

Kent and Sussex Commissioning of Mandatory Dental Services Patient and Public Engagement Report



Background

As part of its commissioning responsibilities, NHS England and NHS Improvement directly commissions general dental services under mandatory dental services contracts.

Some providers in Kent and Sussex recently terminated their contracts to provide mandatory dental services. There were also some providers underperforming on their contracts so that they were not providing as many units of dental activity as their contracts allow.

NHS England and NHS Improvement South East has taken this opportunity to consider which areas would benefit most from additional general dental services. A health needs analysis was carried out to identify the areas of greatest need where new mandatory dental services contracts are being commissioned.

New contracts will commence on a rolling basis with new services commencing from late 2020. The new contracts will be mandatory dental service contracts. These provide NHS dental services for both adults and children.

The contract specification follows national commissioning guidelines but has also taken into account feedback from patients, the public and stakeholders.

Patient and public engagement summary

130 people completed the online survey to provide their views.

Of these:

- 52% were from Kent
- 42% were from East Sussex
- 6% were from Brighton and Hove

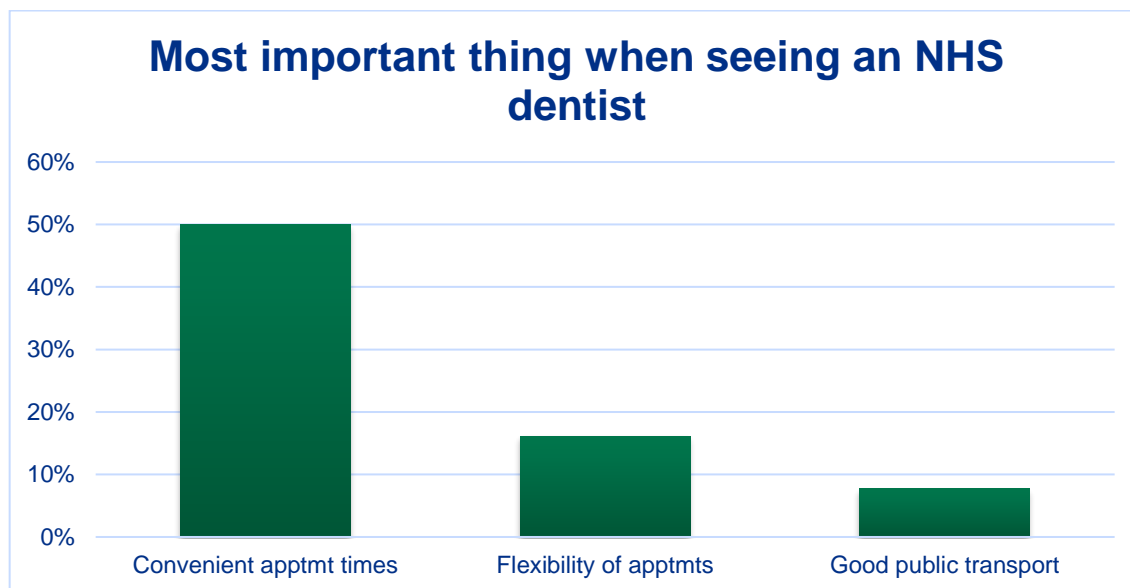
The survey was available on the NHS England consultation website and was promoted by local partners including Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthwatch organisations and Local Authorities.

The survey asked for views on a number of subjects including:

- what is important when seeing a dentist
- experiences of getting an appointment
- preferred times/days of the week for appointments and
- preferences on different options for urgent dental care.

As well as being able to select responses from a given range of options, respondents were also able to provide free text comments on what was most important to them as well as providing any general comments on NHS dental services.

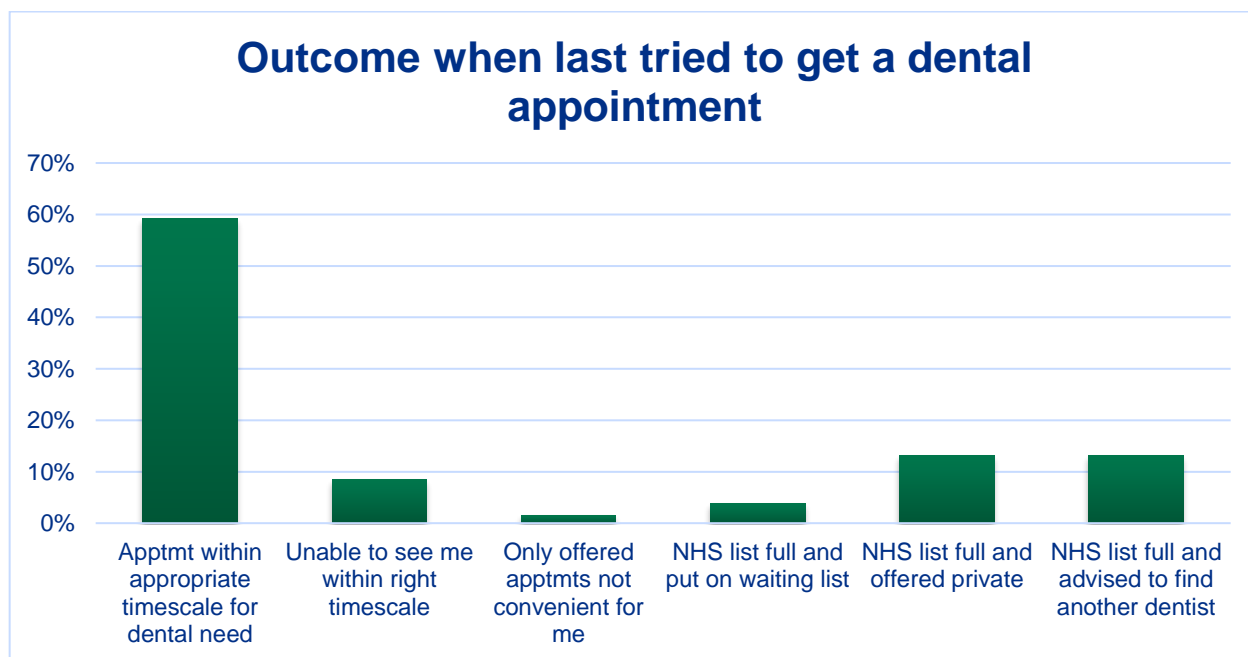
What is most important to you when seeing an NHS dentist?



Half of all respondents stated that convenient appointment times were the most important thing to them when seeing a dentist, 16% wanted to have flexibility of appointments and overall 8% stated that good public transport was important though this rose to 25% for Brighton and Hove.

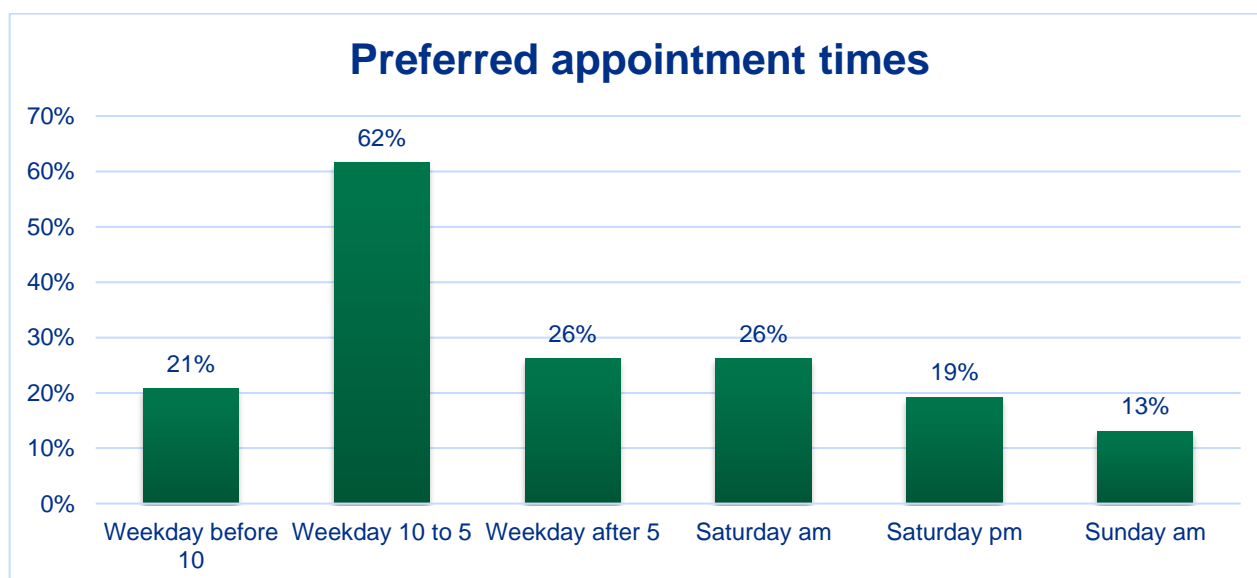
Around a quarter of respondents chose to provide their own response to this question. This resulted in a range of reasons though providing good care and treatment and being able to have access to an NHS dentist were common reasons provided.

What was the outcome when you last tried to get an NHS dental appointment?



The majority of people (59%) felt that they had managed to get an appointment within an appropriate timescale for their dental need. Nearly one in three people (30%) had been unable to get an appointment when they needed it with an NHS dentist and had been offered private treatment, put on a waiting list or advised to find another dentist taking on NHS patients.

When would you like to have appointments?

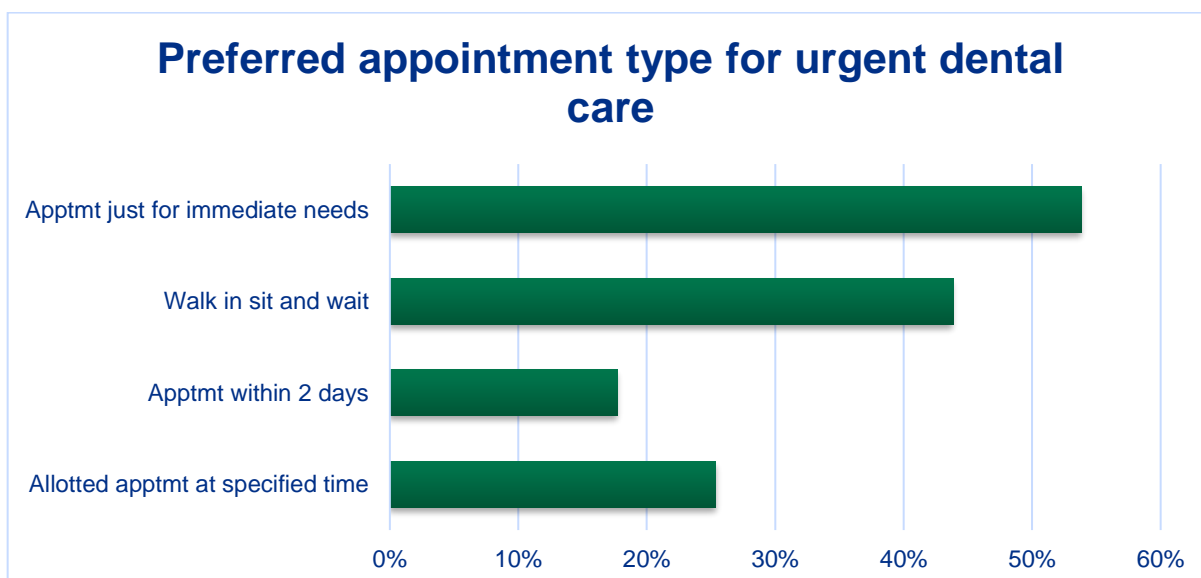


Respondents were able to select more than one day/time when they would like to have appointments. The most popular time is during a normal working day between 10am and 5pm Monday to Friday, selected by 62% of respondents.

Around a quarter of people said they would like appointments before 10am or after 5pm on weekdays or on Saturday mornings. 19% of people said they would like appointments on Saturday afternoons but only 13% of people wanted Sunday morning appointments.

There was some variation by location with respondents in East Sussex being more likely to want appointments between 10 and 5 on weekdays (70%) whilst half of the respondents in Brighton and Hove preferring to have appointments after 5pm on weekdays.

Preferred type of appointment for urgent dental care



We asked people what type of appointment they would want if they needed urgent dental care. Respondents were able to select more than one option. Just over half of respondents said they'd be happy to have an appointment which was just for their immediate needs with 44% opting for a walk-in sit and wait service, 25% wanting an allotted appointment at a specified time and 18% of people stating they'd be happy with an appointment within two days.

Other comments

The survey provided an area for free text comments so that people could provide feedback on any element of NHS dental services rather than being limited by the more specific questions.

Common themes from these comments were:

- access to NHS dental care
- private treatment
- standard of NHS dental care
- costs of NHS dental services
- accessibility to services
- special care dental services
- urgent dental care

The highest number of comments were around having access to NHS dental services. 37 comments were made on this subject with many stating that there are no NHS dentists taking on patients in their local area. Other comments included having to wait a long time for an appointment and appointment times not being convenient for patients.

Where people receive NHS dental services there was a high level of satisfaction with 26 people commenting on the good service they receive from their current dentist.

Private dental treatment was mentioned by 25 people, mainly stating that they now have private dental treatment due to the lack of availability of NHS dentists. There were also some comments that NHS treatment is not seen to be as good as that provided if having private dental treatment.

Cost was a factor raised by a number of people in terms of the high cost of NHS dental care with many people not receiving free treatment as well as a number of treatments, for example hygienist treatment, not being available under the NHS.

Some wheelchair users stated that they had difficulty accessing their NHS dentist and a number of respondents asked for more services for people with additional needs including those with phobias or learning disabilities.

Where people had received urgent care there was a mixed response on how good this had been with a split between those stating they had good or poor urgent dental care.

Considerations for the commissioning of NHS dental services

The survey showed that people are keen to have more NHS dental services in their local areas which will be supported through commissioning new services. It is hoped that by commissioning additional services this will also help to reduce the time that people need to wait to get an appointment.

Having convenient appointment times was stated as the most important thing when seeing an NHS dentist. Although the majority of respondents were happy with appointments during weekdays between 10am and 5pm, a significant number also wanted access to appointments earlier and later on weekdays and at weekends.

Bidders will be asked what times they plan to provide appointments which will then be considered when evaluating bids.

A few people commented on the accessibility of dental surgeries for people in wheelchairs, the service specification should include a requirement for premises being used by providers to be accessible to wheelchair users with premises being fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The costs of NHS dental services are set so although people were concerned about the cost this is not something which can be addressed through the commissioning of new services.

Some comments were received relating to special care dental services, a separate commissioning exercise is planned for these services so any comments will be considered as part of that.

Appendix A

Summary of free text comments

Summary of free text comment themes

Access to NHS services	37
- availability of services	28
- long wait for appointments	5
- poor appointment times	2
Private treatment	25
- being offered this/having to go private	18
- view that NHS treatment is not as good as private	2
- NHS patients being treated less favourably than private patients	3
Standard of NHS care and treatment	34
Good NHS service and treatment	26
Poor NHS treatment	
- treatment provided	6
- appointments don't always run to time	2
Costs and types of NHS treatment	14
- affordability (want free for 60+, students, cap on prices, high cost of some treatments even on NHS – hard for middle income families, need to pay for hygienist)	10
- wider range of treatments on NHS	4
Wheelchair accessibility	3
Special care dental services	5
- dentists able to care for people with phobias or learning disabilities	
Urgent care	7
- good urgent care	3
- poor urgent care	4