



**Service user experiences of
using Croydon dentists'
websites
2021**

June 2022

Findings in brief

Most websites were seen as friendly but four in ten were not.

Variability between websites on 'registration' information.

55% of websites did not have dental emergency information.

Two-thirds of websites showed Covid-safe information.

Confusion over information including NHS and private prices.

A third had broken weblinks which affected access.

Recommendations in brief

Clearly show dental emergency information on home page.

Ensure that NHS contract type is shown on home page.

Make sure website is up to date particularly on 'registration'.

Ensure websites meet patients' expectations.

Consider diverse imagery to reflect the communities served.

Consider translation to support diverse communities.

Executive Summary

The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant effect on Croydon residents in accessing and using dental services. Although this was not unique to Croydon, we wanted to gain a better understanding of the specific issues taking place to help local stakeholders understand the challenges from the residents' perspective.

Bearing in mind the amount of work being undertaken nationally on this, we wanted to be sure we added insight and took into consideration the supply challenges in understanding this. We chose to consult with the Croydon Local Dental Committee on this at all stages to ensure we could provide an insight which would help them with their planning and conversations with NHS commissioners.

Working with the Local Dental Committee has been a very positive experience for both organisations. We learnt much about the complexity of dental commissioning and how this may well affect resident access and usage of the service. In several discussions with the Local Dental Committee, we developed the survey to help gain the insight we needed to know, but was also ensured that it would be useful to those who could influence service change in some way. As a result, the experience of working with Healthwatch has been profiled by Sushil John, Croydon local Dental Committee chair, in the Integrated Care Journal in April 2022, as an example of strong partnership working between us.¹

For this project, we looked at the websites of 47 NHS dental practices based in Croydon between January and March 2021. We presented initial findings in July 2021 with the Croydon Local Dental Committee which presented mostly quantitative data. We then did further analysis so that we could show examples of good practice and where services could be improved to help each surgery improve its communication and information.

This report places qualitative insight to support the initial findings as well as examples of best practice. Healthwatch Croydon hopes this report will enable

¹ Integrated Care Journal (2022) Healthwatch and Croydon LDC working to highlight local patient needs: <https://integratedcarejournal.com/newsdit-article/7f6d0005cfe999ea002f699c0088d21d/healthwatch-and-croydon-ldc-working-to-highlight-local-patient-needs/>

practical discussions with all stakeholders to improve access and patient experience for all Croydon residents.

These are our findings based on the responses from the survey:

- **Welcoming:** A majority of websites were seen as welcoming, but 4 in 10 were not. (see pages 13-14) with varying views on the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of the website (see pages 27-32).
- **Variability between websites on 'registration' information:** There is a perception that service users need to register with a dentist (see page 8). Since 2006, dentists do keep patients' details to follow up but this is not an official list, which explains why this does not appear on websites. This confusion has led to a mixed response in the survey, with 44% having information suggesting that some dentists do provide details on how to regularly access services, even if it is not officially registering new patients, this can be confusing. (see pages 15-16).
- **Dental emergencies:** Most websites did not show information about dental emergencies but 45% (29) did show this (see page 17).
- **Covid-safe practice information:** Only two-thirds of websites presented information about COVID safe practices (see pages 18-19).
- **Confusion over NHS price information:** There were two aspects here; showing NHS price information and the clarity between NHS and private fee information which are linked but are not the same. Only 41% clearly showed information differing NHS from private. Yet all these dentists do undertake an NHS contract. It may be that some contracts are only for children and those with exemptions which means they never pay for services which may explain why NHS services are not displayed, but this could be made clearer. (see page 20).
- **Other information:** More websites had up-to-date information than not, but 42% did not have their information updated. In some cases, this included the recent increase in NHS dental charges. The corrections are usually easy to maintain. (see pages 23-24). A majority did have information on benefits

exemptions for patients, but 42% did not. While some dentists may not hold large NHS contracts, all of those with NHS contracts will see patients with exemptions and this information can easily be provided. (pages 25-26).

- **Working links:** Only two-thirds of websites had maintained each page with clearly working links. It is important to maintain the website so it is easy for patients to use and find information. Offering translated text is an important service for a diverse borough like Croydon and is a good policy – only a few offered this. (see page 21).

These are our recommendations to dental practices

- **Clearly show dental emergency information:** This should ideally be at the top of the front page and show clear easy to access information on what the practice does or does not provide (because not all practices can provide urgent care) and where patients can easily get help.
- **Ensure NHS contract information is clearly shown on the homepage:** Every practice that holds an NHS contract should reflect this on their website clearly on the home page. To manage expectations, the type of contract should clearly be shown, even if it is limited to children only or those exempted from charges. Where there are full NHS contracts, prices should be clearly shown and differentiated from private prices and dental plans.
- **Make sure other information is up to date and fix broken links:** It builds confidence when information is clearly up to date including prices and Covid safe practice guidelines. Having a dedicated person or time to check the website can ensure this is maintained well. Clear information on what is meant by 'registration' would be relevant here.
- **Ensure websites meet patients' and potential patients' expectations:** Some websites can be too complex with too many clicks to get the essential information that users need. Usually, the simplest sites are the best, ensuring they work across PC, tablets, and smartphones. Testing websites with the public before launching helps understand user experience.

- **Ensure imagery and style of language reflect the communities being served:** Regularly testing and checking your website ensures it can be accessed easily and positively by as much of the wider community as possible. Selecting imagery and translation is a good option for practices sited within areas with diverse populations.

1 Background

1.1 Context

About Healthwatch Croydon

Healthwatch Croydon works to get the best out of local health and social care services by responding to the voice of local people. From improving services today to helping shape better ones for tomorrow, we listen to people's views and experiences and then influence decision-making. We have several legal functions, under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

Context

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many reports of the difficulty of accessing and using dental services nationally. For the first six months, there was a very limited service, but since 6 October 2020, NHS London asked dentists to reopen services.

Healthwatch Croydon heard from residents about the challenges of services, and this was raised as a priority subject to consider after the Healthwatch Croydon Annual Meeting poll on themes they should consider.

From the beginning, Healthwatch Croydon was already aware that many reports had been produced by other Healthwatch organisations and other patient groups, but these tended to focus on the first period of lockdown when dental service access was very much limited. Following discussions with the Croydon Local Dental Committee, we discussed both the context and factors that may have led to supply issues which could help shape questions which could bring relevant insight.

The result was a survey of 47 NHS dentists' websites to gain insight into the experience of using dentists' websites to find information about services.

1.2 Some context about dentistry and how it is commissioned

While our role as Healthwatch Croydon is to communicate the patient experience as we have done here, we do usually explain the context and background behind the area we are exploring.

One of the points raised in our findings is that public perception of dentistry is not always aligned to how the service is commissioned and delivered. This section helps clarify some of these aspects. This has come out from our discussions with the Croydon Local Dental Committee who have been open to our findings but asked if we could provide more context.

Lists

We asked a question on regular lists and seeing a regular dentist as that is how patients understand their access and use of the service, like that of a GP. No actual lists by dentists exist and therefore there is no formal registration process. Patients may regularly see the same dentist, twice a year for many years, and their details will be kept in some form of business record but there is no official list. This differs from GPs where patients do fully register and can only be registered at one surgery and when they move their records move with them. Patients can be seen at any dentist without records being carried across. Dentists will usually undertake an assessment and take a detailed record of new patients at their first meeting.

Funding

This in turn affects how dentistry is funded. Unlike GPs who get paid a standard amount for each patient on their list irrespective of whether they use services, dentists do not get paid this way. Dentists are paid by Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) which they are allocated each year and need to use within that year but try to ensure they are evenly spread throughout the year. If they use them too quickly or too slowly, they could lose funding from NHS England. Each UDA is worth a certain value, agreed between NHS England and the specific practice. This can differ from dentist to dentist and in some cases the amount a dentist gets is less than patient charge:

currently £23.80² for a band 1 standard examination. The amount a patient pays does not correspond to the cost to the dentist.

For a patient that has complex needs, many UDAs could be used on one patient, whereas one who has healthy teeth may only use a single UDA. This unpredictability in the way dentists must manage their NHS allocations makes it a challenge to plan and can lead to dentists using up their allocation at certain stages in the year, leading to disappointment for the patient.

Each dentist is a private company taking an NHS contract and they are not legally obliged to take on more than their contract allows. They can oversupply up to 2% but will not be paid for anything they do above that. However, this 2% will be deducted from their allocation for the following year meaning they will only have 98% of their contracted amount for that following year. Therefore, sometimes all they can offer is private work which is not at NHS prices.

Dentists also take on different NHS contracts, some seeing all NHS patients, others only seeing children or those who can gain exemption from costs on benefits. This again affects the supply of appointments.

Commissioning and need

If this was not already complicated enough, the allocation for how many UDAs each dentist has and how much they get paid for each UDA was decided in 2006. Even then, the allocation was based on what the dentists had done in the previous year, so some dentists who had a quieter year maybe due to having less staff would have had a smaller allocation. This means that for many dentists they are working in communities where demand has changed significantly in the last 16 years but UDA allocations have not. Croydon alone has seen a 10% rise in population. This therefore affects demand, access, and patient experience.

² NHS (2022) How much will I pay for dental treatment? <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/how-much-will-i-pay-for-nhs-dental-treatment/>

1.3 Rationale and Methodology

This survey is about patient experience of accessing information from websites of Dentists in Croydon between 13 January and 14 March 2021.

The list was derived from the CQC list searching only the Croydon locality. At that time this was seen as the most effective list. Once completed, we later had access to the NHS mandatory list of contracted practices which was compared. There was also some administrative confusion where some dental practice websites were compared twice.

The final sample was 81 reviews of which 17 were private which have been excluded as we do not review private services. This results in 64 reviews representing 47 practice websites with standard NHS contracts and 2 NHS orthodontic services. Of these, 15 had additional reviews.

We also note that there were five on the NHS list that had not been completed in the time period for the research and was excluded - four specific surgeries and one on the list that had merged with another.

1.4 Method

The survey was set up on Smart Survey. Healthwatch Croydon volunteers reviewed the website by searching for the name on Google. Dentist websites were then assessed through the following questions. Dentists were searched by their name and the first example on the Google search was used.

Questions:

Q1. Name of dental surgery

Q2. Date and time you reviewed the website

Q3. Is the website user friendly?

Q4. Is there any clear information and instruction for new a patient wishing to register?

- Q5. Is there information on dental emergencies?
- Q6. Is there information on NHS prices and the various bands?
- Q7. Is there any information relating to Covid? In regard to restrictions and safe practices that have been adopted.
- Q8. Is there clear information on the difference between private and NHS treatment?
- Q9. Are the links working, such as translation?
- Q10. Is the information up to date?
- Q11. Is there anything particularly helpful or unhelpful about the information?
- Q12. Is there information on what treatment you are entitled to based on your circumstances?
- Q13. Anything else here, please comment

1.5 Limitations of the study

Some practice websites are missing: This project began using the list of providers from the Care Quality Commission which showed both NHS and private suppliers. It was not clear which were which and it was only later once when we received a definitive contract list on request from NHS England that we could compare and noticed that some were missing. We will take this learning forward for any future work.

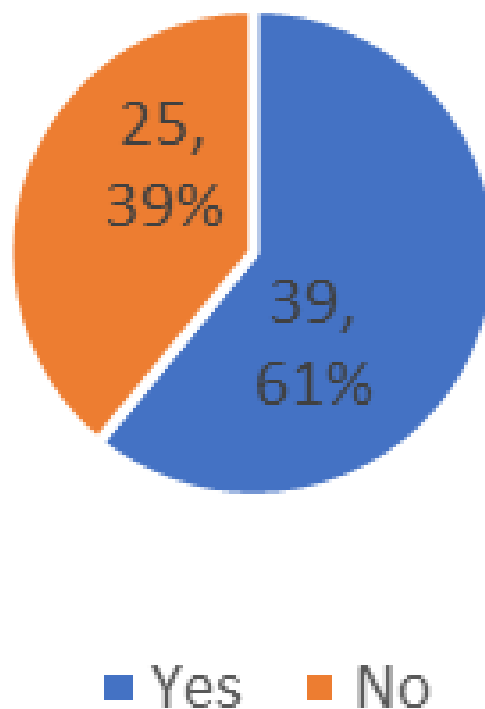
Duplication: Partly due to the complexity between lists and project communication, there were some done more than once. This is reflected in the statistics but averaged when feeding back to each practice to give fair feedback.

Snapshot: This was only a view at one time from a mystery shopper who has their expectations and experiences for each website, but the consistency of the questions makes it useful insight to compare.

2 Insight results

These are our findings based on the survey responses we received, each new space or new line is a separate comment. Please note we have not edited comments, so typos, grammar and phrasing are intentional.

2.1 How friendly was the website?



N=64

- A majority were seen as friendly but nearly 4 in 10 were not.

Positive comments

“Very new looking website, nice aesthetics and clean design.”

“Very new looking website, with nice clean and fashionable design.”

“Plenty of information.”

“Lots of information on treatments.”

“Yes, this website is user friendly because at the beginning of the homepage service users or patients are able to have access to the dental practice through by contact details, including map and telephone.”

Negative comments

“Unable to access information.”

“Very clear on the eyes but not easy to navigate.”

“Lots of information but not what we are looking for.”

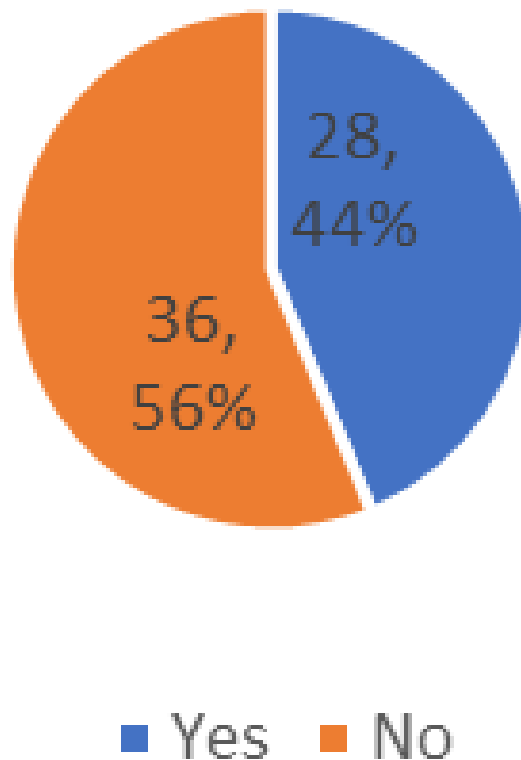
“Information was not easy to access.”

“Couldn't find a website for this practice - only basic info -address, phone number (8 764 1417) and opening hours “

“Information which does not appear to relate or offer exclusive dental services Have to search.”

“Too much unrelated information for the user who just want a dentist.”.”

2.2 How easy was it to register/ request registration?



N=64

- A majority found it not easy to register. This may be due to a gap in perception among the public who believe they need to register to access services. While dentists keep details of patients to follow up they do not keep a registered list of patients.
- However, for some 44% they could indeed find information suggesting that some dentists do provide details on how the register. So, the communication is confusing.

Positive comments

“There is also new registration section for NHS patients, plus there is a contact page and a notice at the top right to prompt users to make the phone call to book an appointment.”

“There is phone number. emails and patients wishing to book appointment advised to complete online form.”

“Yes, there is a tab called 'the new patient journey' however on closer inspection the page is actually very covid heavy, and there is no clear prompt to a fill in a form or make a phone call, however on the booking page you can select that you are a new patient.”

“yes, very large clear button on the top right of the webpage. Has online booking form.”

“Says new patients welcome and phone number, email and online form are prominent.”

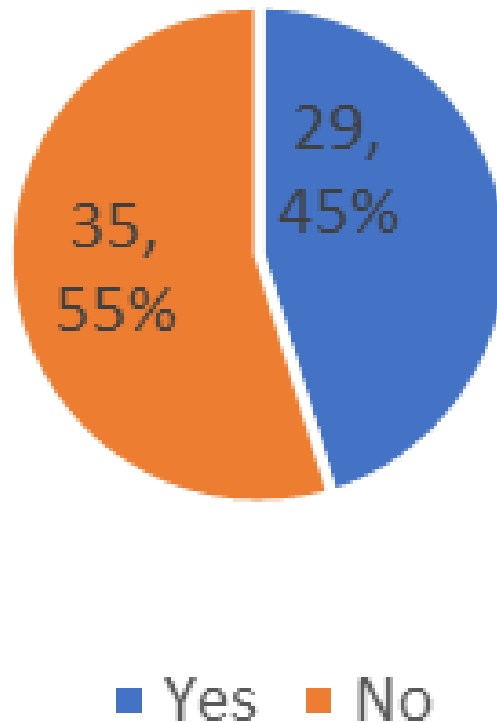
Negative comments

“No information for new patients but to the CQC.”

“Nothing on how to register but there is information on how to book an appointment for NHS and Private sectors.”

There is no information that instruct new service users wishing to register online. Too much information. Too much complexity.”

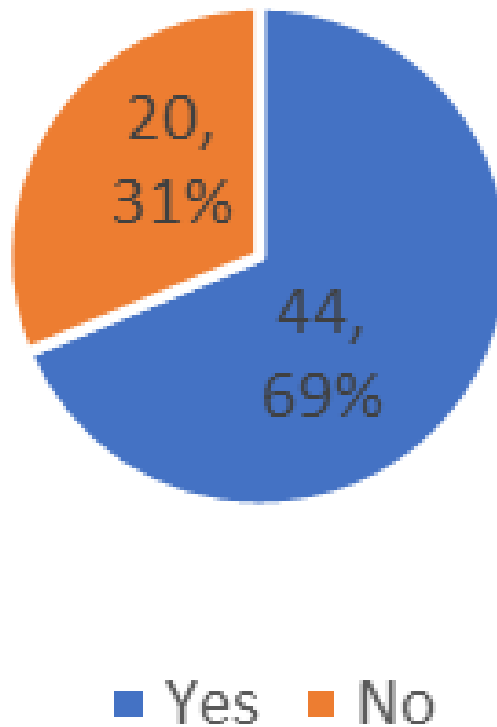
2.3 Dental emergencies information



N=64

- Most websites did not show information about dental emergencies but 45% (29) did show this information.
- Bearing in mind that this is general information that can be helpful for all surgeries to show when they are not open, there is an opportunity to keep the public informed.

2.4 COVID safe practices information



N=64

- Over two-thirds had information about COVID safe practices, but almost a third did not.
- As COVID safe practice details were mandatory for opening, this information should have been easily available but for one third this was either not on the website or not clearly visible.

Positive comments

“Yes, but service user have to access this information by clicking news at the homepage.”

“Yes, a lot of detail, though not on first page; on both pull down 'home' menu or by clicking box with contact details.”

“Yes, first item on home page dated November 20, surgery open with covid safety and later mentions PPE.”

“Mentions limited space in practice which implies fewer patients than usual though this is not explicitly stated.”

“Yes, loads of information, very clearly positioned on the website, also the information is 100% up to date including the latest government updates.” “

The covid information is up to date including all the latest updates from Boris from April 2021.”

Negative comments

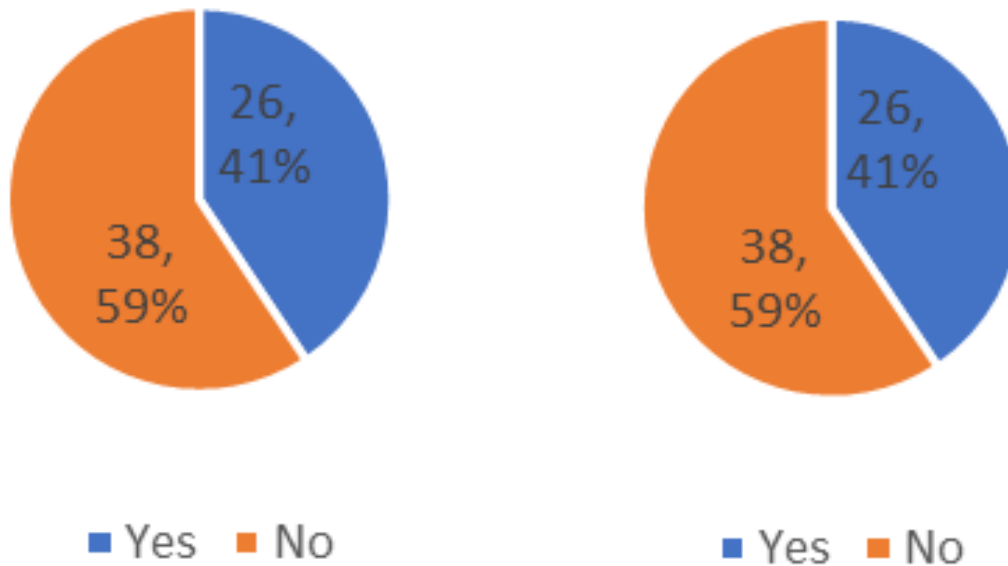
“I cannot find any information relating to Covid-19.”

“No cannot see any information on any type of Covid information.”

“No there is no information on their actual dentist website, as the information listed is linked directly to the NHS website.”

“Does not seem to be anything detailed.”

2.5 NHS price information and clarity of difference between NHS and private



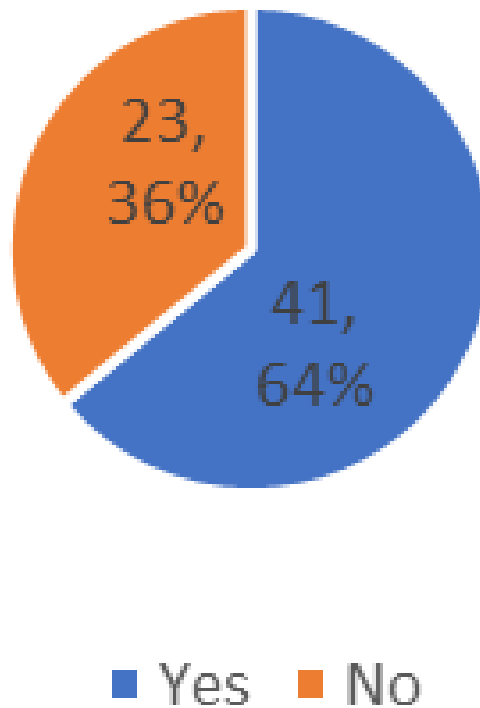
NHS price information

Clarity of difference between NHS and private

N=64

- There were two aspects here; showing NHS price information and the clarity between NHS and private fee information which are linked but not the same
- Only 41% clearly showed information differing NHS from private. Yet all these dentists do undertake an NHS contract.
- It may be that some contracts are only for children and those with exemptions which means they never pay for services which may explain why NHS services are not displayed, but this could be made clearer.
- However, when a new patient is looking for a dentist, they will review websites. Providing a short statement of the kind of NHS contract they provide on the home page will make it clear to the patient and manage expectations. Prominently displaying the NHS logo will also help identification.

2.6 Working links and ways of accessing the website including translation



N=64

- Only two-thirds of websites had pages with clearly working links. It is important to maintain the website so it is easy for patients to use and find information.
- Offering translated text is an important service for a diverse borough like Croydon and is a good policy – only a few offered this.

Comments

“All links and pull-down menus worked except a link to practice's email.”

“All pull down menus and links working -no languages other than English.”

“Yes, links and pull-down menus all work, menus include home, about us etc. No languages other than English.”

“Yes, the links exist but not easy to locate. No translation.”

“Links were working except for one on charges; All info in in English.”

“No links outside the web site and no translation.”

“Links throughout the website are working, no translation that I can see.”

“No translation facility but no links outside the home website.”

“There is a section leading to other accessible formats. e.g., Bengali, and Chinese.”

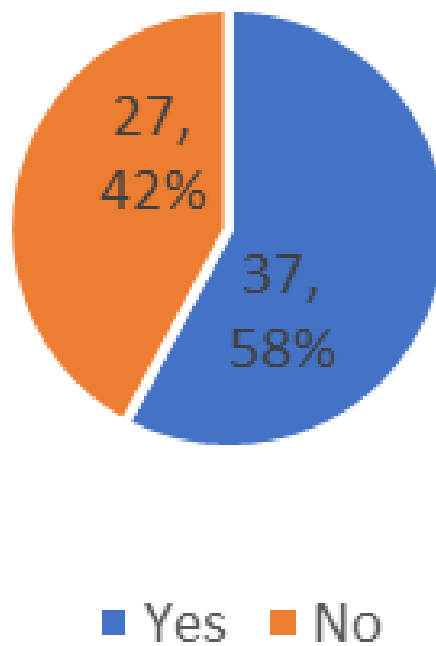
“There is a link on the NHS website but not on the private dental website. furthermore, there are limited languages you can translate in.”

“No translation and no links outside the web site.”

“Patients of non-English speakers and people with learning difficulties will find it too complex to access this information.”

“All the links are working, except the patients' link.”

2.7 Up to date information



N=64

- More websites had up-to-date information than not, but 42% did not have their information updated. In some cases, this included the recent increase in NHS dental charges.
- For patients having access to up-to-date and relevant information is important as well as showing a level of quality which increases confidence in the service.
- The corrections are usually easy to maintain.

Positive comments

“Very helpful the way all of the information is laid out, not too much and therefore it is easy to digest.”

“Info is up to date evidenced by NHS charges reflect the increases of 14 Dec 2020.”

“Covid updates from Jan 2021.”

“Single mention that they do NHS work, on the lockdown update page.”

“There is a lot of current information on their website which is helpful.”

“Info is up to date (NHS charges include the 14 December 2020 increase.”

Negative comments

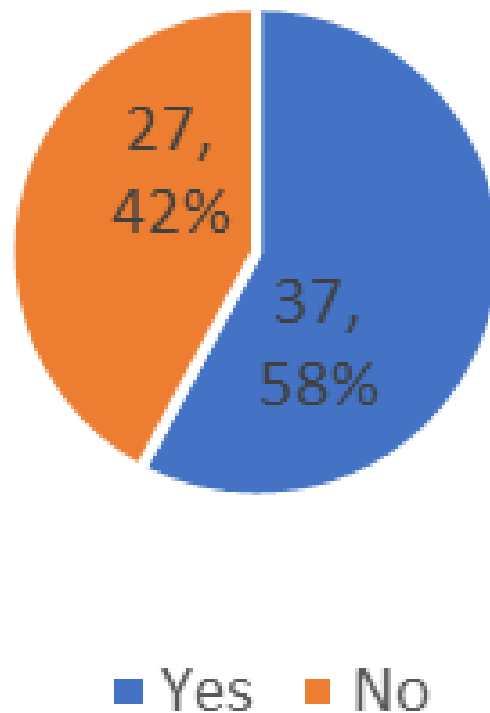
“No information on Covid, which is relevant to these times.”

“2020 stamp on the foot of the pages.”

“Not helpful re covid; info only up to date as of 5 November 2020.”

“Note website not updated since November 20; NHS charges do not include 14 December increase.”

2.8 Information based on your circumstances



N=64

- Again, a majority did have information on benefits exemptions for patients, but 42% did not.
- While some dentists may not hold large NHS contract, all of those with NHS contract will see patients with exemptions and this information can easily be provided.
- The corrections are usually easy to maintain and can reference other regularly updated sources on benefits exemptions.

Positive comments

“Very helpful the way all of the information is laid out, not too much and therefore it is easy to digest.”

“Info is up to date evidenced by NHS charges reflect the increases of 14 Dec 2020.”

“Covid updates from Jan 2021.”

“Single mention that they do NHS work, on the lockdown update page.”

“There is a lot of current information on their website which is helpful.”

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Negative comments

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“Note website not updated since November 20; NHS charges do not include 14 December increase.”

2.9 Information seen as helpful or unhelpful.

- The following shows responses to the general overall questions on websites reflecting what was helpful or unhelpful.
- Helpful websites included details about all treatments, in websites that were laid out well and clear to read and considered the demographics of their community.
- Unhelpful websites included that style of language is not always understandable by patients and some of it is quite complex. Some were not designed well and needed many clicks to get to some information. Some information included services other than dentistry, and details on financing and loans. There was confusion on pricing inconsistencies in information and a lack of information for some on Covid safe practice. The representation of images reflecting the ethnic mix of communities they serve would make them more welcoming, and there was a lack of translated text.

“The information is relevant to providers and partners. Defiantly not useful to the public.”

“The fact that there is no translation for people that do not speak English as their first language.”

“Patients must follow links to obtain information. This is not helpful for those on pay as you go packages, or those non speakers of English.”

“Most of the information does not relates to dentistry.”

“Too much complexity not properly structured.”

“Info is up to date evidenced by NHS charges reflect the increases of 14 Dec 2020.”

“There is a lot of info (for private patients - this is what I phoned to clarify) re payments options -either 12 months interest free monthly payments for treatment or 9/9% APR loans over one to five years by monthly payments (FCA protected) These seem to be for treatments over £600. Not sure how usual this is? Might there be implications for people falling behind with payments and getting into debt?”

Please note re private patients: charges are given and there is also a Medenta Finance loan scheme to spread cost of treatment over one or more years. states that Medenta 'does not promote debt' Examples of payments are given.”

“Having said that there is a lot of helpful info on all treatments, including gum disease. Practice does orthodontal treatment.”

“Existing patients would get a good service at this practice but would not help people who may now be seeking emergency treatment and are having difficulty accessing it.”

“Also, an R Solutions scheme which offers the range of treatments at set prices -e.g., exam and x rays £ Implied this 33. Implied this is available to both NHS and private patients.”

“Loads of helpful information on the website, although it would be better if they had more information on the difference between NHS and Private treatment.”

“There is a lot of current information on their website which is helpful.”

“You have to scroll the screen to get the full information.”

“I like the way the website is laid out all of the components are clear to read and see, you can follow the information quite clearly.”

“There should be a covid update.” “Best website I have reviewed.”

“The layout is not necessarily the best, but there is high quality information, including an invitation to feedback to the CQC.”

“Could have a better look and feel to the website, it looks out of date.”

“It’s helpful to presumably private patients registered with practice or wishing to do so; emphasise I couldn’t see any NHS charges on website or distinction between NHS and other.”

“In my opinion, the information shown is not related to dentistry. Therefore, it is unhelpful, especially to those who access their website.”

“Some information is helpful, but some are unhelpful because most of the things on the homepage are not relating to dentistry.”

“The Colour Scheme is Clear and with plenty information for the person with time to read about other services that are offered.”

“The patient feedback is confusing.”

“Updated website will probably contain up to date info.”

“Seems like a few of the pages that have detail on NHS vs private services needs updating there are also a few broken links here. “

“No information on Covid, which is relevant to these times. 2020 stamp on the foot of the pages.”

“All of the information contained within the website is all up to date, although there could be more information on NHS Bands and covid precautions.”

“Info very helpful except for absence of NHS/private charges. Also, seems (as at some other practices) that patients need to complete form before getting appointment, may indicate that triage is happening which could mean some people not getting non-urgent appointments or having to wait longer.”

“NB In the websites I’ve looked at so far it hasn’t been clear given reduced capacity of DPs whether for e/g/ new patients, routine appointments, etc are being seen.”

“Site is user friendly, except for possible glitch with non-working link (might work on someone else's pc); welcoming and informal. From the website it's the kind of practice you would expect to contact and get an appointment and professional treatment.”

“Nothing more than what we would expect.”

“There is a lot of information on the website, there is information on NHS and private fees, as well as their work on charity work, I cannot think of anything that would be missing from the website.”

“Re Q10 info is up to date (NHS charges include the 14 December 2020 increase. Includes link to eligibility to free NHS treatment including list of benefits and info on NHS low-income scheme. The information on the website is easy to access and clearly set out (in boxes, large print etc). Think one of the links on the covid page may be NHS info which is now out of date.”

“Judging from reviews info is probably up to date. Not much more to add given absence of website.”

“The information helpful and unhelpful because of the design and how it is presented. for example, too much information's that not related to dentistry therefore time will be needed to search through for relevant information.”

“There is no information for those seeking dental services.”

“Would be great to see some information around signposting on there.”

“Nice layout and clear.”

“Not helpful re covid; info only up to date as of 5 November 2020. Not helpful re NHS treatments.

“Very helpful on contacting surgery: phone number etc at end of each page. Also, very user friendly re info on practice, treatments.”

“Not surprising there isn't any info re free NHS treatment since no details re NHS.”

“No information on NHS.”

“There is a lot of information on the website, and it seems like they have everything that a new or existing patient would need except translation.”

“Good information on managing tooth pain at home, a clear way to triage yourself.”

“Covid updates from Jan 2021.”

“Single mention that they do NHS work, on the lockdown update page. Information pasted below: ‘These include: The NHS and medical services like GPs and dentists. We are supporting the NHS to carry out urgent and non-urgent services safely, and it is vital anyone who thinks they need any kind of medical care comes forward and seeks help.’ “

“The dentist is not reflective of a multicultural community in any way and therefore does not comply with current employment legislation or on equality.”

“May be but would require time to search.”

“The overall view of the website is not diverse, all the images are do not include a black person, hence a black person will not feel particularly welcome.”

“All of the information provided is super helpful, it would be better if there was more information on the registration process, covid and NHS treatments vs private.”

“Very helpful the way all of the information is laid out, not too much and therefore it is easy to digest.”

“Assume info up to date and opening hours are current but information I could glean not very helpful.”

“The website is not friendly, information on dental care is not accessible.”

“Basic dentistry information but ignores the Equality Act. Reasonable adjustment.”

“This Dental practice attempts to cater for the community but in so doing it has not been structured for patients to locate.”

“Not all, all information is ell detailed.”

“The dentist is not reflective of a multicultural community in any way and therefore does not comply with current employment legislation or on equality.
“

“May be but would require time to search.”

“The overall view of the website is not diverse, all the images are do not include a black person, hence a black person will not feel particularly welcome.”

“All of the information provided is super helpful, it would be better if there was more information on the registration process, covid and NHS treatments vs private.”

“Very helpful the way all of the information is laid out, not too much and therefore it is easy to digest.”

“Re Q5 emergencies: next to appointments box there is a box saying for emergency appointments call 111 for emergency out of hours appointment; Not very clear, -would have expected patients registered with practice to phone there first to get appointment. Is this intended for people not registered with practice. Note website not updated since November 2020; NHS charges do not include 14 December increase.”

“There is also a hygienists access scheme where people can pay for hygienist appointment without having to register with the practice or make a check-up appointment.”

2.10 Review of practices

The following shows responses to the general overall questions on websites reflecting what was helpful or unhelpful. Practices were measured across nine areas:

- User-friendliness
- Clear information about being put on a practice's books.
- Information on dental emergencies
- Information on NHS prices and various bands
- Information on Covid safe practices
- A clear difference between private and NHS.
- Links working or broken and use of translation.
- Information up to date.
- Information relating to personal circumstances such as cost exemption due to benefits.

One practice, Croydon Dental Care had all 9, see case study below. Five surgeries scored 8 out of 9 - Coulsdon Dental Practice, Family Dental Practice, London Road Dental Centre, MK Vasant and Associates and Parchmore Dental Care.

7 - 11 surgeries

6 - 7 surgeries

5 - 7 surgeries

4 - 5 surgeries

3 - 4 surgeries

2- 4 surgeries

1- 2 surgeries

0 - 4 surgeries

The average across 50 was 4.9 out of a maximum score of 9.

3 Responses to our insight

South West London Local Dental Committee

“We will support improvements to our members' websites based on the feedback in Healthwatch Croydon's report and welcome all feedback which leads to improved services.”

This report is published at the same time as the main report on Croydon residents experience of dental services. Please see the statement in this report for more detail on the impact of the insight produced, working with the Local Dental Committee.

4 Quality assurance

Developing Research Questions

1. **Overall does the research ask the right questions?** Yes, Healthwatch Croydon reviewed other work and worked with the Local Dental Committee to ask questions that would be relevant to the planning and delivery of this service
2. **Has consideration been given to how the findings will be used?** Yes, firstly insight for local dentists on how their websites have been experienced by mystery shoppers to improve the information for patients and potential patients.
3. **Is the research design appropriate for the question being asked?** Yes, under the circumstances an online assessment by volunteers seemed most appropriate, during the time of restrictions.
4. **Has any potential bias been addressed?** Yes, these are detailed in the limitations section but include a selection of websites, inconsistencies in recording and assessing websites
5. **Have ethical considerations been assessed and addressed appropriately?** There were no significant ethical considerations in this survey.
6. **Has risk been assessed where relevant and does it include?**
 - a. **Risk to well-being** No significant risk
 - b. **Reputational risk** Only in that we do not produce accurate results or do not deliver work in time to be effective.
 - c. **Legal risk:** No significant risk
7. **Have appropriate resources been accessed and used to conduct the research?** Yes, staff and volunteer time was used effectively.

8. **Where relevant have all contractual and funding arrangements been adhered to?** This was core work agreed by the Local Leadership Board, so no contract or funding was defined for this work.

Data Management

9. **Is the collection, analysis and management of data clearly articulated within the research design?** Yes.
10. **Has data retention and security been addressed appropriately?** Yes, all responses are on Smart Survey and data only download to staff computers. There was no personal data except staff knowing who undertook each survey.
11. **Have the DPA/GDPR and FOIA been considered, and requirements met?**
Yes.

Thinking about Research Subjects

12. **Have all relevant legal requirements been adhered to ensure that the well-being of participants has been accounted for? i.e., the Mental Capacity Act**
Not relevant for this project
13. **Has appropriate care and consideration been given to the dignity, rights, and safety of participants?** Not relevant for this project
14. **Were participants clearly informed of how their information would be used and assurances made regarding confidentiality/anonymity?** Yes, volunteers were aware they were recording this with anonymity as far as providers are considered.

Collaborative Working

15. **Where work is being undertaken in collaboration with other organisations have protocols and policies been clearly understood and agreed upon, including the development of a clear contractual agreement prior to commencement?** We worked closely with the Croydon Local Dental Committee to understand more about the context of dentistry and ensure

that the questions we asked were relevant to helping further develop services. This was an informal arrangement to share information.

16. Have any potential issues or risks that could arise been mitigated?

Risk	Level	Management
Not enough volunteers	LOW	Recruit more volunteers.
List information out of date	Medium	Need to check sources
Inconsistencies	Medium	Ensure set questions and recheck

17. Has Healthwatch independence been maintained? Yes, Healthwatch’s independence has been always maintained. We took advice on the context of dentistry from the Local Dental Committee, but it was Healthwatch Croydon’s decision on what was asked.

Quality Assurance

18. Has a quality assurance process been incorporated into the design? Yes.

19. Has quality assurance occurred prior to publication? Yes.

20. Has peer review been undertaken? Not relevant for this work.

Conflicts of Interest

21. Have any conflicts of interest been accounted for? There are no conflicts of interest.

Intellectual Property and Publication

22. **Does the research consider intellectual property rights, authorship, and acknowledgements as per organisational requirements?** This is owned by Healthwatch Croydon who are managed by Help and Care
23. **Is the research accessible to the public?** Yes, this will be published on the Healthwatch Croydon website on 01.06.2022
24. **Are the research findings clearly articulated and accurate?** To our best knowledge they are

Evaluation and Impact

25. **Have recommendations been made for improving the service?** Yes.
26. **Has the service provider acted based upon the recommendations?** The South West London Local Dental committee is sharing our insight with relevant dental practices to support them in improving their websites to meet patient expectations. We are also putting together a case study of good practice to help dental practices improve their services
27. **Is there a plan in place to evaluate the changes made by the service provider?** Healthwatch Croydon is working with the South West London Local Dental Committee to monitor changes of practice websites.

5 References

Integrated Care Journal (2022) *Healthwatch and Croydon LDC working to highlight local patient needs*: <https://integratedcarejournal.com/newsdit-article/7f6d0005cfe999ea002f699c0088d21d/healthwatch-and-croydon-ldc-working-to-highlight-local-patient-needs/>

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