

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)
ar [Deintyddiaeth](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care](#)
[Committee](#) consultation on [Dentistry](#)

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Ymateb gan: | Response from: CIC De Morgannwg | South Glamorgan CHC





CYNGOR IECHYD CYMUNED
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

DE MORGANNWG | SOUTH GLAMORGAN

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16 September 2022

Health and Social Care Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN
Email: SeneddHealth@senedd.wales

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Dentistry in Wales

The South Glamorgan Community Health Council wish to formally respond to your consultation, Inquiry into Dentistry in Wales.

As the NHS Patient Watchdog, the CHC has received a lot of feedback from patients and public in relation to Dental Services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and welcome the opportunity to feed this into your consultation.

Initially during the pandemic we heard from members of the public that accessing NHS dental services was difficult. Whilst acknowledging the constraints put on Dentists in regard to aerosol generating procedures due to the risk of cross infection. It became clear that although the NHS part of dentistry had effectively closed down, patients could be seen privately for these treatments. Therefore we undertook a secret shopper exercise to test this view.

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CHC members and staff were allocated three dentists to contact, we ensured that they did not contact their own dentist if they had one. Each had a script to follow and an opt out comment to end the conversation before any appointment was booked.

The first exercise was held in October 2020

What we heard:

Being able to contact the dental practice:

- Our exercise indicated that in 57 cases (81%) our
- members were able to speak to a member of practice staff in order to pose the required questions.
- In 13 cases (19%) our members were unable to speak directly to a member of staff to ascertain the required information. This was due to a number of different factors which are broken down in more detail below.
- In 3 of these 13 cases, our members were met with a recorded message requesting they leave an answerphone message so practices could return their call. CHC members did not leave a message.
- In 7 of the 13 cases, the line was either continuously engaged, rang out unanswered, or terminated the call with a recorded message asking the caller to try back later.
- In 1 of the 13 cases, a recorded message informed patients that routine appointments were not available and provided an alternative telephone number for patients to call in an emergency.
- In 2 of the 13 cases, the contact number provided on the Cardiff & Vale UHB website was not current and would not connect.

Accepting NHS Patients:

- Of the 57 practices that the CHC were able to contact directly, 2 of these dealt only with braces and Orthodontic patients specifically, and offered no NHS Patient registration or services, and none of the other 55 practices contacted were accepting new adult NHS patients.

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- 1 of the 55 practices stated that they were accepting children only for new NHS patient registration. In the scenario the CHC were using for this exercise, the patient requiring dental services was an adult so we were unable to ascertain the length of time a new child NHS patient would have to wait for an appointment.
- Only 2 of 55 the practices contacted signposted our members to the Health Board Dental Helpline for further information and assistance

Private Treatment Availability

We should note that 3 of the 55 practices did not offer any private services only NHS.

Out of the 52 practices that were not accepting new NHS patients but also offered private services from the same practice location, 20 (38%) of these were also unable to offer any availability for treatment privately.

The required waiting times for these appointments ranged from a matter of hours to six weeks, with 7 of these practices offering same day or next day private appointments. 5 of the practices who were offering private appointments were unable to provide specific information on waiting times for a private appointment, as the wait time would be dependent on the exact nature of the issue, or they would be required to speak to another member of staff to obtain this information.

2 of the 52 practices were unsure as to the availability of private appointments and would need to obtain the information from elsewhere before telephoning our volunteer member back. It was not appropriate in this instance to request staff take the additional time to carry out this task so the offer to

Patient Experience

Alongside the 'Secret Shopper' the CHC also received feedback from registered NHS Patients of their recent experience in accessing NHS Dental services through an online survey. Some of the examples we had been told included:

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- *Emails to the practice not responded to*
- *I am registered with an dentist and I did receive treatment "I rang the Cardiff Dental Hospital to complain of severe tooth pain in a tooth that they had previously worked on, as this is what they told me to do after my last visit. They told me they couldn't book me an appointment directly and I would have to go through my normal dentist to get booked in. I managed to get an appointment at my NHS dentist for a week's time to have the tooth pulled out. The day before my appointment the pain was so unbearable I rang my dentist to see if they could get me in any earlier, they could only move my appointment forward by a few hours on the same day so told me to ring the Out Of Hours Service after 6:30pm to see if they could get me an evening appointment at the dental hospital. When I rang Out Of Hours they told me that there was no emergency dental treatment available anywhere in Cardiff after 5pm and all they could do was call me back to give me pain management advice."*
- *Phone is not answered when I am able to ring*
- *We were told no appointments for anyone unless they are in pain. If severe to call the dental hospital*
- *Can't get hold of my dentist*
- *"My daughter was identified as needing a small filling before the start of the pandemic and paid in advance her contribution of £40. She rang today (promoted by your survey) to enquire what the situation was in getting her treatment and the rest of the family routine check-ups. Routine check-up earliest appointment February next year. Her filling can only be done if the Dentist deems it urgent and only he can authorise an appointment, the receptionist would email him for a decision."*
- *"I lost a filling during last lockdown and I have an appointment on Thursday and a choice of days. Don't know what will happen but asked for check-up and filling."*

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- *"They have been really good for me but I had 3 courses of antibiotics and needed to wait 4 months for physical treatment"*

The full report of the findings can be found here

<https://southglamorganchc.nhs.wales/files/reports/reports-2020-21/dental-secret-shopper-exercise-report-english-pdf/>

South Glamorgan CHC Revisit to Dental Services October 2021

Members and staff of South Glamorgan CHC revisited the dental mystery shopper again in October 2021 a year after the first exercise.

Following the conclusion of our initial exercise, a number of changes occurred to the landscape of Dental services in Wales in an attempt to improve access to NHS Dental services.

Contractual changes were introduced which require Dental Practices to provide a certain number of emergency appointments to 'unseen patients' requiring emergency treatment, who seek treatment via Cardiff & Vale UHB, in order to receive their full contract value payment.

In addition, in December 2020 Welsh Government instructed all Dental Practices in Wales to start accepting new 'unseen patients' at a rate of 2 patients per week per £165,000 contract value held. Patients would not only be seen for an initial consultation, but then would be able to access their allocated NHS Dental Practice on a regular basis for care and treatment.

Alongside this, in May 2021 Cardiff & Vale UHB launched a centralised waiting list for patients who were attempting to access NHS Dentistry services but were unable to do so, in order to measure and manage the level of need for NHS Dentistry services across Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan. Dental Practices would then be able to take new 'unseen patients' from this list when their capacity allowed.

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Following these changes, the CHC recognised the importance of gaining patient feedback and experiences alongside our own investigations into availability, and so a Dental Survey was devised and published online for members of the public to complete.

The purpose of this report is to communicate the findings of the South Glamorgan CHC's 'secret shopper' exercise, along with the views of the public we have heard from. The CHC would like to take this opportunity to thank the NHS and its staff for their hard work and dedication over the last 18 months, to continuing to support and care for patients and the public in our local area.

Members of the CHC used the same questions as previously, and also run an online feedback survey which was widely distributed.

Can you contact the dentist?

During the course of the exercise, our members spoke to 53 Dental Practices listed on the UHB's website. There were 10 practices that were contacted, where our members were unable to speak directly to a member of staff for a number of reasons detailed below:

- In the case of 6 of these Practices, our calls were transferred directly to an answerphone to leave a message.
 - In the case of 2 of the Practices contacted, our calls were met with an engaged tone with one call to one Practice finally ringing through but was not answered.
 - In the case of 1 Practice, our call was repeatedly directed to an automated message suggesting we call back later.
 - In the case of 1 Practice, our call was directed to an automated message which gave details of the UHB's Centralised Waiting List.
- From our survey 57% of respondents were registered with an NHS dentist whereas 43% were not registered prior to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Accepting New NHS Patients

- Of the 53 Practices we spoke to, only one Practice confirmed that they were actively seeing new NHS patients. Practice staff informed

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us that the Practice accepts two new NHS patients per week for an appointment on Monday morning. Patients must call at 9am in order to 'register'.

- Another Practice confirmed that they would be seeing new NHS patients in the New Year and offered to take a contact telephone number in order that they could get back in touch, to let us know when they began seeing new patients. As this would not have been appropriate in this case, the offer was politely declined.

Accepting New Private Patients

- Of the 53 Practices contacted, two Practices do not provide treatment on a privately funded basis. 34 Practices confirmed that they were accepting new patients on a 'Private' basis. The length of wait for a 'Private' appointment varied from 'next day' through to February 2022.
- One other Practice confirmed that they may be taking on new 'Private' patients and to check back in December 2021.
- One Practice confirmed that they would be taking on new 'Private' patients in the New Year, and offered to take a contact telephone number in order that they could get back in touch, to let us know when they began seeing new patients. As this would not have been appropriate in this case, the offer was politely declined.

Centralised Waiting List

- With regards to the new UHB centralised waiting list for patients seeking an NHS Dentist, only 11 Practices of the 53 that were spoken to provided our members with any information on this, although it appears that not all Practices are choosing to make use of this list.

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- In addition to these 11 Practices, one Practice we were unable to speak to directly, provided information on the centralised waiting list via its' recorded telephone message
- One Practice invited us to join a waiting list that the Practice itself held for patients wishing to be seen and treated under the NHS, again, this would not have been appropriate under the circumstances and so the offer was politely declined.

For those 57 patients who were not 'registered' with an NHS Dentist prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, we enquired if they had used alternative Dental care services as a result of there being no NHS Dental Practice available to 'register' with in their local community.

7 (19%) of respondents sought treatment from an 'Emergency Dentist' or the University Dental Hospital in Cardiff.

28 (76%) of respondents sought privately funded treatment.

2 (5%) of respondents saw an NHS Dentist who was not located in their local area.

Patient Experience

- *March 2020 was due route canal treatment appointment was cancelled and then never heard from the dentist again.*
- *I need front teeth repairing post accident (booked in beginning of 1st lockdown) they won't as not painful. Then dentist wrote to say she's only seeing private patients so to remain NHS have to swap. New dentist (same practice) won't book repair until I've had standard appointment to see the issue.*
- *Dentist unable to offer appointment of any kind*
- *Dentist unable or unwilling to see me before November. I ended up paying for private care*
- *waiting for my situation to become bad enough to merit an emergency appointment*

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- *Crown and bridge came out. Dentist unable to treat*
- *I am bariatric patient, nowhere offers that service apart from the dental hospital or so I've been told anyway - so I'm on a waiting list to have several fillings and a wisdom tooth removal.*

What needs to be improved

- Provide more NHS Dental Practices.
- Provide services for Bariatric Patients in the community.
- Open up routine appointments for check up's.
- Provide better information and signposting as to how to receive NHS treatment and where to find an NHS Dentist accepting new patients.
- Dental Practices to answer phone calls

Other comments received:

- *More availability of NHS dentists and more access to where and how to find a dentist with spaces.*
- *Unfortunately my dentist has been too busy for non emergency appointments*
- *By taking on extra patients when in need and maybe building more nhs practices in our area to cover the community.*
- *better signposting as to how to receive treatment*
- *More NHS dentists available. I have lived in Cardiff for 10 years and still haven't managed to sign up to an NHS dentist.*
- *If I had been able to visit a dentist regularly, I would not have lost 3 teeth, and now my mouth is changing shape causing further problems*

What has the health board done in relation to Dental Services

- The Health Board established a centralised waiting list for patients needing to see an NHS Dentist this list has gradually increased to over 14K people waiting for allocation to a dentist. We understand

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that dental practices have their own waiting lists also therefore we believe this number to be even higher.

The full report can be found here

<https://southglamorganchc.nhs.wales/files/reports/reports-2021-22/final-nhs-dental-service-availability-reportpdf/>

Experiences of accessing NHS Services as a Veteran and Service Leaver of the Armed Forces.

During a recent survey undertaken looking at healthcare access for Veterans & Service Leavers, of particular interest was that a lot of respondents said they had more difficulty trying to get an NHS Dentist compared to a GP. Whilst the CHC are already aware of the struggles to get a NHS Dentist, it is useful to know how it has affected certain groups in the community.

"Dentist was difficult; had to go private. Doctors straight forward."

"Yes unable to register for NHS dental services"

"Yes- there are too few NHS dentist and following leaving the service having had a dental check with no issues, I was immediately informed by my new NHS dentist that I required some work. This was merely months later."

Comments from CHC Membership:

In order to gain further feedback for the consultation, the CHC asked the CHC Volunteer Membership to provide feedback, which has been included below;

Vast gap widening between Private and NHS funded, serious lack of appointments.

Patients reporting for emergency appointments are just patched up, the problem not resolved, just temporary appointment for example meaning problem not solved and frequent (5) visits made and still ongoing. Is this cost effective, put in proper filling and only 1 visit needed, not 5. I have

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heard several stories like this plus people trying to fix themselves leading to infection and hospital visits.


People are not having check-ups or hygiene treatment. Firefighting not prevention only.

We need (NHS could build conditions into the dentist contracts)-

- Walk in emergency hubs, a physical place to go not online, to many people excluded.
- A fee structure applicable to all dentists
- All dentists should set aside appointments for those on low incomes
- Take a turn/rota for emergency hubs
- Recruit trainees and dentists from abroad with good relocation package and training/CPD
- If parents are not able to lead by example and visit/receive treatment, children will suffer/not feel confident or see dental care as normal/important. They will be less likely to access services.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours Sincerely



Stephen Allen
Chief Officer

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