



**Report:**  
**Healthwatch Sandwell -**  
**Access to Dentistry in Sandwell**

**March 2022**

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## Introduction

Healthwatch Sandwell are the independent voice of the public in health and social care services in Sandwell. They carry out projects each year that are based on issues raised by the public, service providers and service commissioners. The purpose of the projects is to gather information to help inform and influence change in health and social care delivery in Sandwell.

## Background

A number of patients had contacted Healthwatch Sandwell during the COVID-19 pandemic as they have been unable to register with a National Health dentist. Dentists were not taking on new patients and were not offering routine checks (due to COVID-19 restrictions). However, some patients were able to access a dentist for emergency treatment.

These issues are a national problem too and have been identified by Healthwatch England (HWE)<sup>1</sup>, resulting in Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of HWE, and British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch co-signing an open letter addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak) calling for a recovery plan for NHS dentistry<sup>2</sup> and to request that the Spending Review provides vital investment in NHS dentistry.

Over the course of the pandemic, patients up and down the country have been unable to find care for themselves and their children, leaving them in pain and taking matters into their own hands. From April to June 2021, public feedback to HWE was up **55%** on the previous three months. This feedback identified that nearly four in five people (**79%**) said they had found it difficult to access timely care.

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***Sir Robert Francis QC said:***

***'We are very worried that NHS dental care risks 'Vanishing into the void' as limited funds mean that dentists are struggling to offer services to all that need them, hitting people on low incomes hardest'.***

**He also added:**

***'We've also heard from parents unable to register their children with an NHS dentist, as local dental practices***

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/reports-library/20211014\\_HWE%20Dentistry%20Update%20Dec%202021.pdf](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/reports-library/20211014_HWE%20Dentistry%20Update%20Dec%202021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-10-21/nhs-dentistry-we-have-co-signed-open-letter-chancellor-exchequer>

*weren't taking on new patients, had gone private or had closed down'*

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### Objectives

This project aimed to find out if people can access a National Health Service dentist in Sandwell. This included registering, access to face-to-face routine and emergency visits.

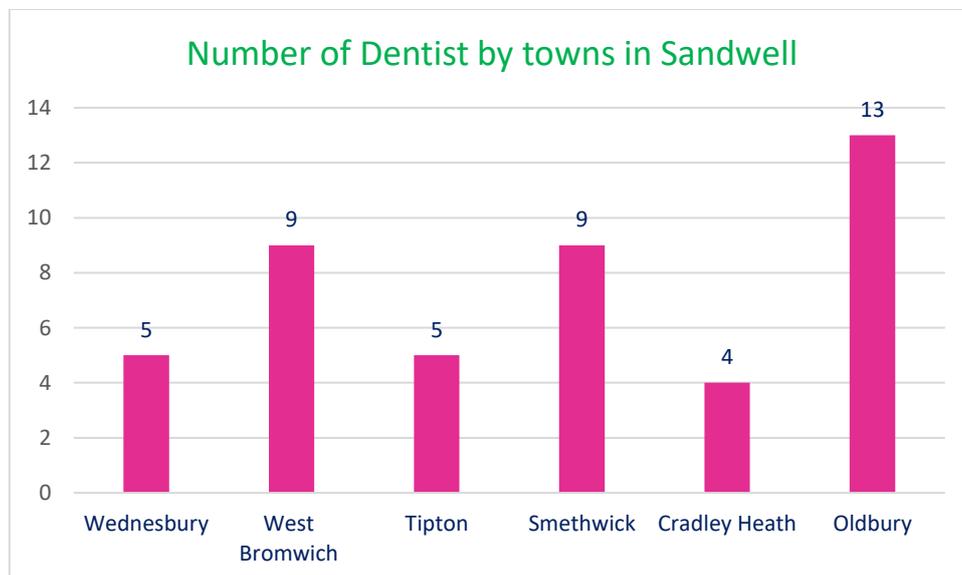
### Methodology

HWS' team of volunteers and staff telephoned all **45** Sandwell dentists and asked **3** pre-set questions relating to the objectives. These questions form the basis of the findings. The findings were analysed to provide a snap shot of provision across Sandwell.

The calls were made anonymously (mystery shopper style) and were made between 2<sup>nd</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

### Findings

In Sandwell there are 45 dentists that are dispersed across the Borough:



NHS dental services are provided in primary care and community settings, and in hospitals for more specialised care. NHS England directly commissions all dental services for the NHS.

Dentists working in general dental practices are not NHS employees. They are independent providers from whom the NHS commissions services. They are responsible for whom they employ within their own dental teams and for the

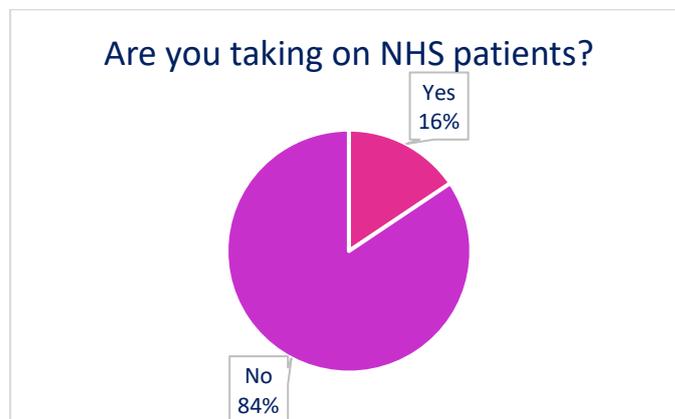
management of their practices. It is common for dental practices to offer both NHS-funded and private services.

In Sandwell there are 2 Special Care Dentistry clinics (Glebefields Health Centre, Tipton and The Lyng Health Centre, West Bromwich). They are provided by Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

These were **not** included in this project and neither were hospital settings for dental care.

The following section headings utilises the questions asked during the project.

Q1. Are you taking on NHS patients?



38 practices were **not** taking on NHS patients, many of the practices were only offering a service to private patients (a person who gets and pays for medical treatment outside of the National Health Service) and there were some practices who had no capacity to take on any new patients.

Examples were given of practices operating a waiting list where they take details and get round to patients to register as soon as possible, timescales varied from 2 – 3 weeks or 6 months.

Some practices discussed Dental Plans to assist with payments so that people could use a private dentist.

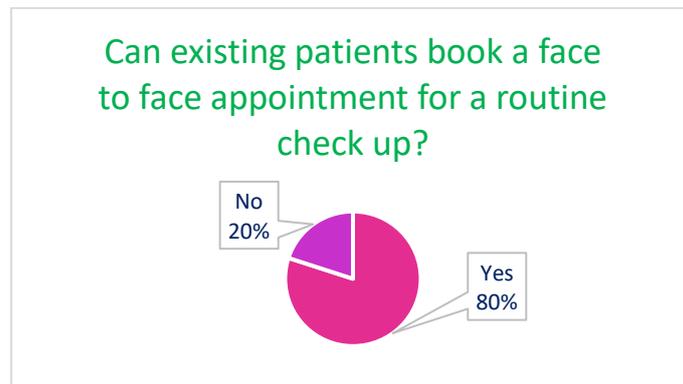
In the case of emergencies a practice gave advise to contact 111 to find a dentist urgently.

There was uncertainty at 2 practices about the future of their NHS contract so was not taking on new patients until that was resolved, possibly after April 2022.

For breakdown of practices by town and overview of answers see appendix 1.

For break down by practice by questions see appendix 2.

Q2. Can existing patients book a face to face appointment for a routine check-up?



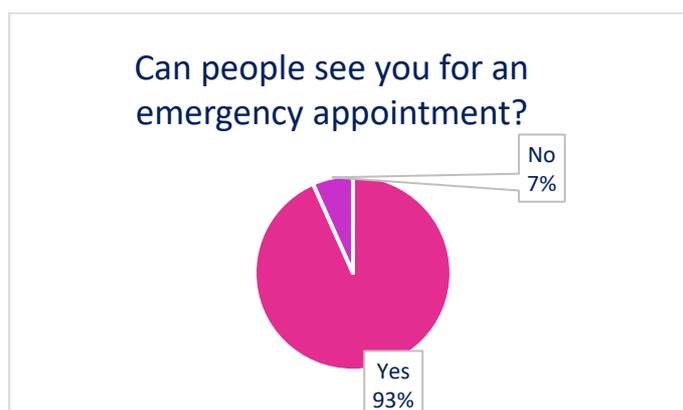
36 practices responded positively, although some were prioritising patients according to need e.g. emergency appointments. One practice had prioritised emergency appointments but had now started to accept routine appointments for existing patients. Some practices said yes but not until after April 2022.

One practice was offering telephone consultations, although there was no clarification given about what would happen if there was a need for treatment.

Some practices would see patients but only if they had attended the practice in the past 2 years, and 3 years at a different practice.

Some practices described operating waiting lists for routine appointments and was working through a back log and some stated that there was a 2-3 week wait.

Q3. Can people see you for an emergency appointment?



42 responded positively, however, there was evidence of prioritising patients depending on need plus they had to be an existing patient.

## Conclusion

7 dentists were taking on NHS patients at the time of this project. They are located as follows: Smethwick (3), Oldbury (1), Cradley Heath (1), Wednesbury (1) and Tipton (1).

This project found that approximately 14 dentists only offered a service to private patients.

Some practices were operating a waiting list with varied timescales for emergency and routine appointments 2 weeks to 6 months.

36 practices were offering face to face appointment for a routine check-up, although some were prioritising patients according to need e.g. emergency appointments.

42 responded positively to offering emergency appointments, however there was evidence of prioritising patients depending on need plus they had to be an existing patient.

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Sandwell would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave Bradshaw (Healthwatch Advisory Board Member) and Jessica Richards (Keele University student on placement with Engaging Communities Solutions) for their involvement in this project.

## Disclaimer

All data provided in this report was accurate at the time of the project, however Healthwatch Sandwell acknowledges that the information may have changed due to Covid 19 restrictions being amended.

(24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Overview by Town

OVERVIEW BY TOWN (February 2022)											
West Bromwich (9)		Smethwick (9)		Oldbury (13)		Cradley Heath (4)		Wednesbury (5)		Tipton (5)	
<b>Question 1</b>											
<b>Are you taking on NHS patients?</b>											
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
0	9	3	6	1	12	1	3	1	4	1	4
<b>Question 2</b>											
<b>Can existing patients book a face to face appointment for a routine check-up?</b>											
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
9	0	9	0	9	4	4	0	3	2	2	3
<b>Question 3</b>											
<b>Can people see you for an emergency appointment?</b>											
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
9	0	9	0	11	2	4	0	4	1	5	0

### Appendix 2 - Breakdown by Dentist

Breakdown by Dentist February 2022								
	Provider Name	Address	Q1 Are you taking on NHS patients?		Q2 Can existing patients book a face to face appointment for a routine check-up?		Q3 Can people see you for an emergency appointment?	
			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	88 High Street Dental Practice	88 High Street Smethwick B66 1AQ		x	x		x	
2.	Bearwood Dental Care	4 St Marys Road Smethwick B67 5DG		x	x		x	
3.	Central Ortho Bearwood	341 Bearwood Road Bearwood Smethwick B66 4DB		x	x		x	
4.	Complete Dental Bearwood	623 Bearwood Road Smethwick B66 4BL	x		x		x	
5.	Dental Practice	13 Waterloo Road Smethwick		x	x		x	

**Breakdown by Dentist  
February 2022**

Breakdown by Dentist February 2022								
		B66 4JX						
6.	Mr Rajinder Kumar - West Park Road	59 West Park Road Smethwick B67 7JH		x	x		X	
7.	Sandon Dental Practice	80 Sandon Road Smethwick B66 4AG	x		x		x	
8.	Shires Dental Practice	45 Three Shires Oak Road Bearwood Smethwick B67 5BS	x		x		x	
9.	Waterloo Dental Surgery	35/37 Waterloo Road Smethwick B66 4JU		x	x		x	
10.	Brandhall Dental Care	4 Brandhall Road Oldbury B68 8DP		x	x		x	
11.	Centre For Dentistry - Oldbury	J. Sainsbury, Oldbury Freeth Street Oldbury B69 3DB		x	x		x	
12.	Cosmo-Dent Dental Practice	2a Halesowen Street Oldbury B69 2AJ		x	x		x	
13.	Dr Browns Dental Surgery	3 Dog Kennel Lane Oldbury B68 9LU		x	x		x	
14.	OHC Dental Practice	10A Church Square Oldbury B69 4DX		x	x		x	
15.	Oldbury Dental Centre	Oldbury Health Centre Dental Department Albert Street Oldbury B69 4DE		x	x		x	
16.	Queens Head Dental Surgery	340 Londonderry Road Oldbury B68 9NB		x	x		x	
17.	Walford Street Surgery	19 Walford Street Tividale Oldbury B69 2LD		x	x			x
18.	Bhandal Dental Practice - 231 Throne Road	231 Throne Road Oldbury B69 2LD	x		x		x	
19.	Bhandal Dental Practice	32 John Street Rowley Regis B65 0EP		x		x	x	



Breakdown by Dentist February 2022								
35.	Princes End Dental Practice	Glebefields Health Centre St Marks Road Tipton DY4 0SN		x	x		x	
36.	Tipton Dental Practice	2 Unity Walk Tipton DY4 8QL		x		x	x	
37.	Asden House Dental Clinic	1-5 Victoria Street West Bromwich B70 8ET		x	x		x	
38.	Medical-Dent	353 High Street West Bromwich B70 9QG		x	x		x	
39.	Pentwyn Dental Surgery	91 Hill Top West Bromwich B70 0PX		x	x		x	
40.	Stella Maris Practice Limited	84 Walsall Road Stone Cross West Bromwich B71 3HN		x	x		x	
41.	The D:NTAL Clinic	25 High Street West Bromwich B70 6PJ		x	x		x	
42.	The Dental Practice	394 High Street West Bromwich B70 9LB		x	x		x	
43.	Yew Tree Dental Practice	24 Maple Drive Yew Tree Estate Walsall WS5 4JJ		x	x		x	
44.	S M Bentley Dental Practice	145a Hamstead Road Great Barr Birmingham B43 5BB		x	x		x	
45.	Scott Arms Dental Practice	912-916 Walsall Road Great Barr Birmingham B42 1TG		x	x		x	
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3</b>