

## Healthwatch Oxfordshire Report to Health Overview Scrutiny Committee April 2019.

### DENTISTRY

Healthwatch Oxfordshire carried out two pieces of research in 2018 focusing on NHS Dentistry. This focus was as a result hearing concerns about access to NHS dentistry in Bicester in 2017, leading to Healthwatch Oxfordshire highlighting the problem to NHS England Commissioners, who have since commissioned more NHS dentists in the area.

Our subsequent reports 'Filling the Gaps; Access to NHS Dentistry in Oxfordshire' and 'Treatment only when needed- dental services for care home residents' included conversations with more than 400 people across the county, 172 questionnaire responses, and 26 care home responses.

Reports can be found here - <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-reports/healthwatch-oxfordshire-reports/>

Overall, we found:

- Concerns about access to NHS dentistry in some areas of the county experiencing population growth, with services not keeping up with demand (Thame, Faringdon, Bicester Wantage\*\* (also highlighted in Wantage Town study)
- Gap in awareness of importance of oral health among some adults and children
- Room for improved information on what is available on the NHS including clear communication about pricing.

Our main findings highlighted by the care home study were:

1. A significant number of residents in care homes did not use dental services at all.
2. Healthwatch Oxfordshire found that there were significant gaps in provision of dentistry services to residents of care homes.
3. Some care homes struggle to obtain NHS dental services for their residents.

Barriers faced meant that many residents at care homes received no dental treatment at all, or only in an emergency. Barriers included:

- Lack of NHS dentists to visit a home.
- Poor physical access at dentists' surgeries.
- Lack of transport and staff time to take residents for appointments

- Some homes felt that dentists were unwilling or unhappy to treat patients with dementia or learning disability.

We asked care homes what could be done to improve access to dental services for their residents, and the following were suggested:

1. Better access to dentists at the care home for residents who cannot easily visit dental surgeries
2. Dementia training for dentist treating residents with dementia. This would also improve the experience of people living with dementia in the community
3. More information available to care homes about dental services that can be accessed by their residents.

### Stakeholder meeting

Healthwatch Oxfordshire convened a stakeholder meeting to discuss the findings of the report in **September 2018**. This enabled discussion and support for a collaborative approach to tackling some of the issues. We are currently following up with attendees to identify outcomes.

Whilst NHS England South were unable to attend the meeting, they gave a written response to our reports saying that:

‘We recognise there are growing challenges around oral health for older patients, particularly as a much higher proportion of older people still retain their own teeth nowadays.’

In terms of key issues raised in the report:

#### Access to High Street Dental practices

NHS dental practices provide access to a full range of services for patients of all ages. Their contracts are site-specific, which means they can only provide services from sites identified in their contracts. Their services have to meet all the necessary requirements for Care Quality Commission registration and with regard a number of other legal requirements, such as infection control.

There are challenges for dentists in terms of going into care homes in terms of the limitations it places on treatment that can be provided if the necessary equipment and facilities are not available. Dentists also have to ensure compliance with infection control regulations and CQC registration for any site from which they provide services.

If patients are unable to attend High Street services on medical grounds, they can attend or be referred to Community Dental Service clinics with staff and facilities more adapted to their needs. In Oxfordshire, this service is provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and it has a number of clinics from which it provides services. The Trust has three domiciliary teams (North, Oxford City and South and West). The Trust has provided a domiciliary service for many years and is happy to see patients with a range of needs, both routine and urgent. The service has

experienced staff willing to provide support to the care homes. Access to High Street dentistry is under review at the moment with the aim of ensuring there are no gaps in provision. This is both in terms of High Street access and access to more specialist services.

The Oxfordshire Community Dental service has advised us that it has been unusually quiet recently in terms of contact with care homes and that it was looking to do work to ensure the care homes are aware of this service. We are aware that some care homes experience high turn-over of staff and this may impact on the local awareness of available services. We would also like to share that guidelines were recently published about maintaining good oral health in care home settings (i.e. helping residents brush their teeth twice a day). This is the responsibility of the home, but the Community Dental Services could advise and support staff if needed’.

**Rose Hill Primary School - Healthy Eating Consultation.** This HWO Project Fund report carried out by researchers associated with Rose Hill Primary School focused on engaging parents, children and teachers in exploring development of healthy eating guidelines for the school. It highlighted some issues around oral health including:

- Many felt that information about dental care is scarcer, that knowledge about keeping teeth healthy is low, and as a consequence, many children have dental caries (tooth decay).
- Challenges of the wider food environment to healthy eating related to oral health, including access to foods high in sugar, higher cost of fresh fruit and vegetables, food poverty and confusing labelling systems on foods.
- Some parents spoke of efforts to find a ‘child friendly dentist’
- Schools can be a powerful vehicle in efforts to improve public health. They can create a healthy environment by encouraging and modelling healthy behaviour, educating children about healthy options, harnessing the power of positive peer influence, and reaching out to families, carers and the wider community

As a result of the report, Rose Hill school has had ongoing conversations with the Community Dental Service.

**Wider ‘service review’ comments on our Feedback Centre** (78 reviews from April 2018-March 2019) about individual dentists on infographics. Overall positive about treatment, but include comments on access to NHS dentists, waiting times, and communication/ information given by dentists about treatment, costs and care, pressure to go private, high staff turnover.

#### **OXFORD UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

We continue to visit hospitals monthly - 2019 has seen visits to the Nuffield Orthopaedic and Horton General hospitals. Parking continues to be a major theme of concern.

An Enter and View visit took place at the A&E Urgent Care Centre - full report will be published in April.

## HEALTHWATCH OXFORDSHIRE ACTIVITY UPDATE

- **Men's Health Film;** focused on the work with Healthwatch Oxfordshire and East Oxford United to reach men in East Oxford, funded through NHS England, presented at Health Inequalities Commission Good Practice event. Film can be viewed on our website <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/>
- **Report on changes to Adult Daytime support (2017-18)** completed and presented to Oxfordshire County Council's Performance Scrutiny Committee. Recommendation accepted to review its approach to major changes to services specifically:
  - communication with service users and their carers
  - and the impact on service changes on carers be addressed through the change process.
- **Patient Participation Group events** - two events with 106 delegates representing 34 practices across all six localities. Purpose was to share experiences, learn from other groups, and hear about the future of primary care from Locality Leads. We plan to hold two more forum meetings in the summer and autumn this year. The full report is available here <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/what-we-do/supporting-patient-participation-groups-and-locality-forums/>
- **Enter and View activity**
  - We spent New Year's Eve with the South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust SOS Bus
  - All Enter & View Reports can be found here <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/enter-and-view-reports/>

### Future activity includes:

**Healthwatch England** funding to support stakeholder engagement across BOB footprint, to gain insight into local priorities for NHS Long Term Plan. We are holding two focus groups to discuss mental health services in Oxfordshire.

### Focus on mental health in 2019

**Enter and View** with an aim to visit the Warneford Hospital in April.