

Written Parliamentary questions on dentistry

The questions contained in this document have been asked in Parliament by Caroline Lucas MP. Healthwatch worked closely with Caroline's team in Brighton over the past 4 years as she had a strong interest what is happening to NHS dentistry.

These questions are based on your experiences which you have shared with us, and information we have gathered from other sources such as the South East Local Dental Committee, a group who represents dental practices in the area. Some of our questions seek further information on Government announcements.

All of the questions are publicly available on the [UK Parliament website](#). We will continue to raise questions on your behalf and push for reform and better availability of NHS services.

9.5.24

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will hold discussions with (a) Healthwatch England and (b) other relevant stakeholders on the potential impact of the change to the requirement for practices to update the NHS website on whether they are accepting NHS patients to include the phrase when availability allows on the accuracy of reporting of NHS dental access; and what proportion of dental practices are updating their websites in line with that requirement. (24219)

Tabled on: 30 April 2024

Andrea Leadsom:

National Health Service dentists are required to update their NHS website profiles at least every 90 days, to ensure patients have access to up-to-date information on where they can access care. Integrated care boards (ICBs) can review which practices in their areas have not updated their profiles in a 90-day period, and work with practices to ensure they comply.

Appointment availability can fluctuate daily, for example with patients cancelling and rescheduling appointments. We have updated the wording on the NHS website profiles to when availability allows, to portray a status which is

more reflective of the way that most contractors are already working. This wording was added to the NHS.UK website on 2 April 2024.

Since March 2024 the number of practices reporting that they are taking on new patients via their NHS website profile has increased. Nearly 500 more dental practices on the NHS Find a Dentist website were showing themselves as open to new adult patients as of 8 April 2024, compared to the end of January 2024.

The answer was submitted on 09 May 2024 at 14:35.

9.5.24

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the number of children unable to access NHS dentistry in England; and whether she has set a target date by which all children in England will be able to access an NHS dentist. (24218)

Tabled on: 30 April 2024

Andrea Leadsom:

The Dentistry Recovery Plan will make dental services faster, simpler, and fairer for patients, and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment. The Dentistry Recovery plan also sets out a new emphasis on prevention and good oral health in children. As part of this plan, our 'Smile for Life' initiative includes supporting nurseries and early years settings to incorporate good oral hygiene into daily routines, and providing advice to expectant parents on how to protect their baby's teeth. The plan will deploy mobile dental teams into schools to provide advice and deliver preventative treatments to more than 165,000 children. Data on the number of children who have been seen by a National Health Service dentist in the last 12 months is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics/2022-23-annual-report>

Data is also available on the number of adults who have tried to get an NHS dentist appointment in the last 24 months, and whether they were or were not successful. This data is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/2023/07/13/gp-patient-survey-dental-statistics-january-to-march-2023-england/>

9.5.24

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of trends in levels of morale in the dental profession; and what steps her Department is taking to retain dentists. (24217)

Tabled on: 30 April 2024

Andrea Leadsom:

NHS England publishes data on dentists' working patterns, motivation, and morale, most recently on 25 April 2024, which is available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/dental-working-hours/2022-23-working-patterns-motivation-and-morale?key=FMh9QF47eDnxL0TEhtBkBsPgH7eWhfSjQURn3f6kRNOTbaKuOUhLI9vpEKJPdd5>

The Dentistry Recovery Plan will make dental services faster, simpler, and fairer for patients, and will fund approximately 2.5 million additional appointments, or more than 1.5 million additional courses of dental treatment.

We want to encourage all professionals to commit more of their time to National Health Service work, and to work in areas of the country with low provision of NHS dental care. That is why we are introducing Golden Hellos, as set out in our plan to reform and recover NHS dentistry. A Golden Hello of £20,000 will be offered per dentist, for a total of up to 240 dentists. The Golden Hellos will support practices in areas where recruitment is particularly challenging, and make a real difference to those patients needing dental care.

Furthermore, our New Patient Premium will offer dental practices cash incentives for taking on new patients, giving better access to anyone who has not received NHS dental care in the past two years. Dentists will receive an extra £15 or £50 per treatment, depending on the work required, which is on top of the funding they would already receive for this care.

9.5.24

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to her policy paper entitled *Faster, simpler and fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry*, published on 7 February 2024, when she plans to open her planned consultation with the dental profession on reforming the contract to make NHS work more attractive. (24216)

Tabled on: 30 April 2024

Andrea Leadsom:

As set out in *Faster, simpler, fairer: our plan to recover and reform NHS dentistry*, we are working on further reforms to the 2006 contract, in discussion with the dental profession, to properly reflect the care needed by different patients, and more fairly remunerate practices. We are developing options through consultation with the dental profession, in advance of a further announcement later this year. Any changes would be phased in from 2025 onwards.

24.9.22

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2022 to Question 41978 on Dental Services: South East, how much of the funding available for the South East was spent by (a) Brighton and Hove City Council, (b) East Sussex County Council and (c) West Sussex County Council; and how many and what proportion of (i) practices applied for this funding and (ii) unique patients were children in each of these local authorities. (62770)

Tabled on: 13 October 2022

Answer:

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. However, total expenditure was £14,172,074, of which £1,044,439 was spent in the South East region.

The answer was submitted on 24 Oct 2022 at 14:59.

7.9.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (41978):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answers of 25 April 2022 to Question 146593 and 28 March 2022 to Question 116906 on Dental Services: South East, how much of the (a) £50 million and (b) £6.9 million that was allocated to the South East was spent; and how many appointments that (i) £50 million and (ii) £6.9 million spending delivered (A) in total and (B) for children. (41978)

Tabled on: 21 July 2022

Answer:

James Morris:

Of the £50 million fund, £14,172,074 was spent in England and £1,044,39 in the South East region.

Data on appointments for National Health Service dental appointments is not collected centrally as appointments are managed directly by dental practices. The additional funding utilised between 14 February and 31 March 2022 generated 62,662 courses of treatment (COT) delivered to 60,318 unique patients. This excludes 7,172 COTs equating to 7,138 unique patients which may have been recorded by error or under local schemes. Of this, 20% of all unique patients were children, 31% were exempt from charges and 49% were fee-paying adults.

The answer was submitted on 07 Sep 2022 at 10:30.

5.9.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (41979):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Pursuant to PQ 174, answered on 24 May 2022 what progress has been made on the percentage of dentists updating the information on the NHS website; what mechanisms he will use to monitor compliance with the proposed requirement set out in the letter from NHSE dated 19 July 2022 to all dental practices in England on the outcome of 2022/23 Dental Contract Negotiations for practices to update their details on a quarterly basis as a matter of routine; by what date this requirement will be in place; and if he will make a statement.

Tabled on: 21 July 2022

Answer:

James Morris:

We anticipate that these measures will be in place by the end of 2022, subject to Parliamentary approval. NHS England is planning further discussions with the British Dental Association on the scope for further reforms of the NHS dental system, which will commence shortly.

The answer was submitted on 05 Sep 2022 at 13:05.

5.9.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (**41980**):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care with reference with reference to PQ 146595 on contractual reform and the announcement on 19 July 2022, on better access to NHS dental services under new reforms, what the timetable is for a) the current b) the next phase of engagement to introduce wider reforms that benefit patients and staff; and if he will make a statement.

Tabled on: 21 July 2022

Answer:

James Morris:

NHS Digital has launched email campaigns to encourage dental practices to update NHS.UK profiles and is improving the process for practices to provide this information online. Compliance will be monitored quarterly through National Health Service dental contracts and we aim for this to be implemented by the end of 2022.

The answer was submitted on 05 Sep 2022 at 12:09.

5.9.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (41981):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) increase and (b) expedite the recruitment of dentists from overseas for NHS work; if he will take steps to (i) enable increased recognition of NHS equivalent overseas dental qualifications and (ii) retain the number of dentists currently undertaking NHS work; and if he will make a statement. (41981)

Tabled on: 21 July 2022

Answer:

James Morris:

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator for dentists and dental care professionals in the United Kingdom. All dentists and dental care

professionals are required to register with the GDC in order to practice in the UK. The GDC assesses the skills, knowledge and experience of healthcare professionals who have qualified outside of the UK to ensure standards of practice are met. As an independent body, the GDC is responsible for these arrangements.

The Department recently consulted on legislative changes to provide the GDC with greater flexibility to establish alternative routes to registration for international applicants. Officials are analysing the responses received and the Government's response will be published later this year. Subject to the outcome of the consultation and the Parliamentary approval, we aim to introduce the legislative changes in autumn 2022. The GDC will determine how this flexibility can be applied, with up to 12 months to introduce changes to its international registration processes, including stakeholder consultation.

The answer was submitted on 05 Sep 2022 at 12:54

24.5.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (174):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answers of 28 April 2022 to Question 116907 and of 26 October 2021 to Question 56597, what progress he is making on ensuring that all NHS dental practices comply with the request to review and update their profile information on the nhs.uk website to help patients find information about available care; what estimate he has made of the number of NHS dentist profiles on the NHS website that are up to date; and for what reasons there was a delay in answering to Question 116907 tabled on 2 February 2022; and if he will make a statement. (174)

Tabled on: 10 May 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

NHS Digital is encouraging dental practices to ensure their NHS.UK profiles are updated and is improving the process for updating information for practices. In the previous 90 days, 47% of high street dental practices had updated information on whether new NHS patients were being accepted. This is an

increase of 3% from December 2021. The response to Question 116907 was delayed due to additional information being collated.

The answer was submitted on 24 May 2022 at 13:14.

28.4 22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (116907):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 26 October 2021 to Question 56597, what progress he is making on ensuring that all NHS dental practices comply with the request to review and update their profile information on the nhs.uk website to help patients find information about available care; what assessment he has made of the number of NHS dentist profiles on the NHS website that are up to date; and if he will make a statement. (116907)

Tabled on: 02 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

It has not proved possible to respond to the hon. Member in the time available before Prorogation.

The answer was submitted on 28 Apr 2022 at 12:14.

26.4.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (146594):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2022 to Question 116905, on Dental Services: Finance, what response he has received from NHS regional commissioning teams on their ability to use the full budget provided to deliver additional NHS dental hours from the funding announced on the NHS England website on 25 January 2022 on securing additional dental appointments for people with oral pain, disease,

and infection in (a) the Brighton and Hove area, (b) the South East region and (c) England; how any unused funds will be redistributed; and if he will make a statement. (146594)

Tabled on: 24 March 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not currently held centrally. National Health Service dentists have two months to submit FP17 dental activity data forms after completing a course of treatment. We anticipate that data for the additional activity will be available from June 2022. It is not possible to carry over unused funds from one financial year to another due to standard accounting practices. Unused additional activity funding is therefore not eligible for redistribution in the following year.

The answer was submitted on 26 Apr 2022 at 13:05.

25.4.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (146593):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2022 to Question 116904 on Dental Services: South East, how many dental practices in (a) the Brighton and Hove area, (b) the South East and (c) England have taken up the offer to deliver additional NHS dental hours as a direct result of the funding announced on the NHS England website on 25 January 2022 on securing additional dental appointments for people with oral pain, disease, and infection; and if he will make a statement. (146593)

Tabled on: 24 March 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected at constituency level. National Health Service dentists submit FP17 forms for dental activity data for up to two months following completion of a course of treatment. The information requested on the additional activity in the South East and England is currently being collated and we expect it will be available from June 2022.

The answer was submitted on 25 Apr 2022 at 14:19.

11.4.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (146595):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on his plans to reform dentistry; if he will make it his policy as part of those reforms to set up a system of patient registration similar to that applied in general practice where patients can join a practice within a certain distance to their home; and if he will make a statement. (146595)

Tabled on: 24 March 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

We are currently negotiating with the British Dental Association on initial proposed changes to the National Health Service contract for dental services. We expect to announce the outcome of these negotiations shortly and will set out an implementation timetable when this concludes. The development of further long term proposed changes will progress during summer and autumn 2022.

Unlike general practice, dental patients are not registered to a particular practice. A dental practice can accept a patient for a course of treatment if it has capacity to do so. There are no geographical restrictions on which dental practice a patient may attend, allowing patients the choice of where they receive treatment.

The answer was submitted on 11 Apr 2022 at 11:22.

28.3.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (116906):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) the number and proportion of dental practices in (i) the South East Region and (ii) the Brighton and Hove CCG area that are having problems delivering current NHS contractual requirements and (b) the staffing capacity

of dental practices to join the new scheme to secure additional NHS appointments for vulnerable groups suffering from oral pain, disease and infection; what steps he will take to enable dental practices to join that scheme; and if he will make a statement. (116906)

Tabled on: 02 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. Overall delivery of National Health Service activity and individual contract activity are monitored by NHS England and NHS Improvement. A reconciliation process is completed at the end of the financial year to determine final delivery levels for each contract. The NHS Business Services Authority also undertakes mid-year performance reviews on individual contracts to understand where contractors may not meet contracted activity levels by the end of the financial year. Information on these reviews is not held centrally.

Where a contractor may not meet its contracted activity due to exceptional circumstances, they should contact their commissioner at the first opportunity. Guidance on exceptional circumstances has been extended during the pandemic, particularly in the last quarter of 2021/22 to address COVID-19 related staff absences. NHS regional teams are working with existing NHS dental contractors to commission activity funded by the additional £50 million investment. More staffing resource has been allocated to commissioning and engaged with Local Dental Networks to raise the profile of the scheme. This activity is additional to a practice's current NHS activity and does not need to be delivered outside of normal practice hours. The scheme has been developed to be attractive to dentists, with those involved in the scheme to be paid more than a third in addition to their normal sessional fee.

The answer was submitted on 28 Mar 2022 at 16:39.

21.2.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (122632):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentists were operating in the Brighton and Hove CCG area in each of the last five years;

what steps he is taking to (a) recruit and (b) retain NHS dental staff; what estimate he has made of the shortfall in NHS dental staff in (i) Brighton and Hove CCG area and (ii) South East region as of 10 February 2022; and if he will make a statement. (122632)

Tabled on: 10 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows the number of dentists with National Health Service activity in Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in each of the last five years.

2020/21	168
2019/20	184
2018/19	187
2017/18	176
2016/17	175

Dental contractors are responsible for delivering activity requirements within their contracts and the recruitment needed to do so. The numbers of dentists recorded as having undertaken NHS dentistry during the pandemic is likely to reflect the impact of infection prevention and control requirements on the number of available appointments.

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing proposals for dental system reform with stakeholders, such as the British Dental Association, to make NHS dentistry in England more attractive for dentists and their teams. Health Education England's Advancing Dental Care Review, published in September 2021, aims to tackle recruitment, retention and attracting dentists into the NHS. The Dental Education Reform Programme is implementing these recommendations, particularly in areas of low NHS dental provision. No specific estimate of shortfalls in Brighton and Hove CCG and the South East has been made as of 10 February 2022.

The answer was submitted on 21 Feb 2022 at 16:56.

21.2.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (122633):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were removed from NHS dentists lists as a result of non-attendance during the covid-19 outbreak in (a) the Brighton and Hove CCG area, (b) the South East and (c) England; and if he will make a statement. (122633)

Tabled on: 10 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

Patients are not registered on an ongoing basis with National Health Service (NHS) dentists. Patients receiving NHS dental care are only registered whilst they are undergoing a course of treatment. The data requested is therefore not collected.

The answer was submitted on 21 Feb 2022 at 09:23.

14.2.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (119477):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that every child has access to an NHS dentist in line with NICE guidelines; what estimate has been made of the number of children (a) in the Brighton and Hove CCG area and (b) nationally who have not been to see an NHS dentist in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. (119477)

Tabled on: 07 February 2022

This question was grouped with the following question(s) for answer:

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how children in the Brighton and Hove CCG area who cannot access an NHS dentist can access dental treatment in line with NICE guidelines; by what date it will be possible for every child in the Brighton and Hove CCG area to access NHS dental treatment; what steps he is taking to ensure all dental practices in Brighton and Hove CCG area have space to accommodate new child patients on the NHS; and if he will make a statement. (119478)

Tabled on: 07 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

Data on the number of children in Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group unable to see a National Health Service dentist in the last 12 months is not held centrally.

NHS dental practices, including in Brighton and Hove, have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as is safely possible. They are prioritising urgent care, care for vulnerable groups and children, followed by delayed planned care. An additional £50 million for NHS dentistry has been made available for the remainder of 2021/22 to allow more patients who have been unable to obtain an appointment. The available appointments will be targeted first at those most in need of urgent dental treatment, vulnerable groups and children.

Where parents are unable to access an urgent dental appointment for their child directly through a NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance. The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the British Dental Association are also developing proposals for reforming NHS dentistry. One of the main aims is to improve patient access to NHS care.

The answer was submitted on 14 Feb 2022 at 14:02.

10.2.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (116904):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the funding announced on the NHS England website on 25 January 2022 on securing additional dental appointments for people with oral pain, disease, and infection, how many of those additional NHS appointments he estimates will be in (a) the Brighton and Hove CCG area and (b) the South East region. (116904)
Tabled on: 02 February 2022

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

No regional estimates have been made.

£6,887,000 was allocated to the South East. National Health Service regional teams are currently working to commission this additional activity and the scheme has been developed to be attractive to dentists, with those involved in the scheme to be paid more than a third on top of their normal sessional fee for delivering this care outside of core hours, such as early morning and weekend work.

The answer was submitted on 10 Feb 2022 at 14:58.

7.2.22

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (116905):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the funding announced on the NHS England website on 25 January 2022 for securing additional dental appointments for people suffering from oral pain, disease, and infection, what will happen to the regional funding allocation in any areas where there is insufficient capacity at dental practices to deliver the additional NHS appointments needed by the end of March 2022; if he will make it his policy to extend the time period for that funding to be spent; what longer term plans he has to fund more NHS dental appointments; and if he will make a statement. (116905)

Tabled on: 02 February 2022.

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

National Health Service regional commissioning teams have been asked to indicate their ability to use the full budget provided. Regions have been advised to spend their full budget. However, if necessary, NHS England will seek to redistribute any unused funds. The funding has been secured for this financial year and cannot be carried over.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have set increasing thresholds for activity in NHS contracts throughout the pandemic, supporting increases in access whilst maintaining compliance with infection prevention and control measures. The current threshold is set at 85%. NHS dental practices have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and

care for vulnerable groups, including children followed by overdue appointments.

The answer was submitted on 07 Feb 2022 at 12:34.

26.10.21

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the letter dated 20 July 2021 from his Department, NHS England, the Chief Dental Officer and Healthwatch to NHS Dental Contractors, what steps he is taking to ensure that all NHS dental practices comply with the request to review and update their profile information on the nhs.uk website to help patients find information about available care; what assessment he has made of the number of NHS dentist profiles on the NHS website that are up to date; and if he will make a statement.

Answer:

Maria Caulfield:

We are exploring what more could be done to ensure that patients are able to find information about available care. Approximately half of all dental practices with a NHS.UK profile are now updating their availability information every 90 days as requested.

The answer was submitted on 26 October 2021