



# Dental Care in Enfield

January 2025

**healthwatch**  
Enfield

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## Acknowledgements

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We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers and staff of Healthwatch Enfield for their dedication and hard work. Their commitment was instrumental in the success of this project, and we are truly appreciative of their valuable contributions.

## About Us

Healthwatch Enfield serves as an independent champion for local people who use health and social care services; we lend our ears to the Enfield community and represent their voice. We team up with multiple community organisations and statutory institutions to share information and gather insights in the aim to help improve the quality of health and social care services in the borough. We share information and advice with residents to ensure they get the support they need, acting as a health and social care champion.

We gather feedback through projects, experiences shared by residents and community groups and social listening to share with public health and social care leaders and local decision-makers to help guide local policies and strategies.

Healthwatch is for everyone that uses all health and social care services, ranging from GPs to care homes, hospitals to pharmacies.

# Introduction

Access to timely and quality dental care is fundamental to overall health and wellbeing. However, in recent years the NHS dental system in the UK, particularly in regions like Enfield, has faced significant challenges. This has led to concerns about accessibility and affordability.

In March 2024, the UK government introduced a new patient premium to incentivise dentists to take on more NHS patients. This initiative, part of a wider plan to improve access to dental care, offered payments of up to £50 per new patient treated. The aim was to deliver an additional 2.5 million NHS dental appointments over the next 12 months, particularly for those who have not seen an NHS dentist in the past two years. This scheme, coupled with increased investment in dental training and workforce development, is expected to significantly enhance access to dental services in the UK.

This research aims to refer to Healthwatch Enfield's previous [report](#) and further investigate the current state of NHS dental care in Enfield, examining the impact of recent government policies and the experiences of local residents. By understanding the challenges and opportunities within the system, this study will provide valuable insights to inform future policy decisions and improve access to dental care for all.

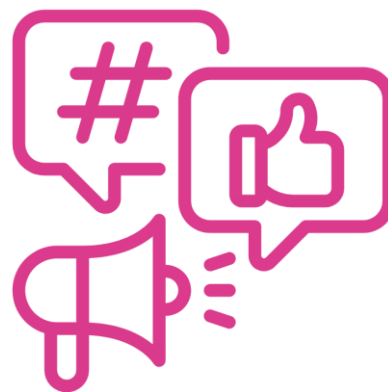
# Methodology

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Enfield residents' experiences with NHS dental care, a mixed-methods approach was employed. This approach combined quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a rich and diverse dataset.

## Data Collection:

- **Online Survey:** A structured online survey was disseminated through various channels, including social media, email, the Healthwatch Enfield website and during outreach activities. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather demographic information, experiences with accessing dental care, and overall satisfaction with NHS dental services.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions were conducted with small groups of participants to delve deeper into their experiences and perceptions. These discussions provided opportunities for participants to share their stories, discuss their concerns, and explore the underlying reasons for their experiences.

By combining these methods, the research aimed to capture both the breadth and depth of experiences with NHS dental care in Enfield. The online survey provided a broad overview of the population's experiences, while the focus groups allowed for a more nuanced understanding of individual perspectives and underlying factors.



# How did we conduct the engagement?

- We made visits to leisure centres, libraries, community organisations, and represented Healthwatch Enfield at events to encourage survey participation, offering paper formats.
- The survey was actively promoted and shared through various digital channels such as social media, email, and other online platforms. Our primary audience was community leaders, volunteers, and voluntary sector organisations (VCS).
- We organised face-to-face focus groups to discuss residents experience with NHS dental care with specific community groups and members.
- We actively participated in community events to gather feedback on the proposal. During these events, we distributed surveys, engaged with community members, and collected information about the challenges and incentives they perceived in relation to NHS dental care.

## Organisations we reached out to:

Edmonton Green Library	Enfield Town Library
Dalmar (Somali Community)	Tea & Toast (Enfield Council)
Sisters in Mind (Women's Group)	Enfield Community Partnership
Southbury Leisure Centre	

# NHS Dentists in Enfield

During November – December 2024 we contacted 43 dental practices in Enfield, as part of our research project. Findings are summarised below:

## NHS Dental Access:

- Most postcode areas have 3 dental practices or more, with the greatest coverage in N13 (7 dental practices) and N14 (6 dental practices), an exception is EN4 with only 1 practice.
- For adults, we found that nearly half of respondents (20 practices, 46%) are currently accepting patients on the NHS. 14 of these practices have a waiting list and 6 are accepting new patients.
- Compared to our report last year, the number of practices currently accepting NHS patients has doubled.
- Locally, N13 has the widest NHS coverage for adults, followed by N9 and N18.
- Compared to last year's report where 3 wards were without an NHS dental practice, now only EN4 has no NHS dental practice.
- 28 respondents (65%) are currently accepting children for NHS treatment, with a 64% increase compared to last year's report. N9, which used to have the least coverage in the last report, has the widest coverage reported.

## NHS & Private Practice Split

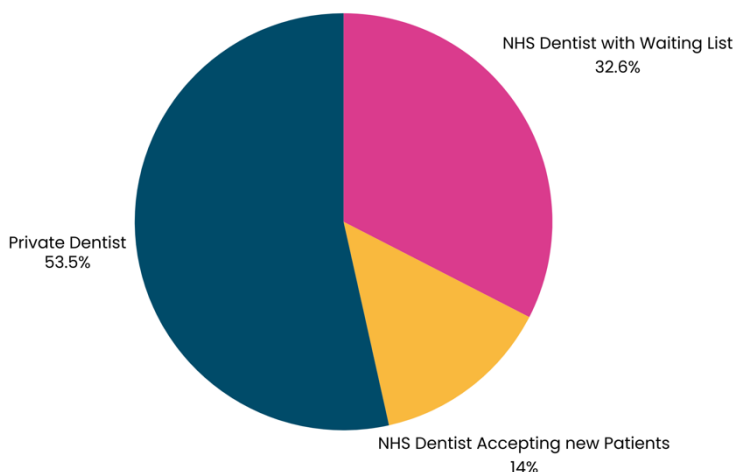


Figure 1 – NHS & Private Practice Split.

During the 9-month period of March 2024 to December 2024, we received enquiries from 6 local people – who needed assistance in securing dental treatment on the NHS.

Compared to March 2024 to December 2024, the volume of enquiries (9) received during March 2023 and February 2024 has dropped only slightly. This corresponded with increases with NHS dental care within Enfield. However as the financial year hasn't ended yet so a full statement can't be made yet.

### NHS Dentist – Increase in Patient appointments



**“Beginning of this year [March 2024] we were able to take on more NHS patients. Due to the vast increase in demand, we had to close our waiting list again.”**

Receptionist of an NHS Dental Practice



# Resident's Experience on NHS Dental Care

During November 2024 – December 2024, we spoke to 110 residents in Enfield, as part of the *NHS Dental Care* research project. The aim was to assess the resident's perspective on NHS dental care in the borough, for adults and children.

## Data Collection

A total of 110 responses were collected through a combination of online surveys and focus group discussions (see Methodology section). The sample included a diverse range of individuals, with a particular focus on speaking to a diverse sector of the community (postcode and ethnicity).





## Ethnicity

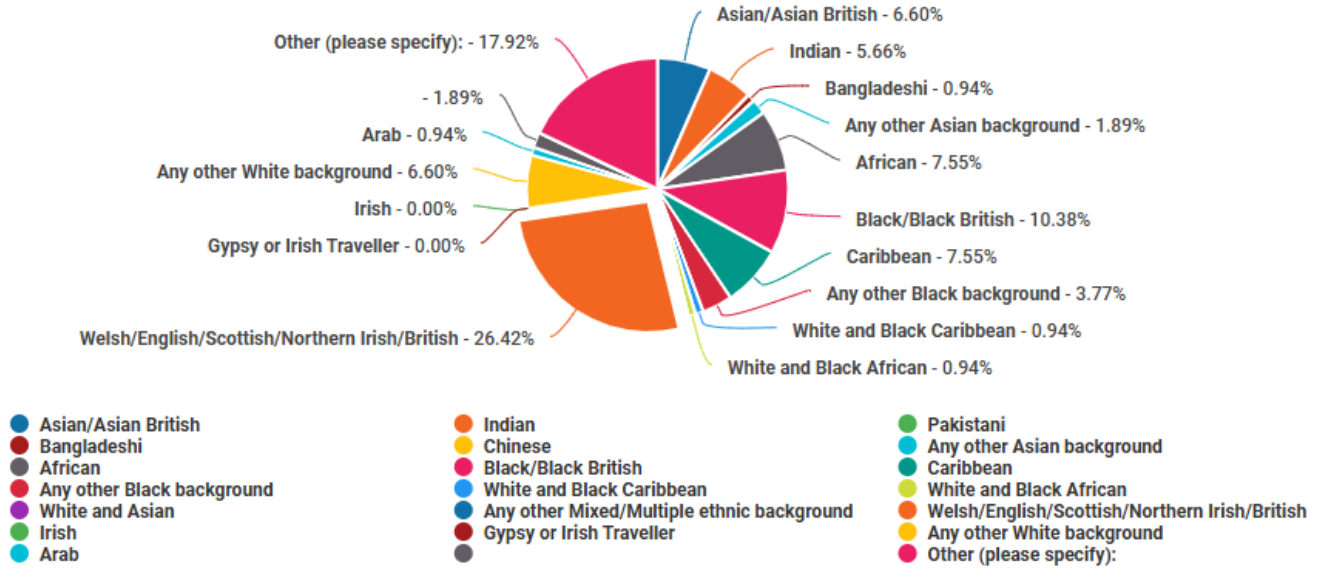


Figure 2 – Ethnicity of residents engaged with.

## Postcode

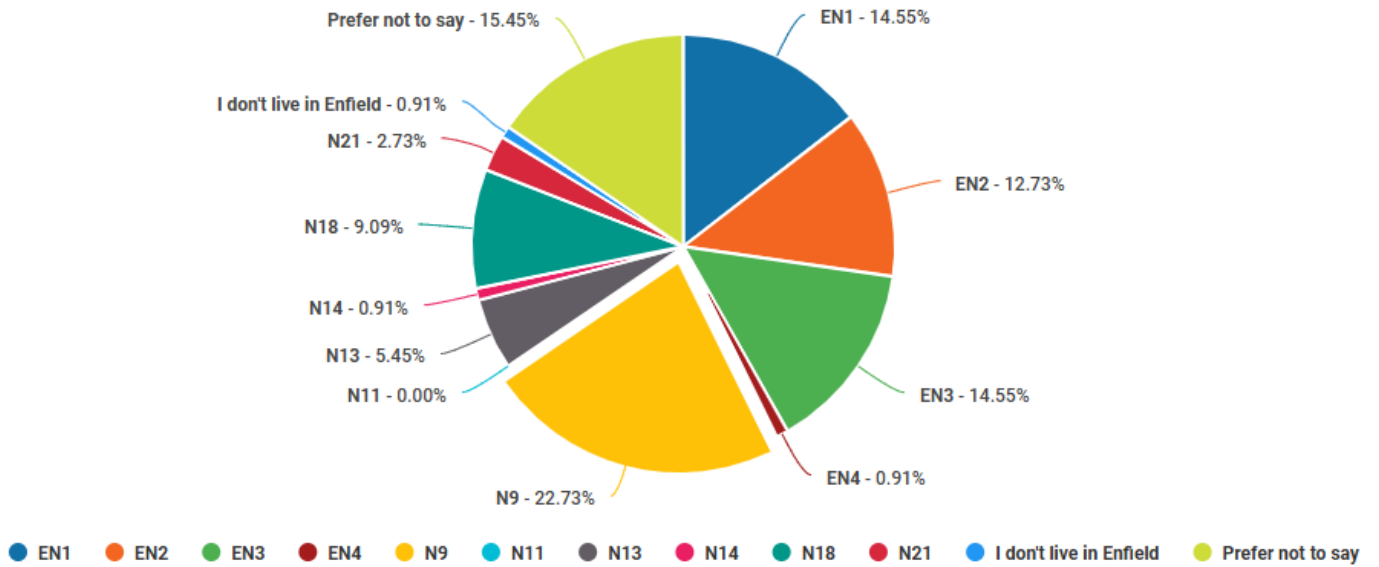


Figure 3 – Postcode of residents engaged with.

Participants who expressed **satisfaction** with their NHS dental care often highlighted the quality of treatment and service, transparency in cost, and the personal connection with their dental provider. They appreciated regular check-up reminders and the time taken by dental professionals to address their concerns.

### Experience of NHS Dental Care

Overall, what is your experience with NHS dentists?

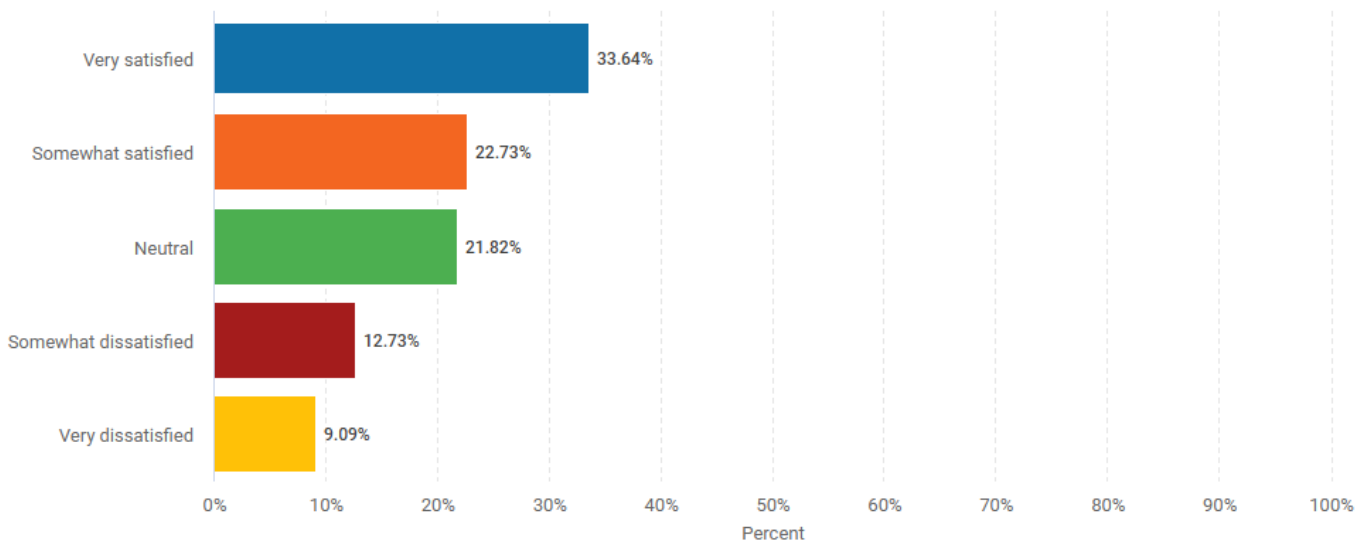


Figure 4 – Experience of residents engaged with of NHS Dental Care.

Participants valued the quality of treatment and the professionalism of dental staff. Clear communication about treatment costs and options were appreciated. Building a positive relationship with their dentist was seen as important. Regular check-up reminders and flexible appointment times were valued. Additionally, participants appreciated the efforts made to accommodate individuals with language barriers.

Participants who expressed **dissatisfaction** with their NHS dental care often cited issues related to access, affordability, and quality of care.

Common complaints included difficulties in securing appointments, particularly for urgent dental care. Some participants reported being unable to find an NHS dentist, leading them to seek private care or forego necessary treatment.

Other common concerns were long wait times for appointments, rushed appointments, and poor communication with dental professionals. Additionally, some participants reported receiving incorrect or ineffective treatment and experiencing negative interactions with dental staff.

Financial barriers were also a significant concern, with many participants unable to afford private dental care. Some individuals reported being deregistered from NHS dental practices after refusing private treatment options.

Compared to last year, residents experienced predominantly no change in booking appointments. It must be highlighted, that responses of those experiencing change compared to last year, generally found booking appointments more difficult.

**Compared to the year before, would you say it is now easier or harder to book an appointment?**

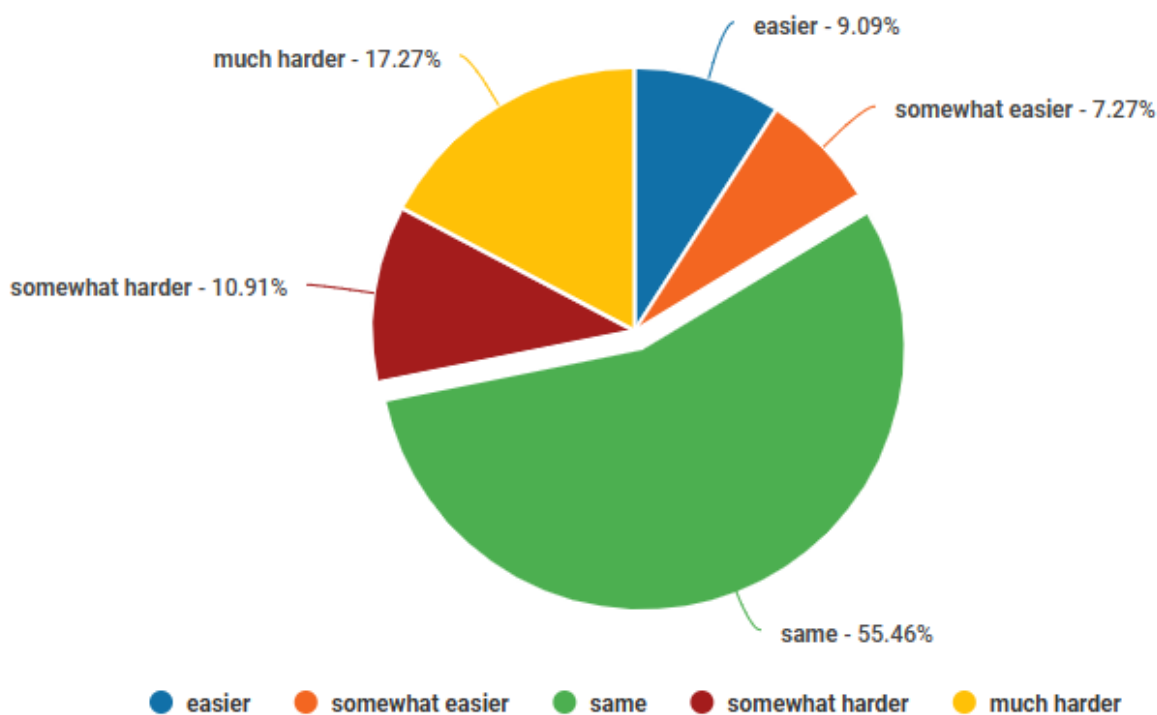


Figure 5 – Booking appointments.

# Booking Appointments

In line with the overall satisfaction of NHS dental care patients, 54% of responses find it easy to book an appointment with their dentist.

Are you able to book an NHS dentist appointment when you need one?

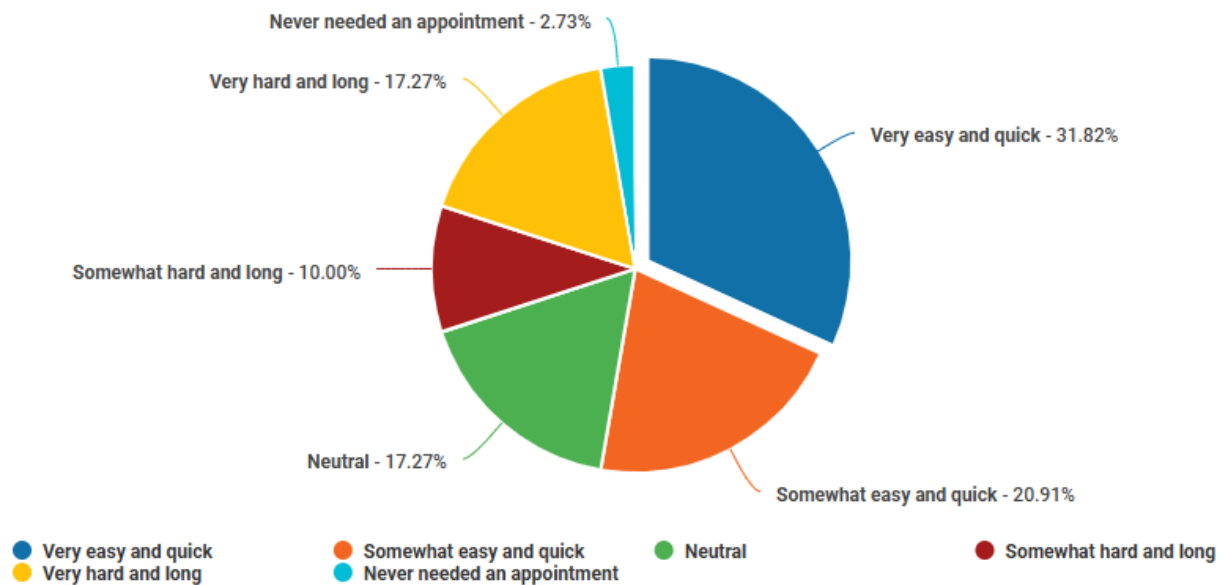


Figure 6 – Booking appointment when residents need one.

## Positive Feedback on NHS Appointments



**“I always get an appointment quick. Very good service, always.**

Enfield Residents, Latin American woman,  
65+ years old



It is important to highlight that 25% of responses found it hard to book an appointment.

## Analysis of Demographic

Of those experiencing difficulties in booking an appointment, only 3.45% were white, while 34% of answers of white British residents found it easy to book an appointment. Highlighting the demographic inequality further, 96.55% of those experiencing difficulties were of Arab, Black African, Black Caribbean, and South Asian ethnicities.

We also found that residents living in N9 experience the highest rate of difficulties with 46.7%, compared to those finding it easy, in which the spread was statistically even between all postcodes.

## Reasons for Experiencing Difficulties

Reasons for residents experience issues in getting appointments can be complex. Speaking to residents, these were some of the issues highlighted:

### Accessibility to NHS Appointments



**“I recently found an NHS dentist that is local to me, but their NHS service is only once a week on a Wednesday.”**

Enfield Residents, British woman, 65+ years old



32% of the responses on what difficulties residents face when booking appointments, highlighted the long waiting times.

## NHS Emergency Appointments



**“I had to wait 5 days for emergency treatment. They are also very rude to me.”**

Enfield Residents, Somali woman



## Language Support for NHS Appointments



**“I had 6 cancelled appointment after pulling 5 teeth. It took me 1 and a half years to get 5 teeth out. But more have to be pulled. I think they cancelled my appointment because of my high blood pressure. English is not my first language, a translator would have been helpful!”**

Enfield Residents, Turkish man, 45-54 years old

# Cost of Dental Care

While the NHS provides heavily discounted rates, some residents experience difficulties in affordability. 29.5% of residents highlighted that the high cost of dentist care presents them with difficulties.

## NHS Emergency Appointments



**“I can't afford it.”**

Enfield Residents, British man, 65+ years old



A residents highlighted their wish for NHS to pay for hygiene, as prevention for further expensive treatments.

# NHS Dentistry Availability

Speaking to residents, understanding how to find an NHS dentist has caused the most confusion.

- 1. Misinformation:** Multiple residents thought that NHS dental care was only for residents on benefits.
- 2. Finding an NHS dentist:** Further, residents struggle in finding dentists who accept NHS patients.
- 3. Resorting to Private Care:** Lastly, one resident shared their experience with their NHS dentist and how they felt pressured to sign up for private dental care.

## NHS Dental Care only for Benefits?



**“I don’t have an NHS dentist as I would need benefit in order to get NHS dentist.”**

Enfield Residents, South American woman, 65+ years old



## No NHS Dental Practices Available



**“I am restricted with a private dentist as there are no NHS dentists available.”**

Enfield Residents, English woman, 65+ years old

**“When we were looking for an NHS dentist, they were all full.”**

Enfield Residents, European woman, 55-64 years old





**“My new NHS dentist has been great. They look after me and send me reminders. I get appointments very quickly.**

**But I had to change my dentist because my old dentist split into NHS & private care. They tried to re-register me as a private patient. When I refused, the dentist took me off the NHS list.”**

Enfield Residents, Black British woman, 55-64 years



## Quality of Care

Residents further highlighted the quality of care received from NHS dentist. 56.25% of responses are satisfied with the services their NHS dentist provided. 21% of residents are dissatisfied.

It is important to highlight, that when comparing the responses of those who are satisfied and dissatisfied, both groups experience issues with access to appointments and the high cost of dental care.

### What is your experience with your NHS dentist?

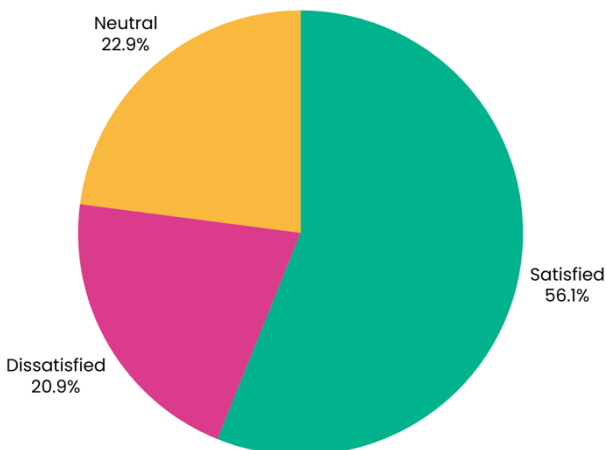


Figure 7 – What is your experience with your NHS dentist?



## Disability Access

Two residents have highlighted their issue in disability access.

### Disability Access



**“My NHS dentist does not have good disability access. They have steps to the door and a small toilet which I can't use.”**

Enfield Residents, American woman,  
65+ years old



**“Bad disabled access.”**

Enfield Residents, British woman, 65+ years old

# Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, we make the following recommendations:

## 1. Promoting Access to NHS Dental Care

This project identified a significant gap in residents' understanding of their rights regarding NHS dental care. Many residents were unaware of their eligibility for NHS dental services and lacked the confidence to assert their rights when pressured to pursue private treatment options.

To address this issue, a comprehensive factsheet will be developed. This resource will provide clear and concise information on:

- **Eligibility for NHS dental care:** Outlining that all residents are eligible for NHS dental care.
- **Available NHS dental services:** Detailing the range of dental treatments covered by the NHS, including cost.
- **Finding an NHS dentist:** Providing guidance on how to locate and register with an NHS dental practice in the local area.

- **Patient rights:** Emphasising the rights of patients to access NHS dental care and to receive clear and accurate information about treatment options and costs.

## **2. Dental Service Providers – Greater Transparency and Support**

Residents have indicated that some have been de-registered from NHS dental care without prior notification. Many patients have been denied treatment without receiving any support or guidance.

### **To improve this situation, dentists should:**

- **Ensure website accuracy:** Maintain up-to-date and concise information on their websites regarding NHS services offered, including specific eligibility criteria.
- **Provide clear communication:** Notify patients in advance if they are being de-registered from NHS care. Alternatively, a general statement could be published on the practice website.
- **Offer support and guidance:** Provide signposting information and support to patients with urgent needs, those experiencing dental crises, or those seeking treatment for children. Dentists have a professional duty of care to their patients.



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