

Dentistry data for local Healthwatch in the South West

The local Healthwatch included in this report:

- Healthwatch Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.
- Healthwatch Somerset.
- Healthwatch Bristol
- Healthwatch North Somerset
- Healthwatch South Gloucestershire
- Healthwatch Gloucestershire.
- Healthwatch Dorset.

Healthwatch Devon, Plymouth and Torbay:

Over the past few months Healthwatch Devon, Healthwatch Plymouth and Healthwatch Torbay have seen fewer enquires regarding dentistry.

The most prominent theme has been 'Access to Services', where 97% of the enquiries had either a negative (unhappy) sentiment (63%) or neutral (usually initial requests for help) sentiment (34%).

Over half of the enquiries received are from the Devon area, which excludes the Plymouth and Torbay areas.



Healthwatch Somerset

Time period of data collected: 1st October to 15th December.

Number of responses: 25.

Sentiment: All 25 were negative.

Themes: 7 of these were purely enquiring how to find an NHS dentist, the remaining 18 were a combination of not being able to find a dentist and complaining about experiences.

Standout feedback:

- **The enquirer and her husband moved to a new area in June 2021:** “None of the dentists they have contacted have waiting lists, they simply ask that they try again in a few months, but every time they ring back, they are told the same thing but usually with an even longer timescale. Her husband suffers from visual vertigo and so travelling back to their old dentist has not been an option and they are no longer on their list after this long. Everyone is entitled to access to NHS dental care”
- **The enquirer’s pre-booked check-up appointment was cancelled with a weeks’ notice due to her dentist no longer doing NHS work.** The receptionist told her all she can do is write to her MP.
- **The enquirer lost part of a tooth many months ago but as it wasn't causing him an issue and he didn't have an NHS dentist, he decided not to do anything until he managed to find a dentist.** Yesterday, part of another tooth broke off. Whilst it isn't causing any pain, he doesn't want to eat on it for fear of making it worse. He spent time this morning phoning round dentists but was unable to find one. One did offer to add him to their NHS waiting list! When asked roughly how long that was, he was informed "about 3 years"!
- The enquirer wanted to know who is taking on new NHS patients in Wellington and he is prepared to travel as he has had enough of taking his own teeth out.

Healthwatch Bristol

Time period of data collected: Q2 (July- September)

Number of responses: 52

Sentiment: all negative.

Themes: largely concerning access issues, poor communication, and costs.

Standout quote:

- This caller has tried to get a dentist appointment for a year and a half, crying down the phone in pain due to a broken tooth. Nothing has happened since.
- The caller says that she is desperate to find a dentist accepting NHS patients in Bristol. She has tried everywhere and nowhere will accept NHS patients and want to charge more than £75 just to be seen. She has called triage 38 times and cannot get through.
- Caller requires root treatment for his teeth and cannot find an NHS dentist, he has been quoted £1275 for this - he cannot afford it and is in pain.

Healthwatch North Somerset

Time period of data collected: Q2 (July- September)

Number of responses: 3

Sentiment: two neutral, one mixed.

Themes: access issues and lack of information.

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire

Time period of data collected: Q2 (July- September).

Number of responses: 6.

Sentiment: 3 negative, 3 neutral.

Themes: access to services (5) and information providing (1).

Healthwatch Gloucestershire

Time period of data collected: Q3 (October - December).

Number of responses: 105

Sentiment: largely negative.

Themes: access issues and poor information.

Standout quote:

“I am currently trying without success to find a local NHS dentist around Gloucester. I am entitled to free NHS treatment as I am a carer on benefits and only receive carers allowance and UC.

I have telephoned a few without success and really could use a checkup as I have many cavities and broken teeth.

I haven't visited a dentist apart from emergency visits for 10 years and more and really need to get my dental health in order”.

Healthwatch Dorset

Time period of data collected: Q3 (October – December).

Number of responses: 22 (22 about dentistry out of a total of 48).

Sentiment: all but one were negative. That one was an enquiry from a local dentist who was asking about community transport options for a patient who needed hospital treatment.

Themes: largely concerning access.

Recent research on access: our volunteers have recently called all the Dorset dentists listed on NHS Choices website to find out more about local access. Of the 75 dental practices (out of 95) who responded to our questions, none are currently taking on NHS patients who are over 18, 12 are taking on NHS patients who are children and 17 dentists have gone private in the last year.

Standout quotes:

- “We moved back to Dorset in June 2020. We have been unable to find an NHS dentist at all, let alone one that is local to us. My daughter was under an orthodontist but was discharged when we moved as we were out of area. Now she's 18 and her wisdom teeth are growing causing discomfort and she is worried that all the work from having to wear retainers from age 8 till 11 will be pointless. But still can't find a dentist. We cannot afford to see

a private dentist especially now with the cost of living spiralling. We need a dentist locally due to work for all of us and my daughter does not drive. What are we supposed to do?"

- **Quote from a worker with the Dorset Assertive Homeless Outreach Team:**
"I have a client who is in need of a set of bottom teeth dentures, as she currently only has her top set and is having trouble chewing. Would you be able to give me some advice of where I could refer her for these? She would be unable to pay for them."