

PRESS RELEASE – 29TH March 2021

Healthwatch warns of broken dental system

Today, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove launches its report "Accessing dental services under COVID-19".

- People in dental pain and distress are finding it difficult to get help.
- People are being encouraged to get help by paying as private patients.
- Advice and information on dental care is confusing, and often inaccurate and misleading.
- Dentists are struggling to provide services, cope personally and survive commercially.

Healthwatch England announced a national dental crisis on the 9th February 2021 (see below for more information).

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove reviewed the COVID-19 related advice given to people from all 43 Brighton and Hove NHS dental practice websites and answerphone messages.

Availability of information was poor:

- Four practices advised they were not open on their website but were not clear about this in their phone message;
- Two practices did not have COVID-19 related information on either their website or phone message.



- 15 practices had COVID-19 related information only in one place, either on their website or in their phone message.

Availability of service-specific information was lacking:

- None of the practices provided information on both their website and phone message about the availability of routine and urgent appointments, and their availability for new patients.
- Five practices did not provide information on either urgent appointments or availability for new patients.
- 15 practices either did not provide any information on urgent appointments OR the availability for new patients.

Availability of advice on emergency services and COVID-19 related information was poor:

- 14 practices did not provide patient advice about where to go in the case of an emergency.
- 21 practices did not provide any advice on COVID-19 infection control procedures for patients.
- Eight practices did not provide any information about emergency services, COVID-19 procedures or any indication of how up to date their information was.

To read the full report, please click on the link below.

David Liley, CEO, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove, said



"Locally and nationally dental concerns are second only to COVID as issues raised with Healthwatch by the public. Some dentists in our City are providing an outstanding service and the last thing we want to do is to criticise them. But for many people the reality has been of living with pain, dental distress and not knowing where to go for help.

We have escalated these issues nationally and to NHS leaders in Sussex; Our MPs have asked questions in Parliament and we meet regularly with local dentists and NHS England. But so far there is no clear path to a better future for dental care.

People cannot find a dentist when they need one; serious dental issues like mouth cancers are not being identified. Dentists are finding their contract arrangements difficult. The system is simply broken and needs radical reform."

[Accessing dental services under COVID-19](#)

[Healthwatch England Report](#)

Contact for interviews and comment:

Contact for interviews and comment:

David Liley, Chief Officer, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove

david@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk 07931 755 343

office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Press release ends

