxious when it comes to visiting the dentist.”

“Staff were really friendly and efficient. Patient has learning difficulties and everything was explained as best possible for her to understand.”

“Called 111 regarding some tooth ache I had been suffering with for about a week as no dentists in the area could see me for months. I was given an appointment at Night Dental a few hours later in the day and before I knew it I was having an infected wisdom tooth removed. Obviously, this is not a pleasant experience but I cannot thank the dentist and nurse who looked after me enough. I was incredibly nervous as I hate dentists but they did what they needed to do to get me out of pain and made sure I knew what was happening the full time.”

“The woman I have is absolutely fantastic! She needs to pull my front tooth out due to accident a few years ago, the cap come out and she just can't save it, I was so upset but she was so reassuring the whole time and told me I'll have a lovely smile with a denture and then a dental bridge after 6 months. She really has taken care of me and has always been so lovely and very professional! The receptionists are very lovely women too! Would never go anywhere else not even if you paid me.”

“Attended with my 5-year-old who needed a cracked tooth taken out. The staff made her feel very comfortable with the procedure and helped her when she was feeling scared. The staff are all very friendly and helpful.”

“Visited dentist 14/5/21 was nervous and anxious. Tooth had broken and aged 64 I am embarrassed by my teeth. Dentist was kind and patient and very reassuring. Lovely man and dental Nurse and reception all kind helpful people.”

“The practice was running on time. The staff were friendly, polite and professional. I was having treatment, a filling on one side and a repair on the other side. I didn't feel the local anaesthetic at all. I didn't feel the work being done at all. And I was given a white filling. It's fabulous because when I got home I had a good look and I couldn't even tell that there was a filling in there. I always feel safe and confident in my dentist and the assistant's hands. I would be devastated if the practice ever had to close. I'd start a protest!”

“Having been in a lot of pain with a broken wisdom tooth, I ended up with an emergency procedure to have it removed here. I found the dentist, assistant and reception to be lovely, putting me at my ease at all times, talking me through everything and providing painless and successful treatment. I could not have found better treatment anywhere.”

“I bring my grandson here , he has several disabilities from ASD, ADHD and PDA, the dentist he has visited has always been so very welcoming even under pressure from his moving around and constantly questions him, very understanding and brilliant with children with disabilities, cannot thank you enough for your patience.”

“Had to have a tooth extraction the lady dentist and dental nurse was amazing I was an extremely nervous patient she was very gentle and all-round amazing,

couldn't thank them enough for their service. It has restored my faith in going to the dentist."

"I recently went for my usual check up with Dentist. I was informed I would need three teeth filling. So, another appointment was made for this to be done. The Dentist and Nurse were really very polite and caring and the work to my teeth carried out without any fuss. I'm now able to chew my food and enjoy the work that they have done for me. Obviously given that we are all wearing face masks and only being allowed into the building as an when they are ready for you, my experience was great. The Receptionist and staff member who took my temp and asked me if I had been in contact with or had any symptoms were both courteous and proficient as I was quickly admitted to the premises and through to the Dentist. All in all, a speedy and cheerful experience given the current environment. It's a pleasure to go feeling so assured that the service you receive is given in a genuine caring manner."

"Suffered with pain in right side upper teeth. Booked in as emergency, seen that day, script for anti-biotics. Went back three days later for extraction, always used to be nervous at dentist until started using this one maybe six years ago - best thing I ever did. Brill staff and make you feel at ease throughout."

"As someone who is terrified of dentists, my new dentist at 543 made me feel a lot better about getting work done there. I need a tooth removing but was really not in a good place but he said it was better to be prepared for the procedure and to come back for another appointment he even showed me the x-ray of the tooth and how he would remove it. I would recommend 543 to everyone."

### 3. Conclusion

From the information Healthwatch Hull has gathered, we have found that difficulties accessing dental treatment as an NHS patient is a continuing trend and is likely to be an issue for some time to come.

Out of 16 dental practices we contacted, only six is offering to register NHS patients and two of these practices will only do so if the patient falls under a certain criteria.

Regardless of whether patients can or have registered as an NHS patient, there is significant waiting times for treatment; with waiting lists potentially being between one to two years. During this time, patients may find that their initial ailment requires more significant and invasive treatments when they are seen than they otherwise would have required.

One practice we spoke to with over 1000 patients on their waiting list and who are currently not accepting NHS patients, advised that patients who register privately will be seen within the next four months.

Dental practices favouring private patients over NHS patients assists in creating a two-tier system, with those in more deprived areas or difficult circumstances having to manage their ailment for much longer or seek alternative and sometimes dangerous treatments than those who can afford to pay.

We have been told this is already happening within seldom heard communities as those with advanced dental issues have been accessing prescription-based medication from unlicensed sources.

This can also affect the livelihoods of patients as dental issues can impact confidence and vital abilities such as chewing; which could cause further health complications. It could also contribute to wider issues such as individual's socio-economic status as they may not seek opportunities due to concerns around their oral appearance and / or odour and how others may perceive their hygiene.

Healthwatch does recognise however that when patients are seen in Hull, they are likely to be happy with the service provided; with praises often being identified to dental staff for the quality of service they have provided. While patient satisfaction may be high after treatment however, this does not compensate for the delay in being able to receive said treatment.

When contacted about accessing NHS dental treatment, Healthwatch is left at a loss on what to realistically advise patients. NHS England only advise patients to search outside of their local area or call NHS 111, however NHS 111 often cannot provide help for the patient either.

Our experience during the pandemic and our findings highlights concerns that an already strained service may have further difficulties should more people require dental treatment in the near future.

## 4. Recommendations

Below are the recommendations Healthwatch Kingston upon Hull would make when it comes to providing information and services to patients in our local area:

1. To regularly update the NHS England 'Find a Dentist' page, so patients know where it is accepting patients and possible waiting times.
2. To improve overall communication around dentistry; advertise how patients can obtain a dentist, emergency dentistry procedures and how to complain if they cannot.
3. To improve the dental provision for NHS Patients in the Kingston upon Hull area; review funding e.g. make treatment for NHS patients 'financially beneficial' and consider ways to increase capacity of Dentists to aid public access e.g. attract Dentists to Kingston upon Hull.