Dental services in Barnsley Report

August 2023

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About Healthwatch Barnsley

Healthwatch Barnsley is your local health and social care champion. From Penistone to Goldthorpe and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

If you recently visited your GP or local hospital, or used any health and social care services in Barnsley, we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good or bad experience we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you say.

We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Barnsley and beyond.

Find out more about us on our website www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk

Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need

Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help to make health and care better

Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector serving as the public's independent advocate

Background

Following the recurrence of dentistry concerns in the top intelligence trends, we decided to conduct a quick snapshot survey of dentists in Barnsley. This was in order to collect more local intelligence on NHS dental services.

The survey consisted of **5 questions** to explore the concerns, along with an opportunity for participants to write any additional comments about their experiences with local NHS dentistry services. The survey was completed by residents during an engagement session in Barnsley town centre on Wednesday 23rd August 2023. It received a total of **104 responses.**
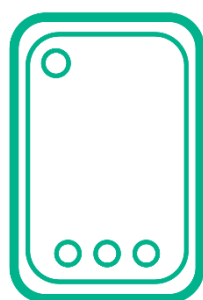
In addition to the survey, we completed our **6 monthly ring-around** local dentists to find out if any of the practices were taking on new NHS patients (if so, we asked if they had a waiting list and the current time scales of it). We have included this update at the end of this report.

Key Findings

Q1. Have you been able to see a dentist for NHS treatment (including a check-up) during the last two years?

62 residents told us they had been able to see an NHS dentist within the last two years, with **42** residents being unable to get access to an NHS dentist.

NHS dental appointment within the last 2 years

- **Yes**
- **No**

40%

60%
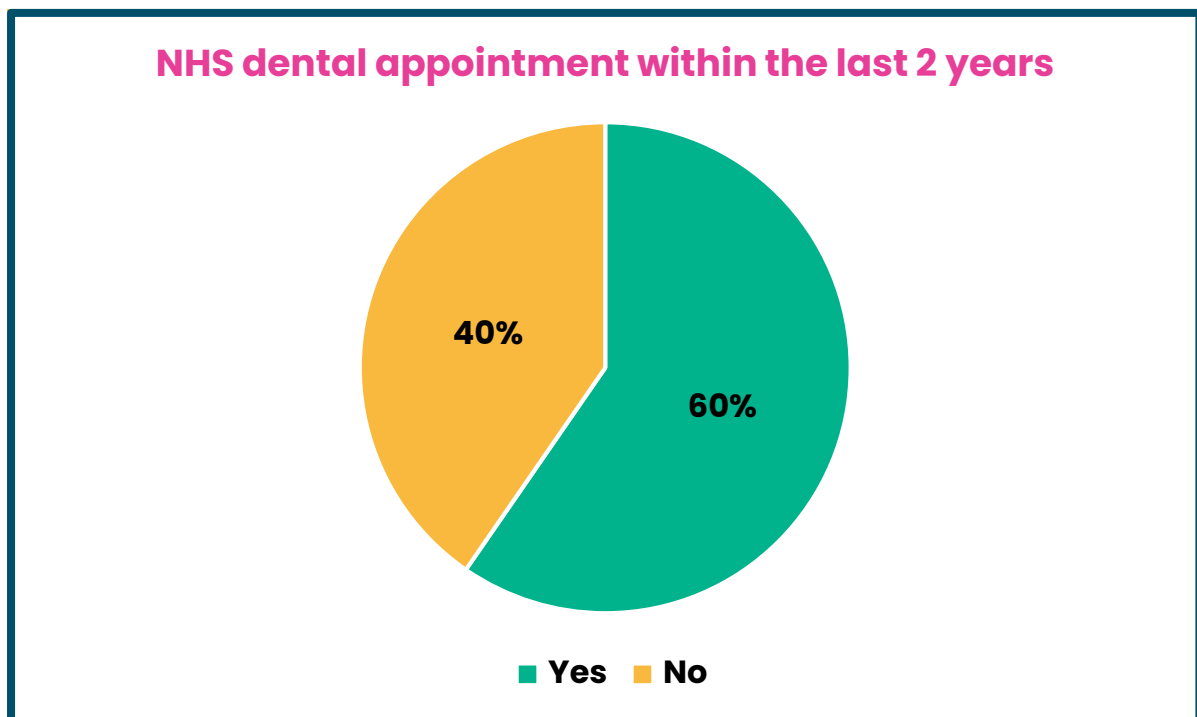
Additional Comments

"I have dentures, they look after themselves so there is **no need for me to see a dentist**"

"**The quality of treatment is poor so I ended up going private** - some dentists charge different prices, they never stick to the same price scale"

"**I see a private dentist**, I used to pre-book my next appointment when I had my last visit but they don't do it that way now they ring with an appointment when you are due for a check-up. Sometimes it's a little bit over time but I'm ok with that"

"**Not been to the dentist in years**"

"I have dentures so only go about once every 10 years. **My son had to ring 111 as he couldn't get a dentist appointment** when he had problems"

"Dentist is totally hopeless **you can never get an appointment**"

"**Totally disgusted. My check-up is 15 months overdue**, the dentist has left and they are struggling to recruit a replacement"

"I have a private dentist, I have a check-up every 6 months and treatment as needed. I also **have an oral cancer check at the same time**"

"**My dentist has left so next appointment not given but said if I haven't been seen within 12 months they will strike me off the register**"

"**I have a fear of dentist so will not go unless it is absolutely necessary**"

"**I cannot get an appointment**"

"They have told me it will be **2024 before I can get an appointment**"

"I now go to a private dentist because of quality - **had NHS dentures which broke after 6 months and dentist refused to replace or refund**"

"**My dentist is 50 miles away, it is the nearest I could get**"

"**I am struggling to find a dentist**. I keep ringing but there is a waiting list"

"**I had a tooth abscess and had to ring NHS 111** they got me treatment but I had to pay private, I am registered with that dentist now but all the treatment is private"

"I have had dentures fitted now so **I only go if I have a problem** (touch wood not had one yet)"

"**I had to wait 3 years to get a place with an NHS dentist** - Private dentists were just far too expensive"

"Due to the shortage of dentists there is a limit on appointments, there is no appointment availability. **I have had appointments cancelled 4 times in a year"**

"I have regular appointments with my dentist and attend all my checks-ups - **I would hate to have problems and not be able to see a dentist** I cannot imagine anything worse than toothache!"

Q2. If you were able to see a dentist were you able to get all the treatment you needed at NHS prices?

55 residents said they were charged NHS prices for their treatment.

7 residents told us they were unable to have their treatment on the NHS.

Were you able to get all the treatment you needed at NHS prices

- 11%
- 89%

■ Yes ■ No
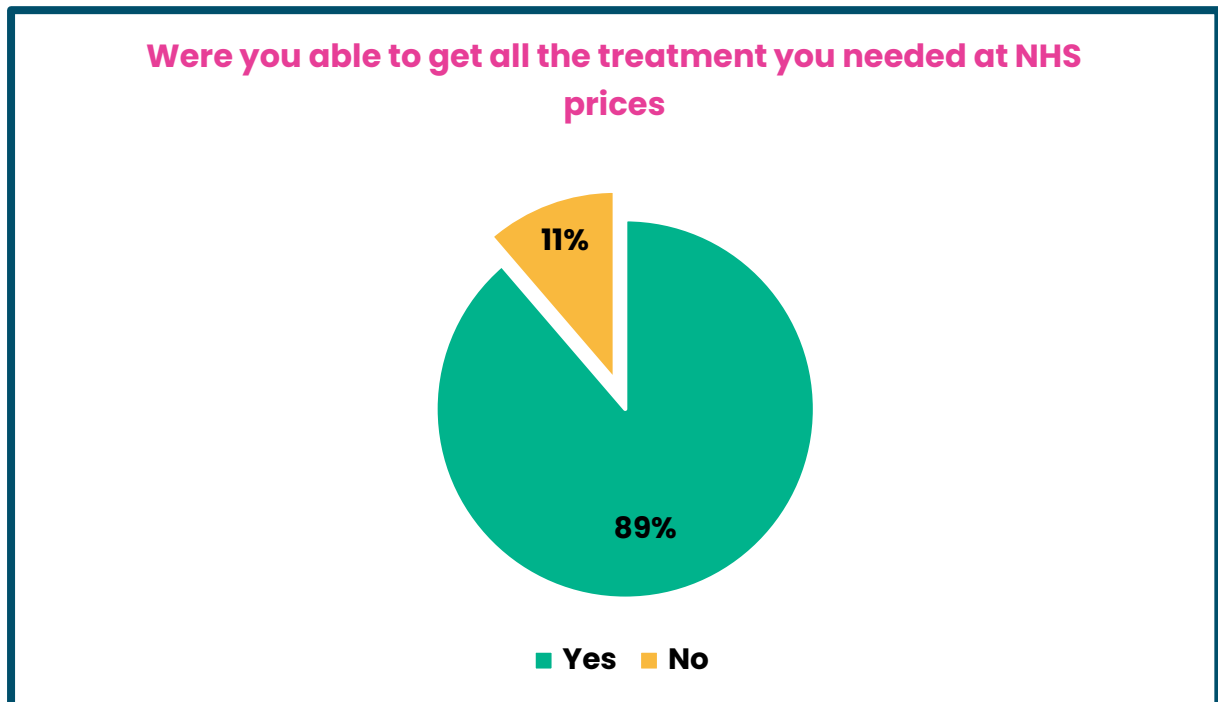
Additional Comments

"I do have an NHS dentist but I had to pay private for a scrape and polish. **I had to pay for private treatment for my daughter aged 8 to have a tooth removed as there were no NHS appointments available**"

Q3. On a scale from 1 being very fair, to 10 being very unfair, how happy are you with how much NHS dental treatment costs?

NHS dental charges

A bar chart titled "NHS dental charges" showing values:
- 1 – very fair: 22
- 2: 8
- 3: 5
- 4: 5
- 5 – about right: 28
- 6: 1
- 7: 5
- 8: 9
- 9: 7
- 10 – very unfair: 14

Legend: NHS dental charges
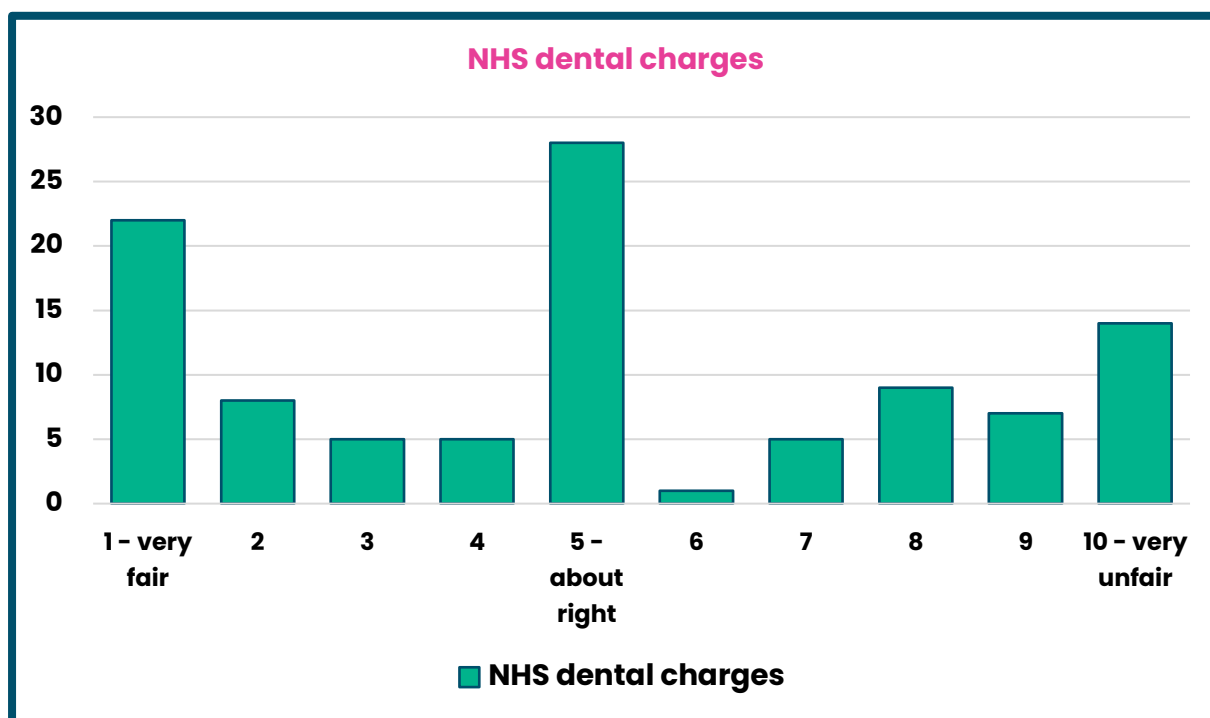
Most people thought the NHS charges were fair when compared to paying for private treatment. Some of the respondents thought that dental treatment on the NHS should be totally free of charge, especially for older people. This is because they tend to need expensive work (dentures) during later life and this is something that they do not usually budget for.

Additional Comments

"**I am a pensioner and I think dental treatment should be free**. I am lucky to have a dentist and I have regular 6 monthly check-ups"

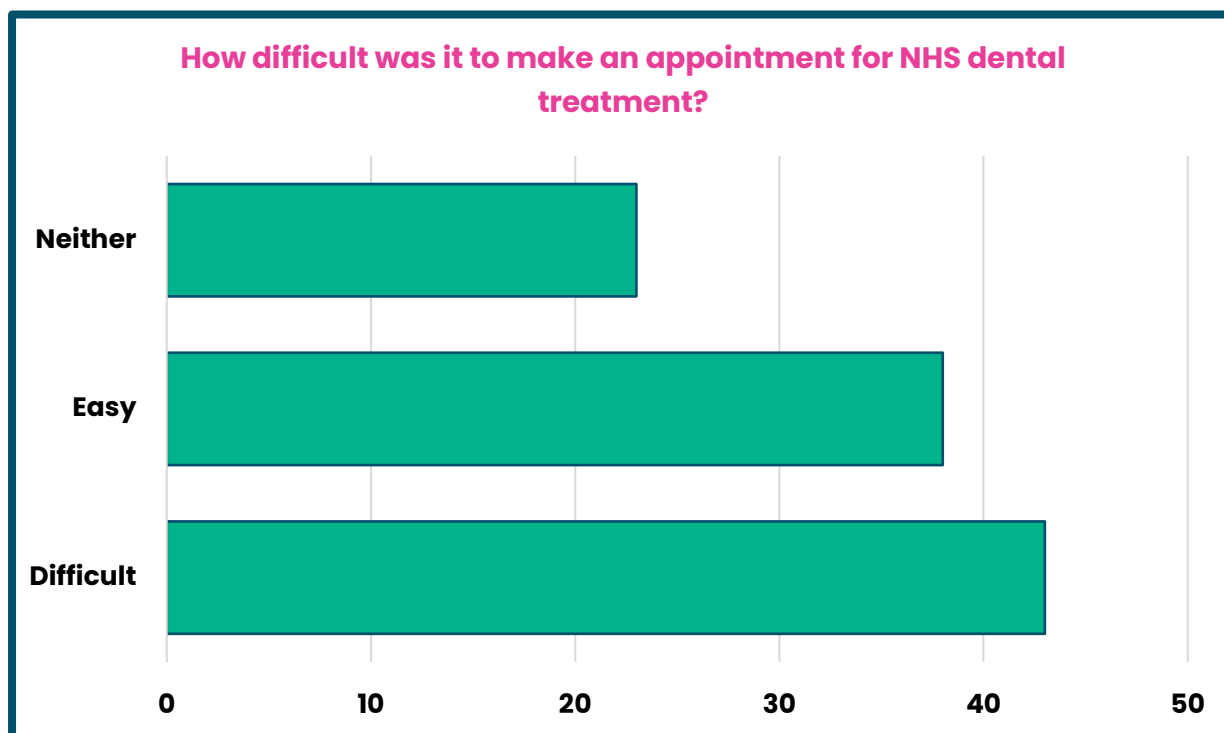"**Costs are scandalous**"

"**Cost is the main factor for not going to dentist** - I cannot afford the treatment"

"Cost me almost £70 for 3 fillings and that is NHS prices - **I don't think pensioners should have to pay!**"

"**Extortionate prices for a filling**"

"**Very happy** with the NHS dental work"

Q4. How difficult did you find it to get an appointment for NHS dental treatment?

How difficult was it to make an appointment for NHS dental treatment?

Category	Value
Neither	23
Easy	38
Difficult	43

(Horizontal axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50)

Residents that were unable to obtain NHS treatment obviously reported that it was difficult to get an appointment. The residents who thought it was easy to get an appointment were regularly visiting the same dentist before the pandemic; once services opened up again they were called back in for routine check-ups. **23** residents told us it was neither easy nor difficult to get an appointment and in many instances they were contacted by the practice when their routine check-up was due.
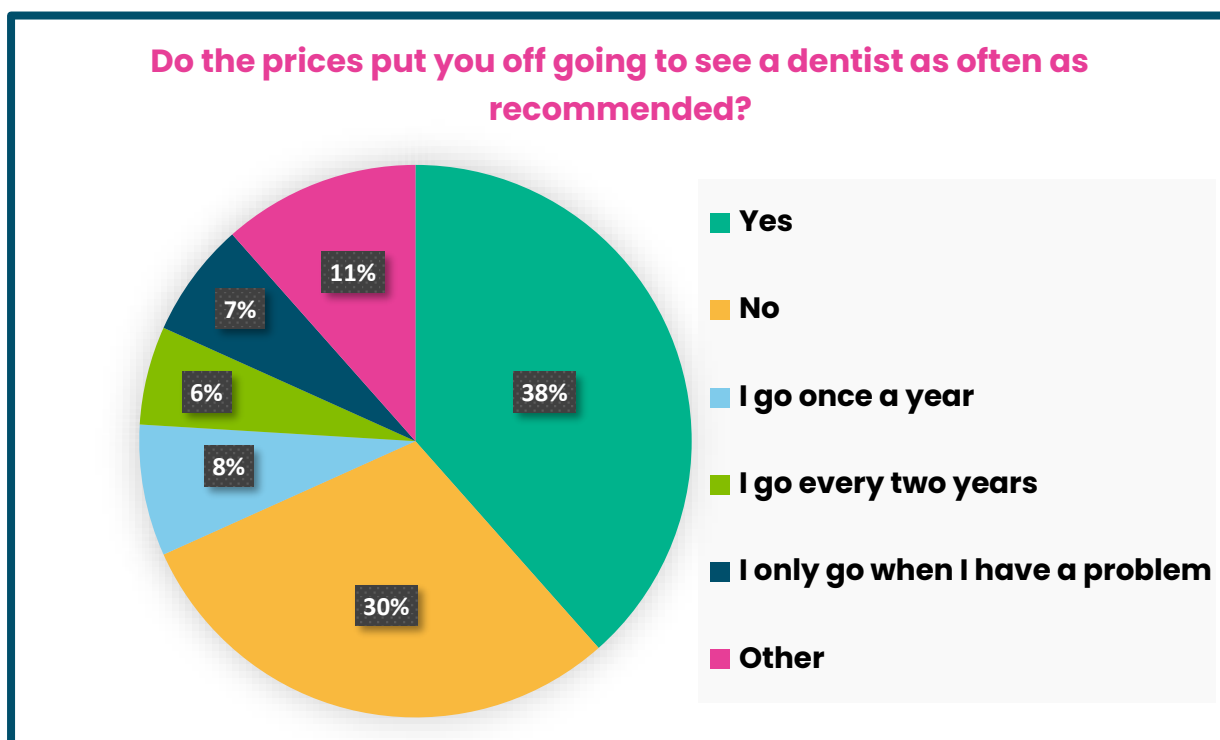
Additional Comments

"**I took the last 3 teeth out myself**"

"**Happy with the service**"

"Had a **two week wait** for an appointment that's all "

Q5. Do the prices for NHS dental treatment put you off going to see the dentist as often as is recommended?

Do the prices put you off going to see a dentist as often as recommended?

- Yes — 38%
- No — 30%
- I go once a year — 8%
- I go every two years — 6%
- I only go when I have a problem — 7%
- Other — 11%

40 residents told us that the price of NHS dental treatment puts them off going to see a dentist as often as recommended. Some people felt that the price of NHS treatment was fair when compared to paying for private treatment, although many people still thought it came low on the list of priorities in the context of family budgeting (where rent, food and warmth take precedence).

Additional Comments

"I have **moved to yearly check-ups now because of the cost**"

"I received NHS treatment at an NHS dentist and it still **cost me £2,500** – now I only go if I have a problem because **I can't afford it. I am due to retire soon after working all my life and paying my contributions so I was hoping it would be free** but someone told me I will still have to pay!"

"**I only go if I am in pain** or have toothache"

"I had dentures fitted but had to go private. **It is really difficult to get an appointment unless you can afford to go private** which many on low incomes can't"

"I used to go to the dentist in Cudworth but they took me off the register (I don't know why) they told me I could go back on it as a private patient. My sister told me to try Sheffield Dental Hospital as I have MS, they had a 2 year waiting list but I am now being seen. **The treatment is free but I have to pay for transport to get me there** and sometimes because of the weather or transport strikes I have to have a taxi which is £70 return."

"**The cost does put me off** but I still attend as it is important. I am on warfarin so unable to have full treatment"

"I have had to cancel 2 appointments this year as **I couldn't afford it and that is NHS prices**"

"**I use a private dentist as I cannot get an NHS appointment** it cost me £460 for root canal treatment and I got a quote for 3 or 4 fillings and it was going to be £400+ which I cannot afford so I just had the 1 done which cost me over £80"

"With everything else going up **dentist has become a luxury**"

"I know **I don't go as often as I should** but I try and go at least every other year"

"It is **just another bill I can do without** at the minute"

Our Conclusions

Regular check-ups at the dentist are there to help people maintain good oral health by preventing or identifying any dental problems. It is beneficial to treat any dental issues early, as if left unknown and untreated, it can become more challenging to treat in the future. The NHS suggests that people with good oral health should attend a dental check-up once every 12 to 24 months. However, people with more dental problems may need dental check-ups more often.

According to our findings, **47** people confirmed that they would not attend the dentist as often as recommended due to either being put off by the NHS treatment costs or not having tooth pain to indicate that treatment is needed. These findings suggest that with a review of the NHS dental treatment costs and more information on the importance of oral health, more people may attend dental check-ups as recommended, which could reduce the need for dental treatment.

However, **42** people had reportedly not been able to see a dentist via the NHS within the recommended 12 to 24 months, despite several comments indicating they have poor oral health with the need for treatment.

This data highlights an imbalance in the supply and demand of NHS dental services, where only **53%** of people were able to receive all their necessary dental care through the NHS within the last two years. The remaining **47%** have had to either not receive any dental care or those who could afford to would instead pay for private dental treatment.

There is still a misconception amongst the public and dental practices that patients are required to register to receive NHS dental treatment. This was highlighted by the lack of attendance by many people during COVID-19 safety measures, with NHS patients previously registered at local dental practices being removed from registers and subsequently refused treatment.

Our Recommendations

Based on our findings, we have the following recommendations to improve the dental services;
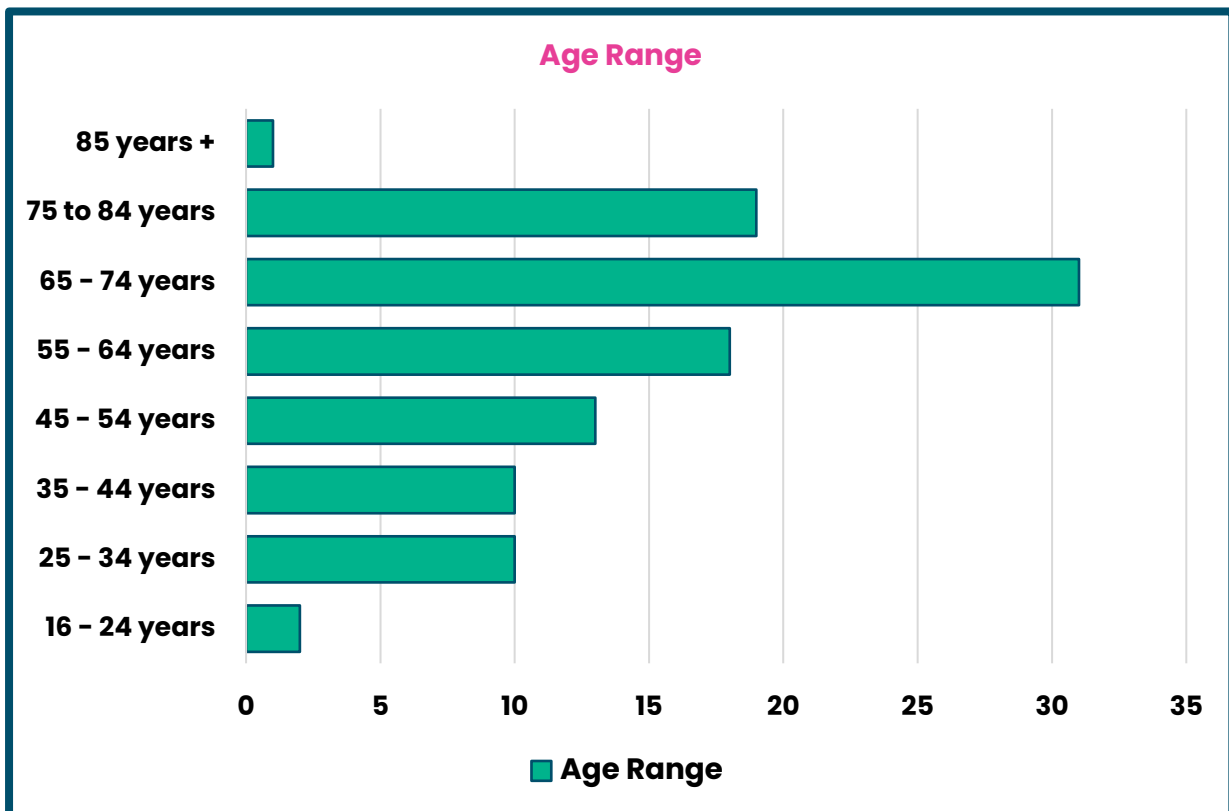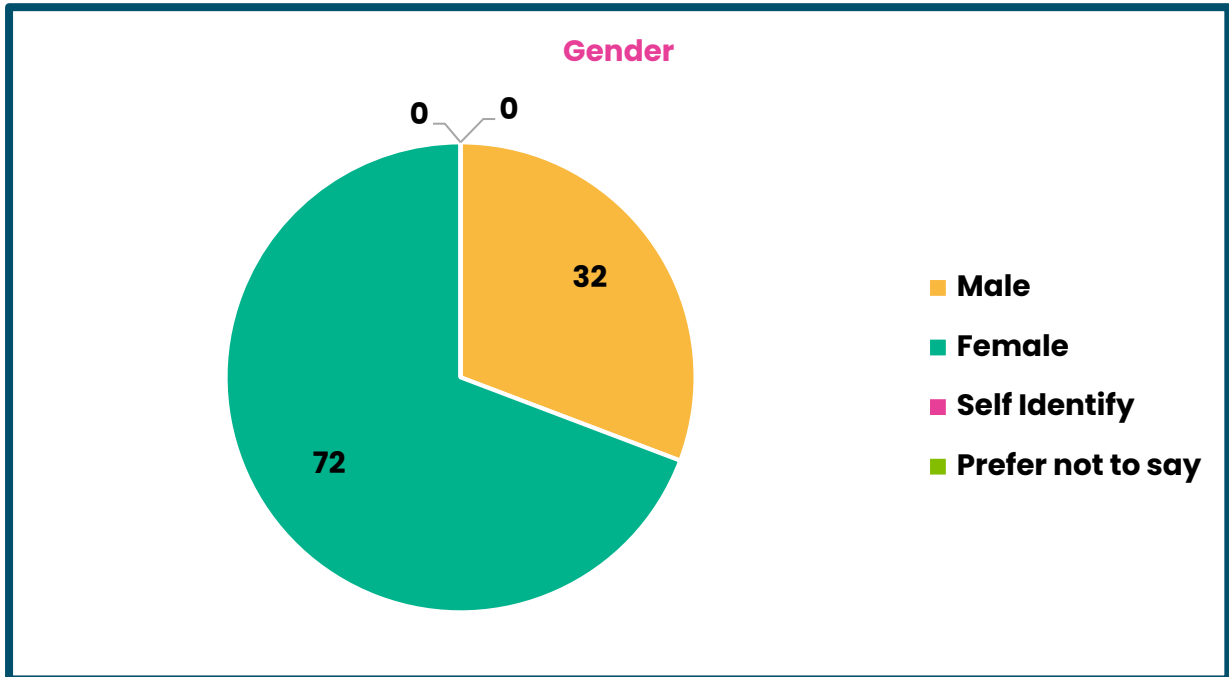
- **Communication** - NHS England, NHS South Yorkshire and dentists need to provide patients with more accurate and up-to-date information. Particularly with updates on the availability of NHS dental appointments and highlighting the importance of maintaining good oral health through regular check-up appointments.

- **Patient registration** - NHS England, NHS South Yorkshire and dentists need to be clear that people don't register with a dentist in the same way as with a GP surgery. Patients are being misled into believing they must be registered in order to receive NHS dental treatment.

Previously Healthwatch England in their report, ***'Dentistry and the impact of COVID-19' Dec 2020,*** had made similar recommendations for dentistry.

- **Clearer information** - NHS England and dentists need to provide more accurate and up-to-date information for patients.

- **Patient registration** - NHS England and dentists need to be clear that people don't register with a dentist in the same way as with a GP surgery. There is no guarantee of treatment at the same practice as a result.

- **Access to care** - The Government must make more resources available to dentists to help reduce the backlog caused by the pandemic.

- **Affordability** - The Government and the NHS should review the cost of NHS treatment; many people struggle to pay the NHS charge due to factors such as job loss or hours being cut due to the pandemic.

Appendix A

More information about the 104 people we spoke to

Gender

- Male — 32
- Female — 72
- Self Identify — 0
- Prefer not to say — 0

Age Range

Age Range	Count
85 years +	1
75 to 84 years	19
65 – 74 years	31
55 – 64 years	18
45 – 54 years	13
35 – 44 years	10
25 – 34 years	10
16 – 24 years	2

Employment Status

A bar chart titled "Employment Status" showing:
- Employed: 33
- Retired: 52
- Student: 3
- Unemployed (actively seeking work): 2
- Unemployed (unable to work due to ill health): 14

Legend: Employment Status

Appendix B

Vacancies for NHS Patients in Dental Practices in Barnsley (Sept 2023)

Practice	Information from NHS "Find a Dentist" website				Notes from telephone updates via Healthwatch Barnsley
	Under 17 years	Adults aged 18 years and over	Patients entitled to free dental care	Not accepting new NHS patients	
Trinity House Orthodontics					Only accept referrals from other dentists
My Dentist (Peel Street)				X	
Dentecare (Barnsley)	X	X	X		**14/09/23** **Could not** give a timeframe for first appointment availability
Gibbons, PR				X	
Yorkshire Smiles	X	X	X		**14/09/23** Waiting list of up to **2 years** for first NHS appointment, but will try and see children sooner
Cale AJ and Associates Townend Dental Centre	X	X	X		**22/09/23** **Not** currently taking on any new NHS patients
Queens Road Dental Care				X	

Churchfield Dental Care				X	
Oaksmere Dental Surgery	X	X	X		**14/09/23** First NHS appointments **April 2024**
Warren House				X	
Hanson, Speakman and Associates (Wilthorpe Park)	X	X	X		**12/09/23** Waiting list currently at **3 to 4 years**
Genesis Dental Care (Lynton House)	X	X	X		**22/09/23** Waiting list for adults for NHS appointments approximately **2 years**, with children's list at approximately **8 weeks**
Worsborough Dental Practice	X				**22/09/23** **Not** currently accepting any new NHS patients. Although **will see children and vulnerable adults currently within 3 months**
Nicholson RS Associates				X	
My Dentist (Pontefract Road)				X	
Darton Dental Practice	X	X	X		**22/09/23** **No response** from practice

Rotherham NHSFT (Cudworth)					No update given. Accepts referrals only
Cudworth Dental Surgery					Only accepts patients referred by other dentists
Royston Dental Practice	X				
FP Dental (Wombwell)	X				
Fern Cottage Dental Practice	X	X	X		**14/09/23** Waiting list currently up to **2 years**
Haricovert Ltd (Wombwell)					No update given on NHS website
My Dentist (Wombwell)				X	**19/09/23** Very limited availability (based on need)
Hoyland Family Dental Centre	X	X	X		**22/09/23** **Not** currently taking on any new patients, as a dentist has just gone on maternity leave
Garden Street Dental Practice	X				**19/09/23** Waiting list currently at **12 months**
Grimethorpe and Shafton Dental Practice	X				**19/09/23** Will see **children ASAP** but no availability for adults
Darfield Dental Practice	X				Update via NHS website

My Dentist, Penistone				X	**19/09/23** Will see **under 18s** in approximately **1 month** or try to see earlier if an emergency
My Dentist, Thurnscoe				X	**19/09/23** Waiting list for new NHS appointments is approximately **2 years**
My Dentist, Bolton on Dearne					**14/09/23** Confirmed dental practice **now closed**
Dearne Valley Dental Practice	X				**19/09/23** Has **limited** availability to see **children in an emergency**

The earliest possible time an adult could be seen for an NHS dental appointment in Barnsley is **April 2024.** There is only 1 dentist in the borough offering this time scale; the majority are saying waiting lists of between 1 and 2 years.

Children will be seen sooner, usually within **a month to 6 weeks,** although most practices did say they would try and see sooner if it was an emergency.

For more information

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