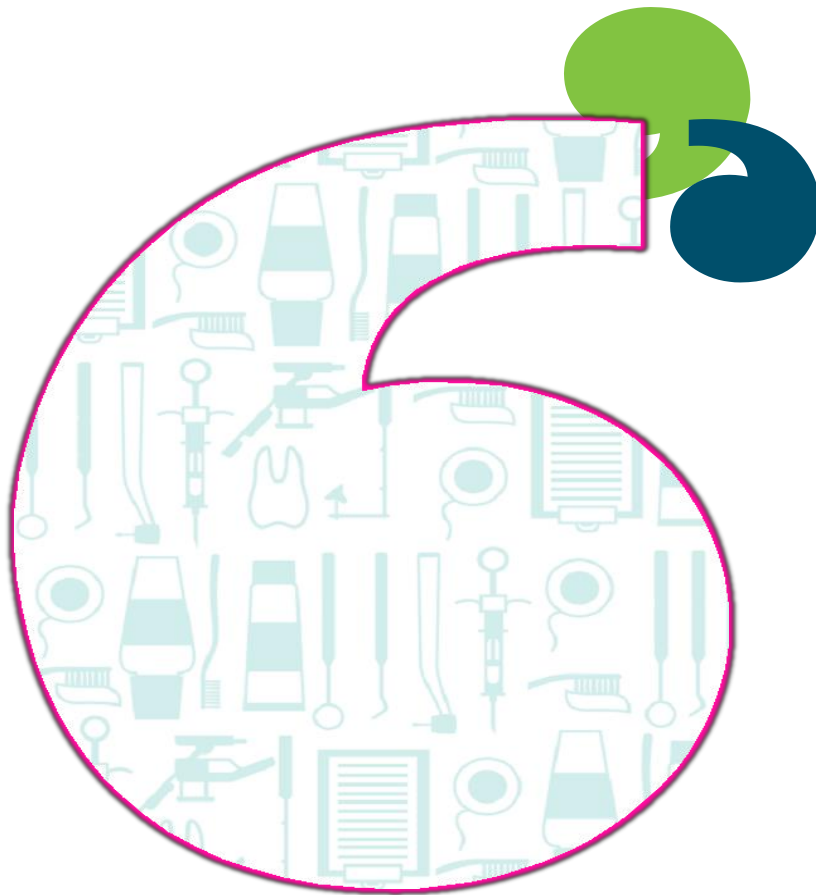


# Access to NHS Dental Services in Hertfordshire Enter and View visit report



**Gatrad & Associates Dental Care**

**148 High Street, London Colney, St Albans, AL2  
1QF**

**St Albans and Harpenden Area**

**Premises visited:** Gatrad & Associates Dental Care  
**Date and Time of Visit:** 13.09.17 12:45  
**Visit Conducted By:** Catherine Free and Pamela Rochford

**NHS Contract Holder:** Dr A Gatrad

### **Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank the staff we spoke to on the visit.

### **Purpose for the Visit:**

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) is conducting an Enter and View visiting programme into Dental Practices in Hertfordshire following the outcomes of a joint project between HwH and Public Health locally. For further information our report can be found here:

<http://www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Access-to-NHS-Dental-Services-in-Hertfordshire-2016.pdf>

The focus of the visits is to look at the:

- Environment
- Physical Access
- Information Access
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints Handling

We are working with Public Health East of England and have informed NHS England locally. We are also working closely with the Central Region Inspection Manager - Dentistry at the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The Local Dental Committee has also been informed and has been very supportive of this work.

## Methodology:

Healthwatch Hertfordshire (HwH) is the independent health and social care champion. Local Healthwatch is in place to gather the views and experiences of people accessing services, to use this information to influence decisions and to provide information and advice to the local community about health and social care services.

Legislation allows HwH authorised representatives to ‘Enter and View’ health and social care premises to see and hear for themselves how services are provided.

We are focussing on one area at a time that has been randomly selected. We began with Welwyn and Hatfield, where 50% of the practices were randomly selected for an Enter and View visit; the summary report of our findings for the district can be found [here](#). We are currently looking at St Albans and Harpenden, and have plans to visit 25% of the dental practices in the area.

These Enter and View visits are ‘announced/unannounced’ visits where we notify the practice of our intention to visit within the next 4 weeks but do not give a specific date or time. Authorised HwH representatives use an observational checklist to record their findings and have thirteen specific subject areas to ask the person on duty at the Reception desk about.

Desktop research is carried out on the website of the dental practice and the practice’s entry in NHS Choices.

## Disclaimer

The report relates only to a specific visit (a point in time) and the report is not representative of all service users (only those who contributed within the restricted time available).

## 1. Introduction

*Gatrad & Associates Dental Care is a large dental practice located on the High Street in London Colney. The practice was founded in 1983 by the principal dentist still working at the premises. Currently working there are five dentists, two dental hygienists, and a specialist dental surgeon.*

*Travel links are somewhat lacking, but this is understandable considering the practice's location in a small town. Directly outside the practice is a bus stop with buses to St Albans, Hatfield, Watford, and Borehamwood. The nearest train station is St Albans City Station.*

## 2. Environment

### 2.1 Signage

*The practice was easy to find, with a large sign saying 'Dental Surgery' on the outside of the building, facing the high street. This is easily visible from the road. However, when we approached the practice, we could not find a sign letting patients know that the main entrance is located at the side of the practice.*

*The practice does provide an embedded Google Map on their website for patients' convenience in the 'Appointments: How to Find Us' page.*

### 2.2 Car Parking

*The practice has a small car park at the back of the building intended for staff. The road via which the practice's car park can be reached is a residential street partly covered by single yellow lines, and then there are a number of driveways it would be impractical to park across. There is street parking nearby to the practice, that seemed not to have any restrictions, but the nearest car park is across a busy road. There is no designated drop off facility.*

*There is also no accessible parking for the practice.*

### 2.3 Visible External Information

*There is a poster near the entrance of the practice which gives information about out of hours help available from 111, but this was in small print and not visible from the high street. The practice does not have any signage to say it offers NHS treatment.*

### 2.4 First impressions

*We were warmly welcomed to the practice by the receptionist. The waiting room and reception area is combined into one room that is clean and light, but small. A*

*number of padded, armless chairs that were all the same height ringed the room. The noticeboard was situated on the way to the treatment rooms and was full of information that was mostly in small print, which could make it difficult for service users to read. However, the noticeboard included the practice's complaints policy, the NHS Fee Bandings, community classes elsewhere, and information on the different languages available to speak at the practice. This is so that patients can alert the receptionist to the different language they need on the interpreter service. The Family and Friends Test was available for completion on the reception desk, as well as another laminated sheet about languages available there.*

*There was a TV on the wall, but this was turned off at the time of our visit. There were also some children's books and toys available for patients' entertainment.*

### 3. Physical Access

#### 3.1 Facilities

*Although the outside of the practice is wheelchair accessible, with an even concrete approach to the practice from street level, the entrance could present a problem for wheelchair users. The lip of the door is like a step that service users have to climb over, which of course would be especially difficult for wheelchair users. We did not see a bell to alert the practice of the need for help outside.*

*Once inside the practice, we found that the desk was high and made no allowances for wheelchair users: for example with a lowered section of the desk. This could present as an obstacle to good communication with wheelchair users. The waiting room itself is small, which leaves little room for manoeuvre for wheelchair users, or indeed a service user with a pushchair or pram.*

*There is no hearing loop for those with a hearing impairment.*

**The practice manager said that they are planning to install one in the next six months.**

*There are treatment rooms downstairs as well as upstairs, and there is no lift or stair lift to upstairs.*

*The practice does have a patient toilet, however it was not accessible. It could only be accessed via a narrow corridor, which could be a struggle for wheelchair users. In addition, the paper towel dispenser was higher up than the rest of the toilet facilities, and there was no red emergency cord. There was no colour contrast between the toilet facilities and the walls and floor, nor a contrast between the toilet seat and the toilet; this could present a problem for service users living with dementia.*

## 4. Information Access

### 4.1 NHS Charges

*The NHS Bandings for treatment cost were on display and up to date, clearly visible in the reception area. When asked how treatment costs are explained to the patient, the receptionist let us know that this would be discussed on the phone when the patient initially contacts them. The receptionist also said that the FP17DC form would be filled out by the dentist with the patient at the time of the consultation.*

**The practice manager said reception staff will make sure the patient understands the fees/options and get the patient to sign the form. The patient will be given a copy of the FP17DC form and a copy is then filed in their paper file.**

**All patients are told to call with any queries.**

### 4.2 Complaints

*The practice's complaints policy was on display on the noticeboard in the waiting room. The policy itself is clear, and patient centred. The clause included to say that they never discriminate against patients who complain will be a comfort to patients who may be unhappy with their treatment.*

*However, a few of the contact details given in the escalation procedure are out of date or inaccurate:*

- 1. The phone number given for 'The local Health Board', is for NHS England. It should be clear, also, that this would be the first step in the escalation procedure if an NHS patient is unhappy with how their complaint has been dealt with at the practice.*
- 2. The 0845 number for the Private Dental Complaints Service is a premium rate number, and not the one given on the Service's website.*
- 3. It should be made clear that the Ombudsman is the next step in the escalation procedure after NHS England.*
- 4. Healthwatch should read as 'Healthwatch Hertfordshire'; as well as this, it should be clear that we are a signposting service if service users are stuck on what to do next.*

*The Statement on Dental Complaints from the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board is a great addition to the complaints procedure; however, the practice complaints procedure needs to have the same advice or else service users may be left confused.*

*As well as this, the complaints policy that is given on the practice's website is different to what we were given by the practice on the visit. Although the advice given on the website is the same, it is in the interest of service users for there to*

*be uniformity in the way the complaints policy is presented so as not to confuse service users. Indeed, the policy given online is in small writing, which may present a difficulty to service users with a visual impairment.*

*The patient feedback box and cards on the reception desk, in a prominent position, make it clear to service users at the practice that they want to hear their patients' views on the practice. This is certainly good practice.*

### Summary of the Practice's Complaints Policy

Named Responsible person	Acknowledgement Of complaint	Clear timescales for complaint	Additional information about organisations to take complaint to?	Support for complaints? Pohwer or Healthwatch?
Yes	Yes - 3 working days	Yes - within 10 working days, with further notification if required	Yes - NHSE* PDCS CQC PHSO	Yes - Healthwatch Hertfordshire

\*NHSE          NHS England

PDCS          Private Dental Complaints Service

CQC          Care Quality Commission

PHSO          Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

### 4.3 Promoting oral health

*At the time of our visit there was some information on oral health for both adults and children on the walls in the waiting room and reception area. This was mostly concentrated on in treatment rooms, however.*

### 4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices website

*The practice has a quite developed entry on NHS Choices, including a picture of the practice and its opening times on the front page. However, the page has not been updated since February 2015; as such no information on the services provided here can be found due to the website's 90 day rule. Some of the information on facilities*



*offered at the practice is out of date as a result of this, as the practice told us that there is no disabled parking, and the car park at the back is used by staff.*

*The practice's own website is sophisticated, navigable and friendly. The NHS logo is clear in a band of brand logos on every page, so it is clear to new patients that NHS treatment is offered here. The 'Meet the Team' page with photos of staff are a nice touch to let patients get to know the dentists before they go in. However, the dental nurses and reception staff are missing from this page, which could be off putting for a patient when they arrive at the practice having never seen their faces before. The 'Fees & Offers' page includes the up to date NHS fee bandings, including the emergency treatment category. As stated above, the complaints policy is on the website, but in a different version to what we were given on our visit. The opening hours given on every page do not include that they close for lunch, as it states on their NHS Choices page.*

*It is excellent practice to give the 111 number on the 'contact us' style page, titled 'How to Find Us' on the practice website.*

## 5. Supporting Patients

### 5.1 Communication

*When asked how patients' communication needs are dealt with, the receptionist let us know that patients do not get asked specifically about their communication requirements. However, when these are declared to them, their computer system has a pop up that opens whenever a patient's records are opened. They also said that this would be included in paper records too. It was not mentioned how often a patient's communication needs would be checked with the patient.*

**The practice manager told us that patients are asked about their communication needs on first point of contact.**

*When asked how the practice would support patients who cannot speak or understand English, the receptionist told us that they would call the Language Line, a telephone interpretation service. The phone would be put on loudspeaker so that they can communicate.*

**The practice manager let us know that patients also like to use Google Translate.**

*The receptionist told us that there is a phone line for the hearing impaired, but did not elaborate further than that. The receptionist said that they also use a text messaging service to ensure good communication with the hearing impaired.*

**The practice manager told us that staff will speak slowly and clearly to ensure patients with a hearing impairment can lip-read. They also said that they would make sure they go up to that individual to get their attention, and write everything down for them.**



*In cases where patients would like to sit in a private room to recover from treatment or speak confidentially to a member of staff, the receptionist said that they have a staff room with a few stools available where patients can sit quietly. They also have a 'card room' for when they are taking patients' medical histories, if required.*

## **5.2 Patients with specific requirements**

*When asked how the practice deals with patients who are unable to access the building, the receptionist told us that those individuals are directed to the Special Care Dental Service provided by Hertfordshire Community Trust. They said that they would carry out the referral for them, once the patient had completed the necessary forms. They also said that the service has a special care unit for children with special needs too.*

*In the case of patients who can access the practice, but are unable to climb stairs, the receptionist said they would always arrange the appointments to be in one of the downstairs treatment rooms.*

*When dealing with patients who have a learning disability, the receptionist said that all practice staff understand the need to take extra time with the patient. They ensure that all information given at the treatment visit is recorded; the receptionist was aware of the purple folder and what it is used for.*

**The practice manager said that they have an Equality and Diversity Policy, which is regularly talked about and looked at in meetings. They also said that the practice does its best to support people with learning disabilities in their own decisions.**

*When a patient with a visual impairment arrives at the practice, the receptionist told us that they would help the patient, but did not go into further detail than that.*

**The practice manager said that they would speak clearly when explaining treatment plans, ensure the patient has telephone reminders for appointments, and guide them to the treatment room if necessary.**

## **5.3 Medical Emergencies**

*When the receptionist was asked what the procedure is in a medical emergency, they told us that the first staff member to see it would call for help, then another staff member would dial 999, and the practice's designated first aider comes to help.*

**The practice manager added that afterwards they would make notes on the patient's file and in the accident/incident folder. If necessary they would also**

report to RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

*The practice has its own defibrillator, which is kept with the medical emergency pack full of equipment on the ground floor of the practice in the staff room.*

*The identity of the first aider was clear to the receptionist when we asked. There is only one first aider qualified at the practice.*

### 6. Summary of Findings

*Gatrad & Associates Dental Care has many areas of good practice. We found the following areas to highlight:*

- 1. Transparency around NHS Fees.*
- 2. Approach to patients who cannot speak or understand English.*
- 3. Approach to patients with a learning disability.*
- 4. Clear medical emergency procedure.*

*However, did also find the following areas for improvement:*

- 1. Clarity on patients parking in the car park, and accessible parking.*
- 2. Accessibility to the practice for those with specific requirements.*
- 3. The complaints policy.*
- 4. The practice's NHS Choices page.*

### 7. Recommendations

#### 2.1 Signage

- 1. Improve signage on the outside to the main entrance, located at the side of the building.*

#### 2.2 Car Parking

- 2. Consider creating one or two designated accessible parking spaces in the practice's car park.*
- 3. Ensure that it is clear whether the practice is intended for patients or staff, and react appropriately to what the patient need for parking is in response to that decision.*

#### 2.3 Visible External Information

- 4. Include the NHS logo on signage outside the practice, and ensure that information about 111 is in larger print.*

#### 2.4 First Impressions

5. *Consider installing a wider variety of chairs in the waiting room, including chairs with armrests, to benefit service users less able to rise from a seated position.*
6. *Ensure it is clear to all service users that they can ask for water via a sign in the waiting room.*
7. *Ensure that all notices in the waiting room are in a large typeface to try to make sure it is accessible to all patients.*
8. *Consider creating a board with photos of staff members for the waiting room.*
9. *Aim to ensure that that waiting room is supervised at all times to prevent service users from entering unauthorised areas.*

### 3.1 Facilities

10. *Consider installing a bell outside the practice to ensure service users with access requirements can enter the practice.*
11. *Look into ways of decreasing the size of the step attached to the main entrance to ensure the ease of access for wheelchair users.*
12. *Consider creating a section of the desk that would be wheelchair accessible to improve communication for all.*
13. *Consider widening the corridor that leads to the patient toilet.*
14. *Create a colour contrast between the toilet seat and the toilet, and a contrast between the toilet facilities and the walls and floor to protect the dignity of patients living with dementia.*
15. *Install a red alarm cord in the toilet to ensure the safety of all patients using the practice.*
16. *Consider installing a system by which service users can see the toilet is occupied from the waiting room before they get as far as the toilet.*

### 4.2 Complaints

17. *Update the complaints policy in line with the points raised to be addressed in section 4.2.*
18. *Ensure that the complaints policy is uniform across all platforms.*
19. *Incorporate Pohwer, the independent advocacy organisation for Hertfordshire, into the complaints policy in accordance with the Regulation of Dental Services Programme Board.*

### 4.4 Dental Practice and NHS Choices Website

20. *Update the practice's entry on NHS Choices.*
21. *Include the practice's lunchtime in the opening hours on the website.*

22. *Consider renaming the 'Appointments' section to 'Contact Us' to better encompass what is included on the sub-tabs and ease patients' access to information.*
23. *Consider including all staff members on the 'Meet the Team' page.*

### 5.1 Communication

24. *Ensure that patients' communications needs are checked regularly in order to meet the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard.*
25. *Consider ways of creating a dedicated private space for patients who would like a confidential conversation, or need to recover after treatment.*
26. *Consider ways they can ease access for the visually impaired by installing braille signs in places such as the toilet, and whether it is always realistic for the receptionist to leave their desk to help a service user in this way.*

### 5.3 Medical Emergencies

27. *Consider creating a designated first aid area in the staff room.*
28. *Consider whether it is realistic for the one designated first aider to always be in the practice.*

### Practice response:

1-16, 25 & 26. We are planning major building works in the next 6 months-year and will then address the following points.

17-19. We will improve our complaints policy as you recommend very soon.

20-23. These recommendations will also be implemented shortly.

24. We do verbally ensure that our patients' communication needs are being met at each visit, but we will now change our Medical History Form to include this question.

27. There is a designated first aid area in the staff room.

28. We do have two first aiders: Mr Anis Gatrad and Mr Fez Gatrad. Mr Fez Gatrad works more hours and that is why he was named as main first aider at the meeting.