



Accessing dentistry services since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

May 2022

healthwatch
Sutton

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About Healthwatch Sutton

Healthwatch Sutton is your local health and social care champion. From Worcester Park to Wallington and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

If you've recently visited your GP, or local hospital, or used any health and social care services in the London Borough of Sutton, we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good experience or bad experience, we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say. We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Sutton and beyond.

Find out more about us on our website: www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk.

Background

Lack of access to NHS dentistry has intensified as an issue for people over the last 18 months. Nationally, Healthwatch England have seen a large increase in the volume of feedback and a huge increase in the amount of negative sentiment ([Healthwatch England, 2021](#)).

In Sutton, we have also seen a large increase in the volume of enquiries from residents struggling to access local NHS dentistry services.

In response to this, we contacted all 36 dental practices in and around the London Borough of Sutton to identify the practices taking on new patients and to find out the average waiting times for accessing routine and emergency appointments. Since the publication of the [report](#), we have been able to help signpost residents to local NHS dentists accepting patients, but we have had varying levels of success.

What we did

We created a survey to gather feedback from Sutton residents who had either used, or tried to use, any type of dental service since March 2020.

We liaised with the Local Dentistry Committee and NHS South West London Clinical Commissioning Group to develop the questions needed to capture the information we need to improve support locally.

The survey was available between 21 January and 21 March 2022. It was promoted online via social media, e-bulletins and on our website. We also asked Sutton Council, the local NHS and our partners in the voluntary sector to share our survey in their newsletters and social media channels.

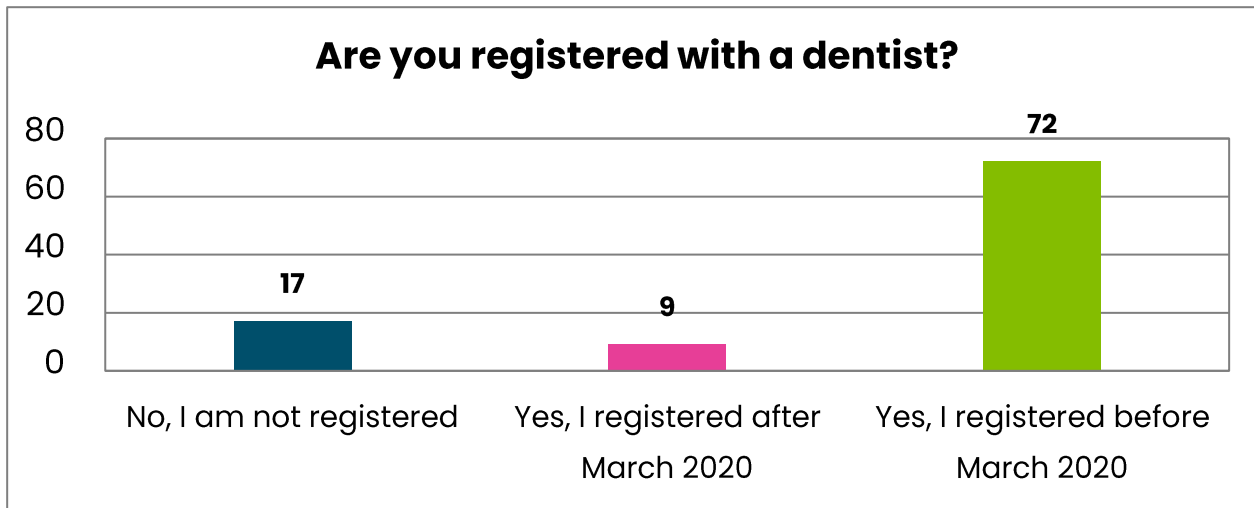
In addition to this, we sent a paper copy of our survey to our members who are not online.

We received 98 responses.

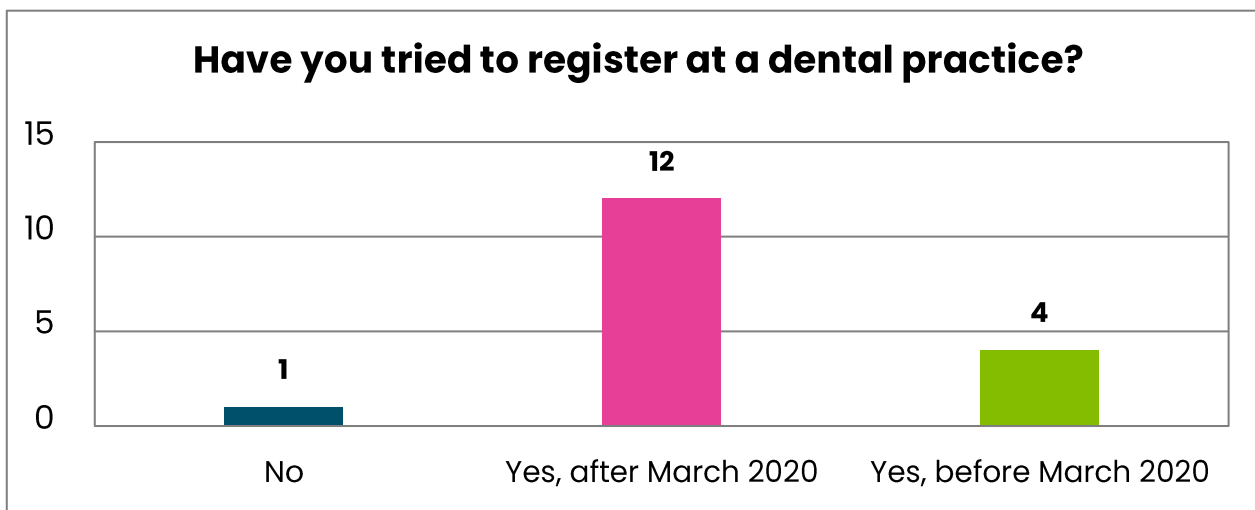
What we found

Registering with a dentist

The majority of respondents (73%) told us that they registered with a dentist before March 2020. 9% told us that they had registered with a dentist after March 2020. 17% told us that they were not registered with a dentist at the time of completing the survey.



We asked the 17% of respondents who were not registered at a dentist whether they had tried to register at a dental practice and when they attempted to register. We also asked why they were unable to register.



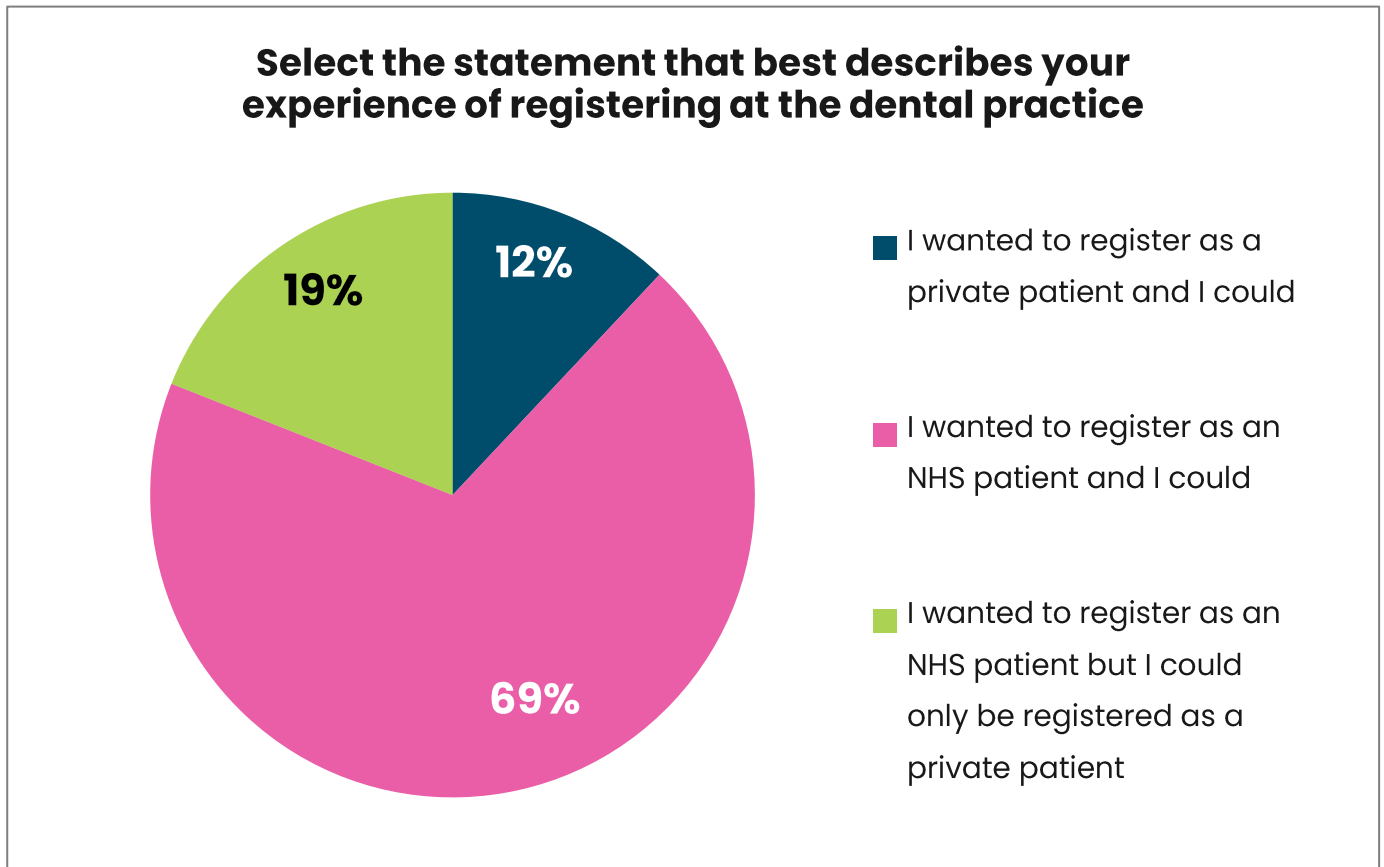
All the 12 respondents who tried to register with a dentist after March 2020 told us that they were unable to register because they contacted surgeries but they were not accepting NHS patients.

Experiences of registering with dental practices

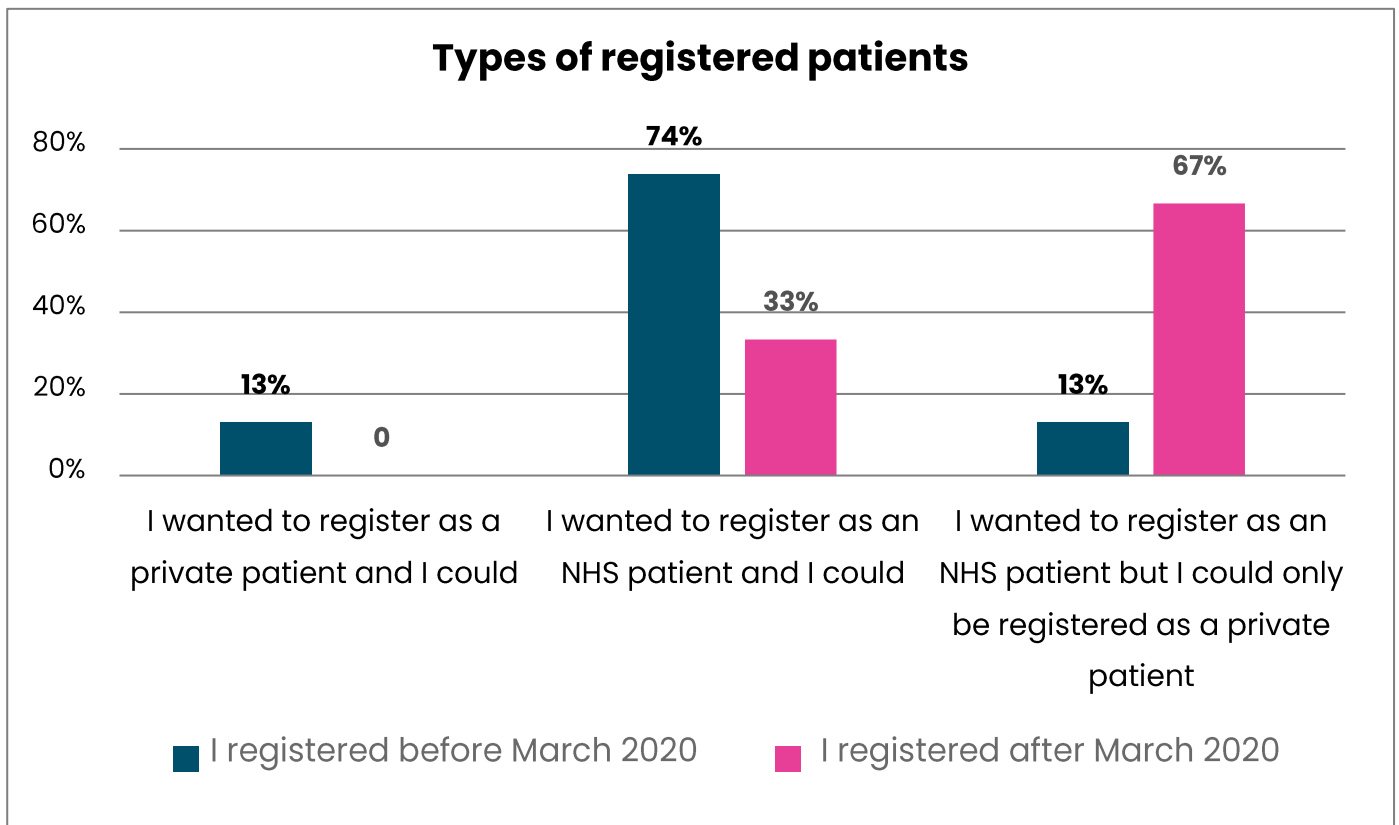
The majority of respondents who were registered with a dental practice (69%) told us that they wanted to register as an NHS patient and they could.

Almost 1 in 5 respondents told us that that they wanted to register as an NHS patient but they could only be registered as a private patient.

12% of respondents told us that they wanted to register as a private patient and they could.



We compared people's experiences of registering with dental practices before and after March 2020.



The chart above is subject to a considerable amount of variants due to a low number of respondents who registered after March 2020.

However, the chart shows that there is a significant decline in the number of people who were able to register as an NHS patient when they wanted to, after the pandemic started.

Routine appointments

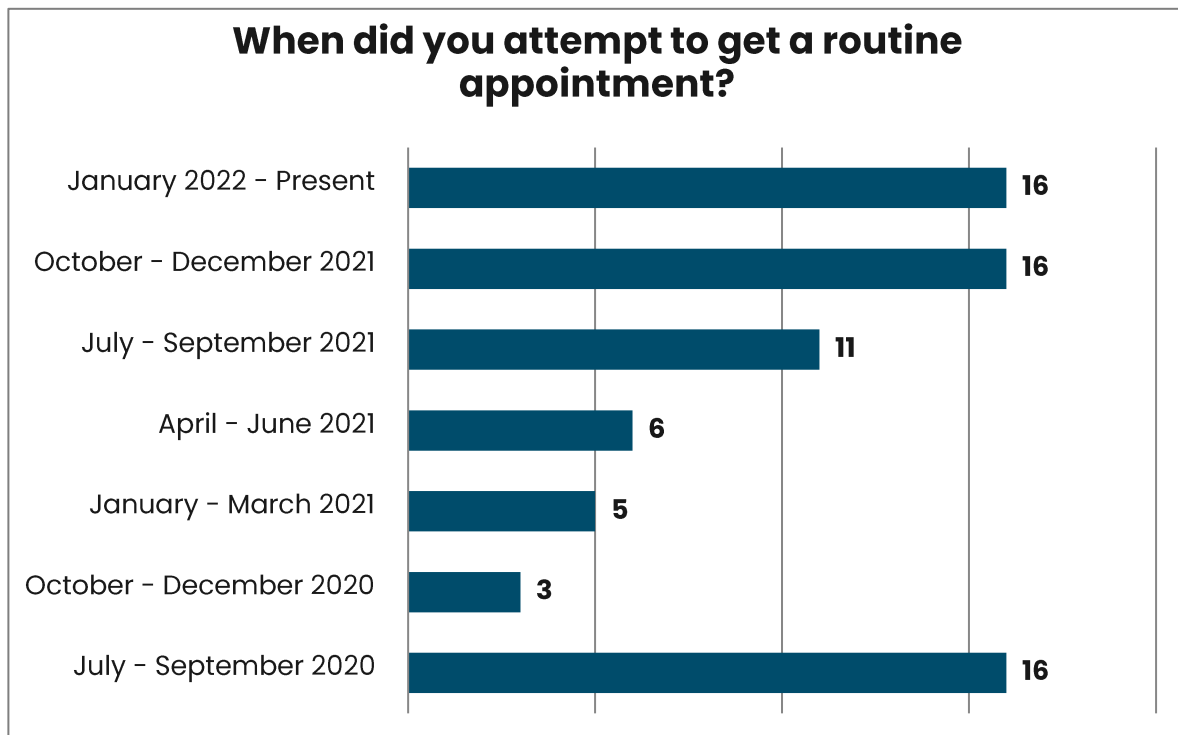
Have you attempted to arrange a routine appointment since March 2020?

76 respondents told us that they had attempted to arrange a routine appointment since March 2020.

When did you attempt to get a routine appointment?

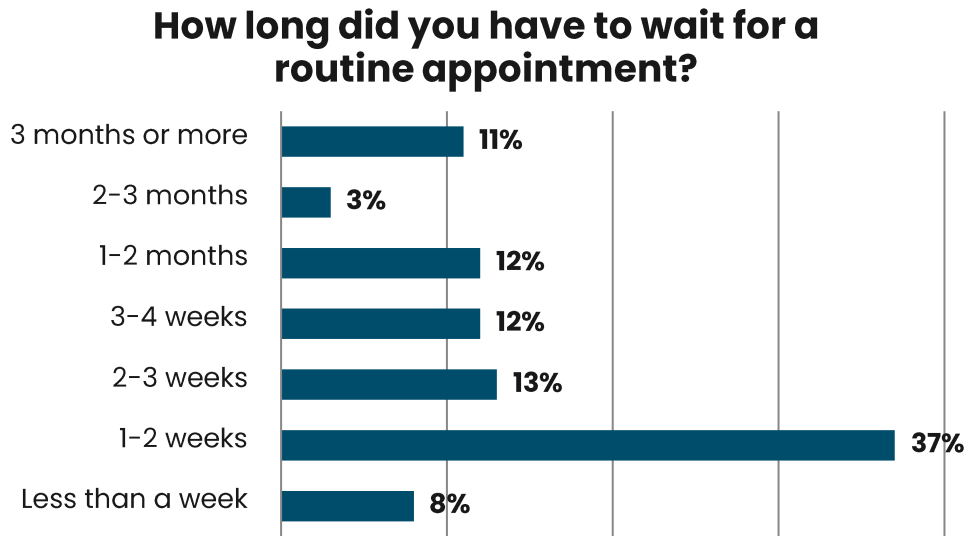
The same number of respondents (16) told us that they had attempted to book a routine appointment between July–September 2020, October–December 2020 and January 2022–Present.

It is important to note that there were national lockdowns between March–June 2020, November–December 2020 and January 2021–March 2021.



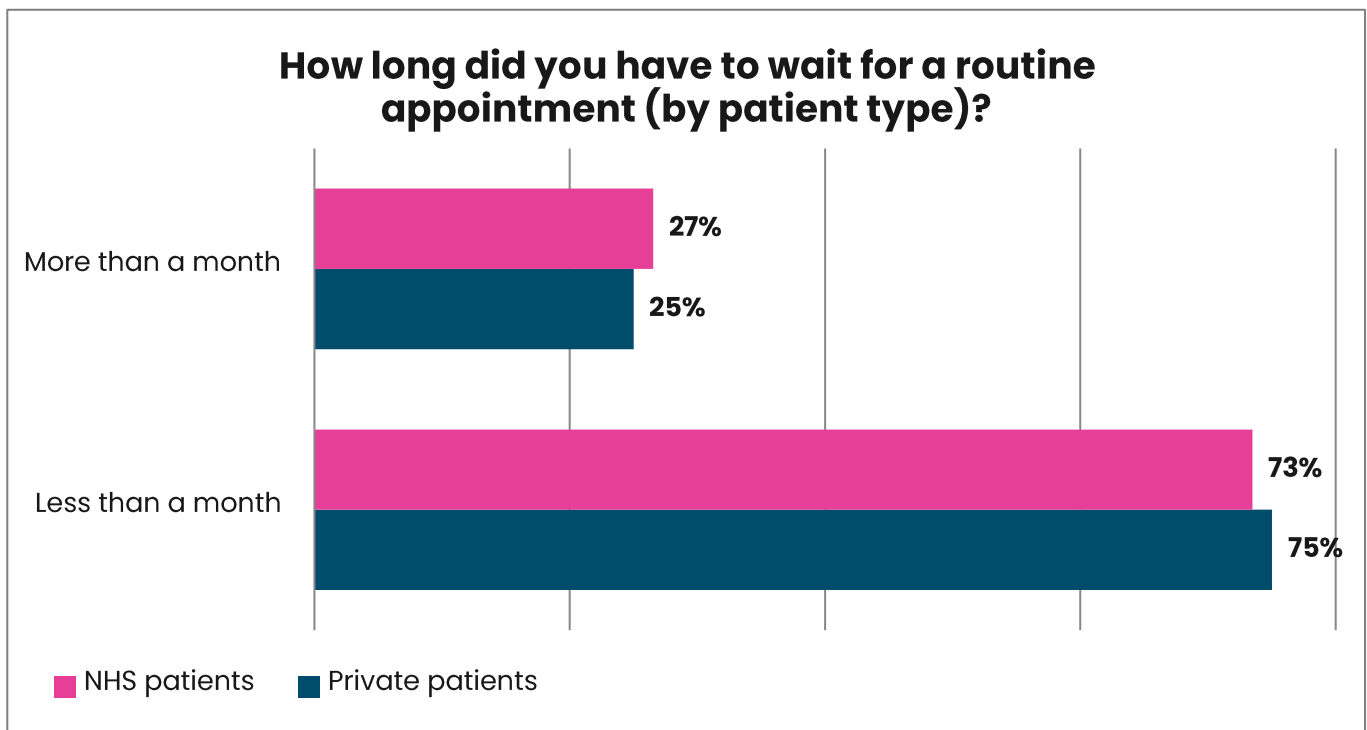
How long did you have to wait for a routine appointment?

The majority of respondents (37%) had to wait 1-2 weeks for a routine appointment.



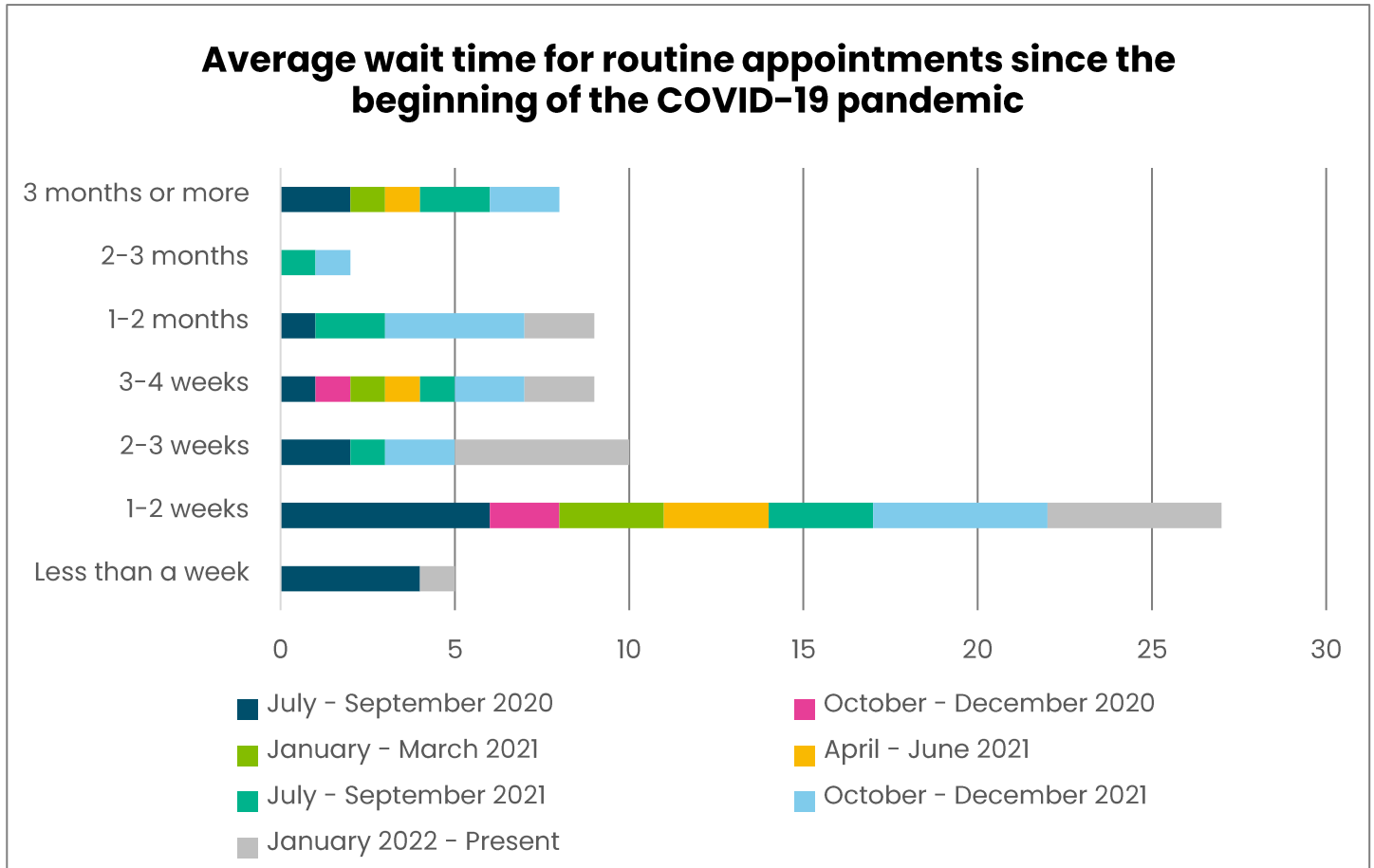
More than 1 in 4 of respondents had to wait 1 month or more for a routine appointment.

We compared people's experiences of registering with a dental practice (e.g. private or NHS) with the length of time they had to wait for a routine appointment.



The chart above suggests that the majority of private patients (75%) and NHS patients (73%) waited less than a month for a routine appointment.

We also compared the average wait time for routine appointments with the time of year for when people attempted to book an appointment.



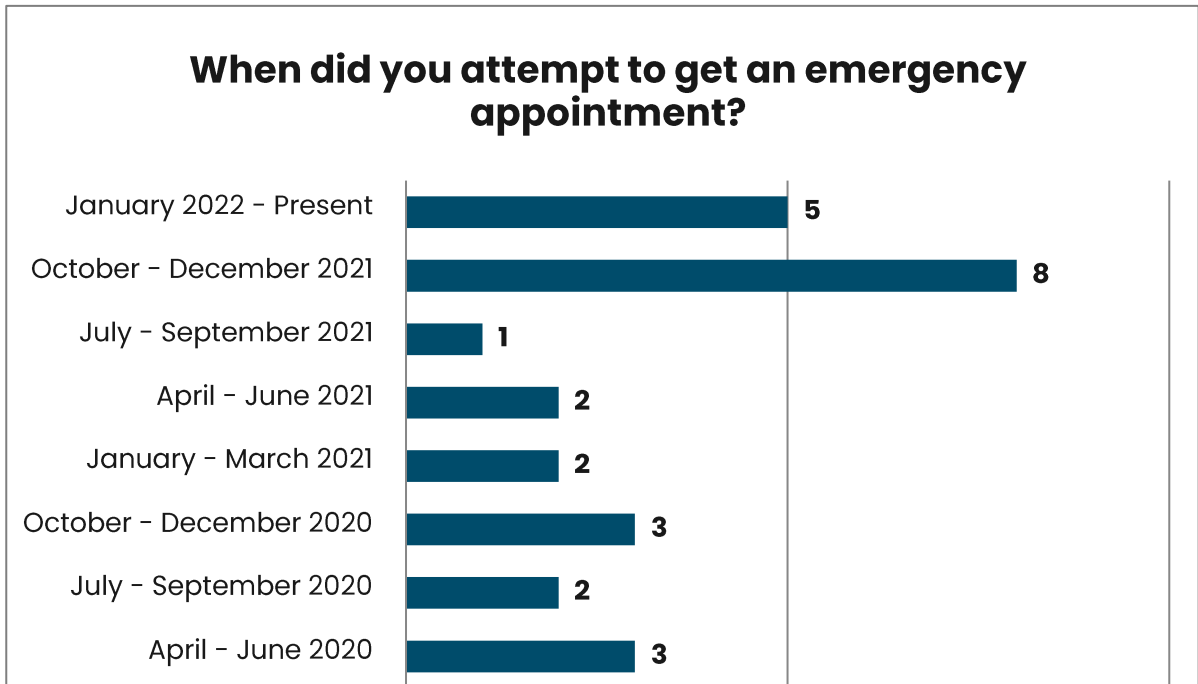
The chart above suggests that the average wait time for routine appointments has been 1-2 weeks between July 2020–March 2022.

Emergency appointments

Have you attempted to arrange an emergency appointment since March 2020?

25 respondents told us that they had attempted to arrange an emergency appointment since March 2020.

When did you attempt to get an emergency appointment?

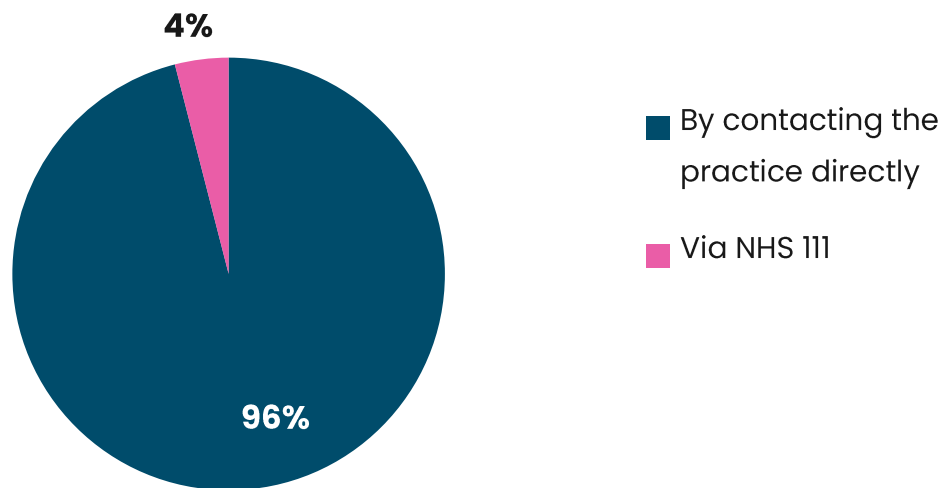


How did you attempt to book an emergency appointment?

13% of respondents reported that they were unable to get an emergency appointments.

Of the respondents who were able to book an emergency appointment, 96% contacted the practice directly and 4% contacted NHS 111.

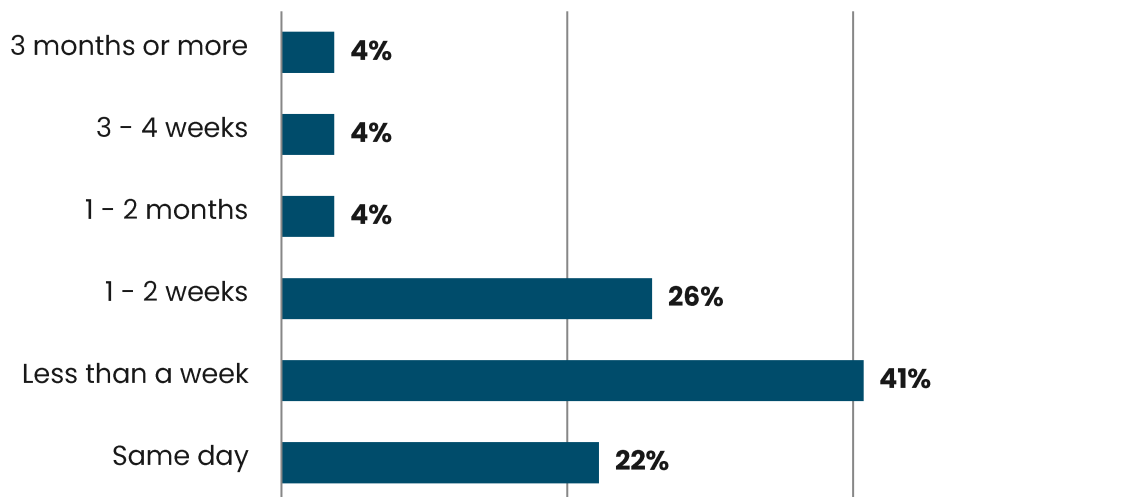
How did you attempt to book an emergency appointment?



How long did you have to wait for an emergency appointment?

The majority of respondents (41%) reported that they had to wait less than a week for an emergency appointment.

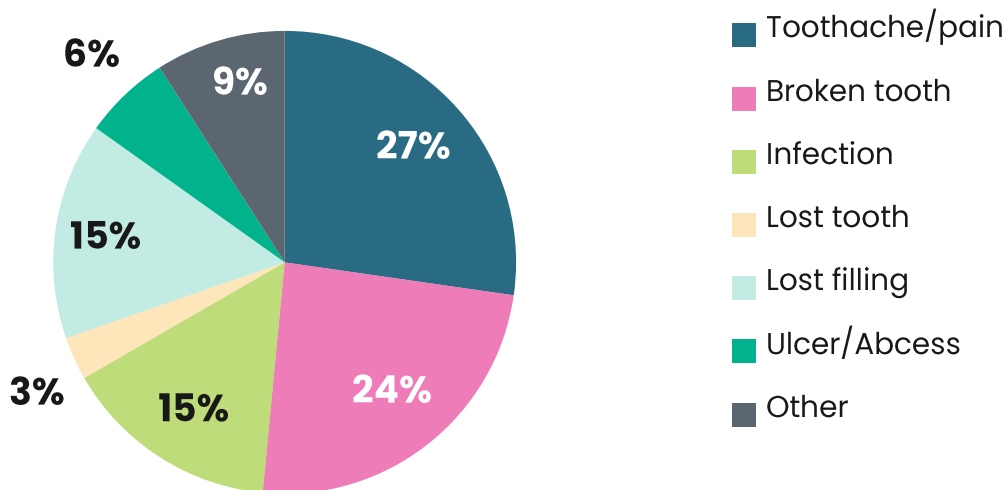
How long did you have to wait for an emergency appointment?



Why did you need to book an emergency appointment?

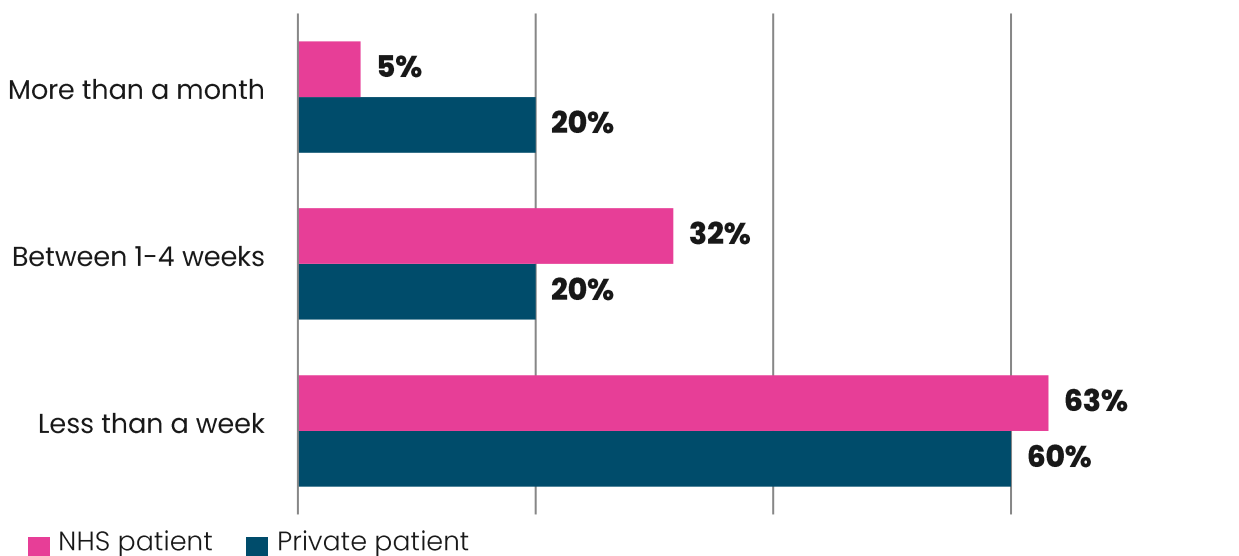
27% of respondents told us that they needed to book an emergency appointment because of pain, 24% told us that they had a broken tooth and 15% told us that they had an infection.

Why did you need to book an emergency appointment?



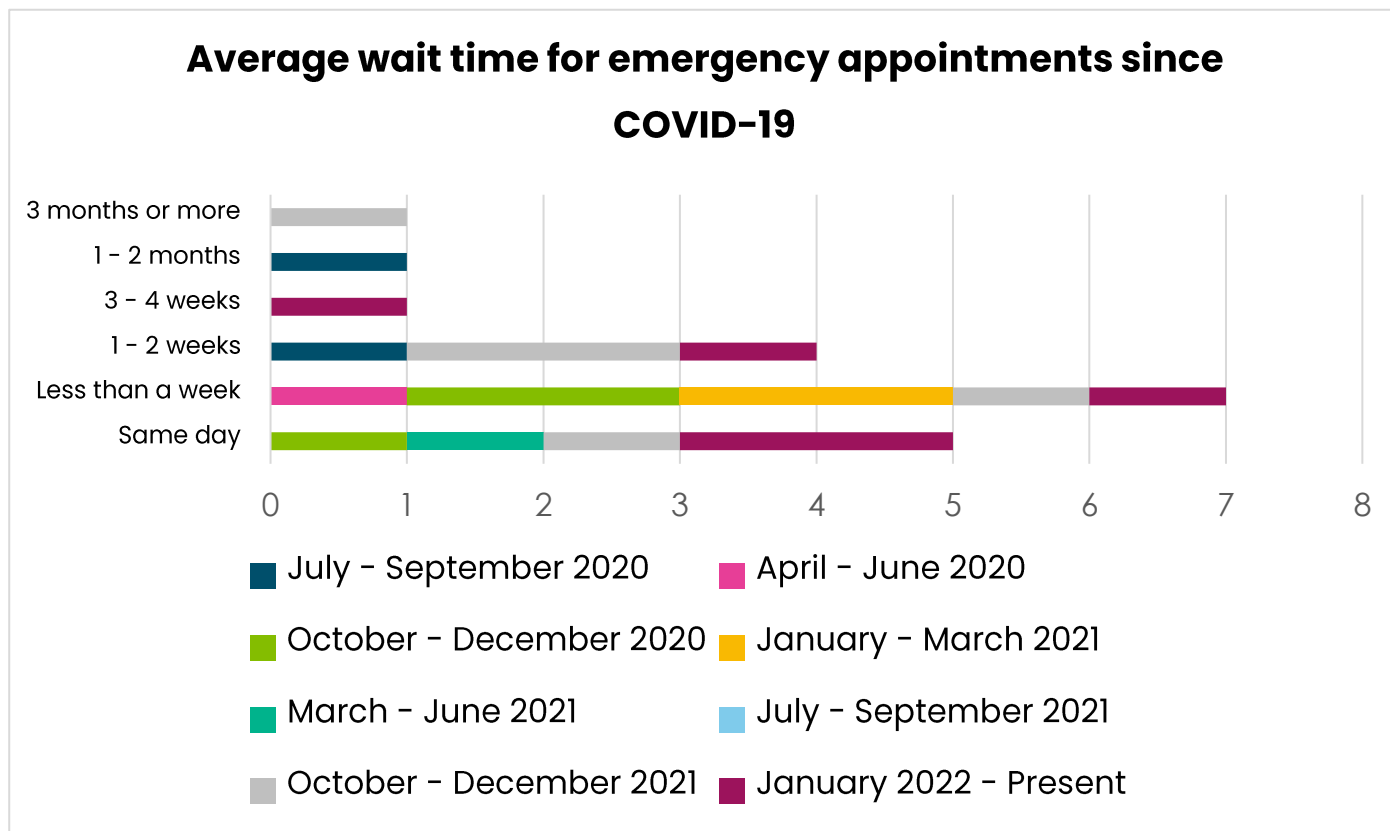
We compared people's experiences of registering with a dental practice (e.g. private or NHS) with the length of time they had to wait for a routine appointment.

How long did you have to wait for an emergency appointment (by patient type)?



The chart above suggests that the majority of private patients (60%) and NHS patients (63%) waited less than a week for an emergency appointment.

We also compared the average wait time for emergency appointments with the time of year people tried to book an appointment.



The chart above suggests that the average wait time for emergency appointments has been less than a week between April 2020 – March 2022.

Urgent dental care

Have you ever needed to access urgent dental treatment outside of normal hours?

6 respondents told us that they needed to access urgent dental treatment outside of normal hours.

Where did you access the urgent dental treatment?

We asked the 6 respondents where they accessed urgent dental treatment. Please see their responses below.

Where respondents accessed urgent dental treatment	Number of people
Charing Cross Hospital	1
King's College Hospital	1
Kingston Hospital	1
Morden Community Dentist	1
My usual dental practice	2

What was the outcome? e.g. given prescriptions to collect from out of hours pharmacy, ED gave me painkillers etc.

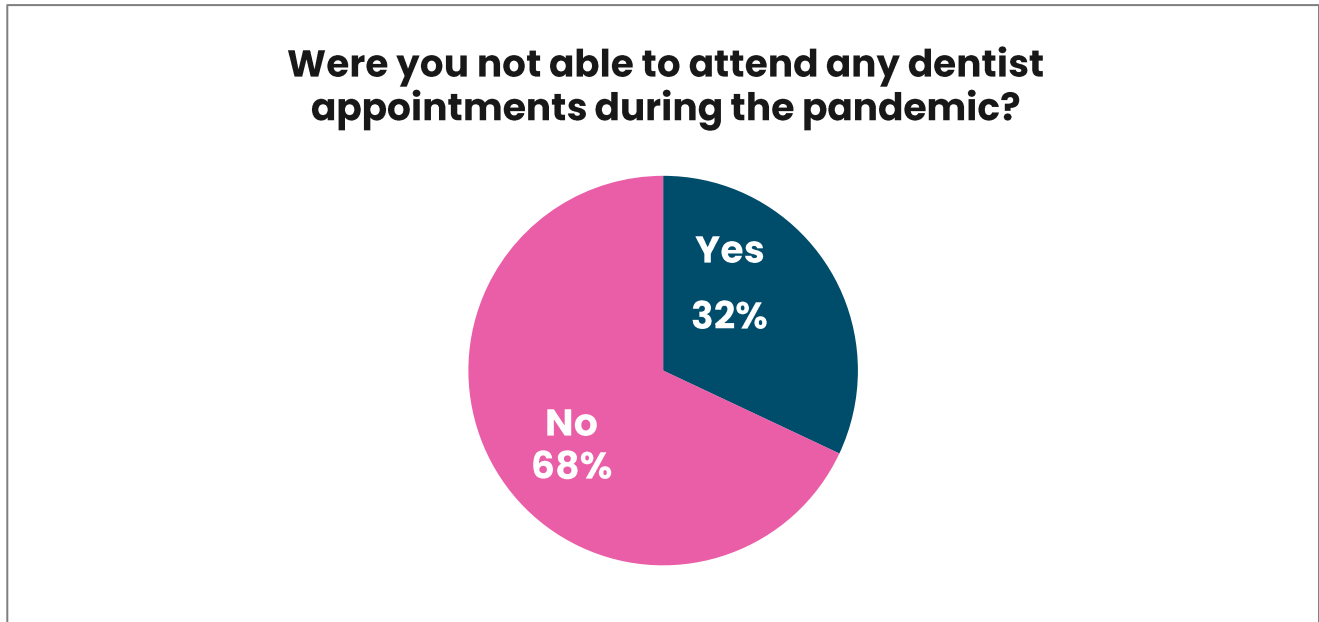
We asked the respondents what the outcome was after they accessed urgent dental treatment. Please see their responses below.

Outcome	Number of people
Painkillers	2
Extraction	2
Emergency filling	1

Missed appointments

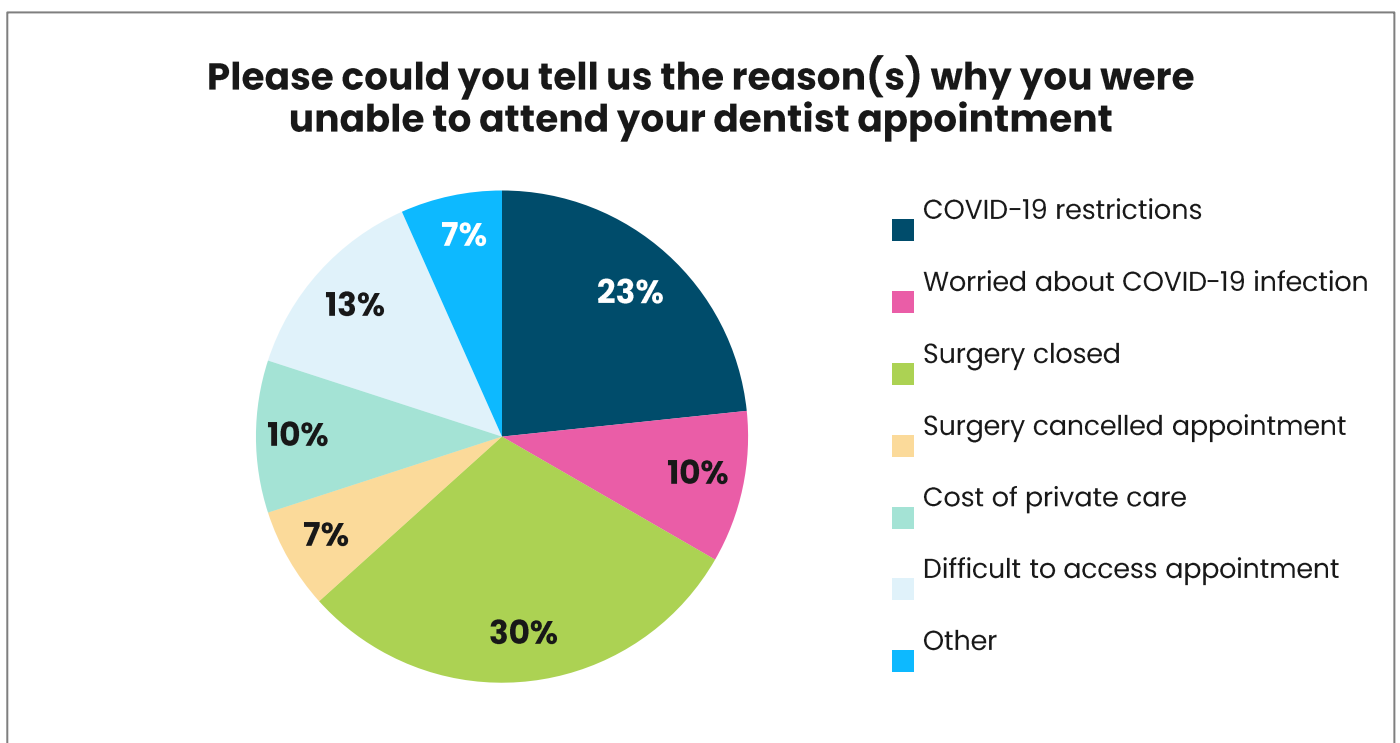
Were you not able to attend any dentist appointments during the pandemic?

32% of respondents told us that they were not able to attend at least one dentist appointment during the pandemic.



Please could you tell us the reason(s) why you were unable to attend your dentist appointment

The majority of respondents (30%) told us that they were unable to attend their dentist appointment because the surgery was closed.





“Many practices closed or reduced their hours of operation, making it difficult to get an appointment that worked with my schedule.”



“I was notified by someone I had been with a couple of days earlier that they had tested positive [for Covid-19]. I moved my booking for a couple of weeks before getting tested.”

“I cannot have the vaccines due to health issues so I’m very anxious about going to the dentist.”

“Lockdown rules. Then the dentist I was registered with at the start of the pandemic closed so had to find another.”

“The children’s school told their whole class to isolate.”

“Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 and due to my ill health this year.”

“I had COVID-19 and my appointment was cancelled by the dentist”

“My dental surgery changed from NHS to private.”

Do you have any other feedback about your experience of accessing dentistry since the COVID-19 pandemic began?

We asked all respondents if they had any other feedback about their experience of accessing dentistry since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

The majority of respondents (31%) commented on their difficulty getting NHS appointments locally.

Respondents also commented on the cost of private dental care, difficulty getting NHS appointments for children, impact of COVID-19 on appointments, long waiting times and incorrect information.

Difficulty getting NHS appointments locally

34% of respondents told us that they had difficulty getting NHS appointments locally.



“It was difficult to find a dentist taking new NHS patients during the pandemic. I found one eventually through Healthwatch Sutton.”



“Because local practices don’t accept new patients, I have to take annual leave and spend a 4 hour round trip to visit a dentist on the other side of London.”

“Impossible to register for an NHS dentist – where we were before have turned private and don’t want to know us. I have no idea how the elderly can register – my husband has cancer resulting in his teeth being removed prior to radiotherapy for safety reasons. He is now unable to have dentures so can only eat soft food.”

“Impossible to get an appointment – had to pay for online antibiotics.”

“My dental practice is no longer registered as NHS since 2021. I am now unable to access NHS dental treatment as I cannot find an NHS dentist that is taking on new patients.”

“My dentist has cancelled as I have not attended for 2 years and said that they no longer take NHS patients.”

Cost of private dental care

8% of respondents commented on the cost of private dental care.



“My son who is a low wage earner has a private dentist which he’s been with for many years but is unable to find or switch to an NHS one. He has avoided appointments because of the cost.”



“I have impacted wisdom teeth and so would like to be able to have them removed but there are no dentists who are accepting NHS patients and I cannot afford to have private dental care.”

“I desperately need a root canal but cannot find a dentist that will register me as an NHS patient and I cannot afford private treatment.”

“My dentist passed away during the first lockdown and the NHS removed funding from his surgery. There are not enough NHS dentists in my area so the waiting list for an appointment is ridiculously long, and it is too expensive to go to a private one.”

“If I had been a private patient, I believe my appointments would have continued as normal. I only got my emergency appointment the next day by going private. My follow-up appointment with a hygienist was meant to have been 3 months afterwards. I was not allowed to make it immediately. 6 months later, I was able to make it – no explanation offered as to why the automatic follow-up had not been booked in a timely fashion.”

Impact of COVID-19 on appointments

8% of respondents told us that COVID-19 had an impact on their appointments.



“I had a booked appointment cancelled by the surgery in April 2020 which was completely understandable at the time.”



“I have three regular appointments a year with a hygienist and two with a dentist for a check-up. I was due to see the hygienist at regular intervals during the time from March 2020 to the present time, but because of a combination of my own underlying health problems which made me very much confined to home and the fact the practice was closed due to government regulations, I did not have my regular appointments, all of which were cancelled. I have now my annual check-up (I have very strong teeth with a filling in one) will take place in April 2022 but as yet the

hygienist has a backlog of appointments so I have not had a regular appointment set-up. I did not want an emergency appointment.”

“Dentist has always followed Covid rules and reopened as soon as allowed.”

“Only need routine check-up. Delayed it until surgery resumed services.”

Long waiting times

8% of respondents commented on long waiting times for appointments.



“They are offering appointments in 6 months’ time. Ridiculous!



“Waiting times have increased since the pandemic. I feel this is because of extra measures dentists have to do to safeguard patients regarding the number of patients allowed in the surgery at a time. Personally, I’d rather be assured that my visit to the dentist is safe rather than get an appointment, unless an emergency, quicker.”

“My dentist referred me to Kingston Hospital since July 2020 and I am still waiting.”

“The waiting period for appointments is extremely long especially for children who need it the most.”

“I attempted to book an appointment around March 2020 due to what I thought was a filling coming out of a tooth but had to wait more than a year to get an appointment.”

Incorrect information

3% of respondents commented on a lack of or incorrect information about dental practices providing NHS dental care.



““Terrible. NHS website is misleading as it shows that dental practices are accepting patients and in fact is not true.”



“It is terrible. I called NHS England to ask for help finding a dentist and all they did was give me the same list of dentists available online and they were telling me I needed to travel 3 hours away because there were spots available in the middle of nowhere. NHS dental services are near impossible to find. I pay all my taxes but can't access this system which is meant to be available to everyone. NHS England is not properly doing their job to meet the needs of the local population for dental services.”

Difficulty getting NHS appointments for children

4% of respondents told us that they have had difficulty accessing NHS appointments for children.



"I can't even register my 3 year old!"



"We moved to the Borough in May 2020. I have not been able to register my son anywhere (he was born in October 2020), the rest of our family have had to travel to our old dentist miles away (who are also not accepting registrations). To date my son has never seen a dentist, he's now 16 months old and has nearly all his teeth through."

"We have been trying to register our 2 year old son with a dentist, but my dentist won't answer the phone or return my calls. I've tried another dentist but they don't have any NHS places available and only offer private, which seems strange for a child."

Negative feedback

7% of respondents commented on the negative experiences they had whilst accessing dental care.



“There was no contact from the dentist during the pandemic.”



“Every time I tried to contact the dentist, I was told the dentist would not do drillings.”

“The service is pathetic and a hindrance to public health.”

“Couldn’t make an appointment and still can’t as they never answer the phone. I keep leaving messages, but they never return my call. I have been trying for nearly two years. I am very frustrated with the lack of service I am receiving.”

Positive feedback

25% of respondents commented on the positive experiences they had whilst accessing dental care.



“My care has been excellent throughout the pandemic. I have been able to see my dentist and hygienist every 6 months and have had treatment done in a timely manner.”



“My dental practice has been nothing but kind, supportive, efficient, practical and value for money.”

“As I have been going to my dentist for many years – I have had no problems accessing dentistry during the pandemic.”

“Apart from earlier in the pandemic when no appointments were available, we have been able to access appointments in 2021. My daughter and I have had routine appointments and my other daughter has had routine, orthodontic, tooth extraction and a filling. I have recently made another appointment and being seen within a couple of weeks. No problems.”

“Both my wife and I have been able to access dental appointments in a reasonable time.”

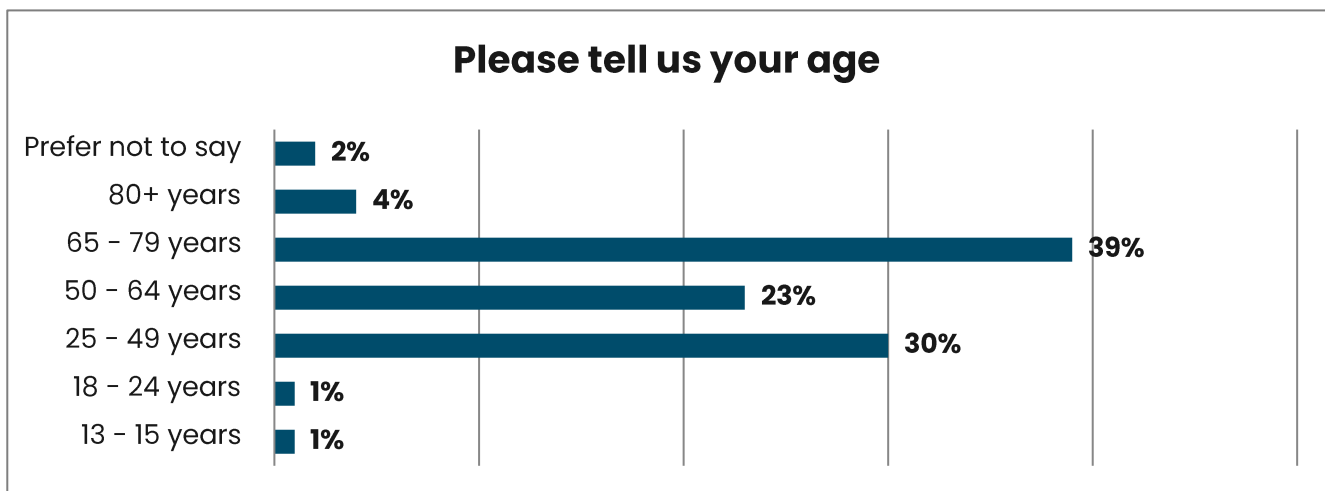
“Experience has been good and at the same level before the pandemic.”

Who we heard from

At the end of our survey, we ask for respondents to tell us information about themselves. This information helps us better understand how people's experiences may differ depending on their personal characteristics. These questions are optional.

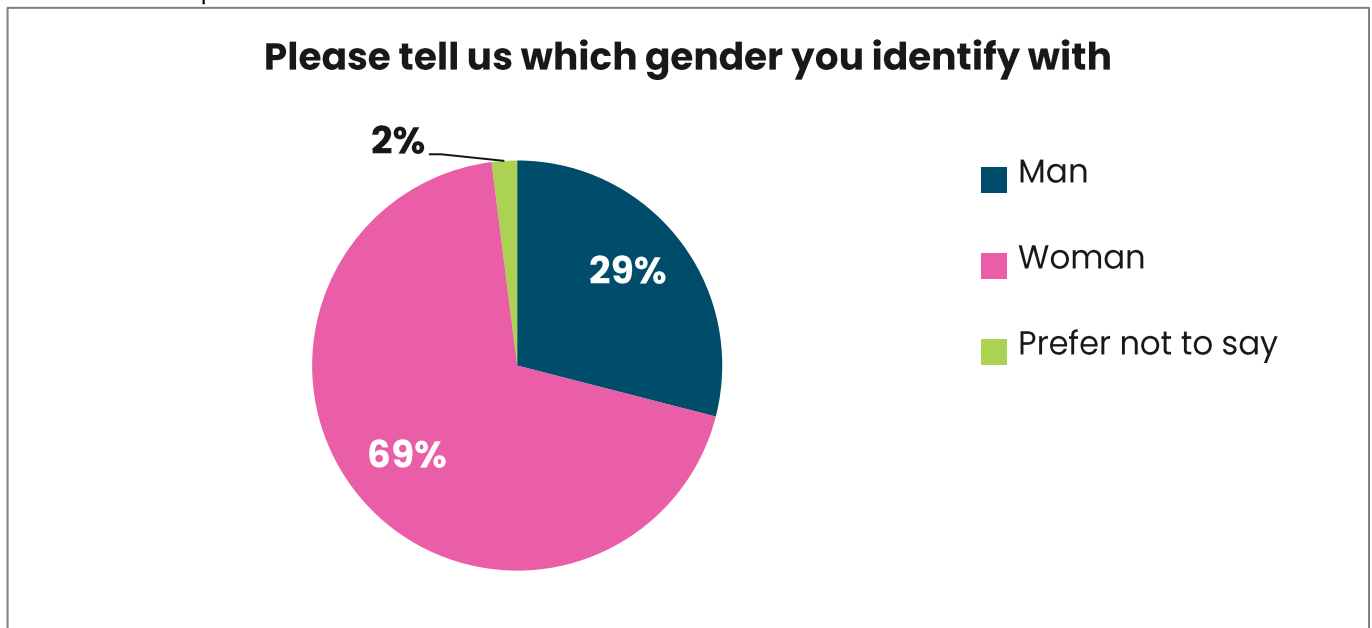
Age

The majority of the respondents (39%) were aged between 65-79 years. The population in Sutton is 64.4% aged under 65 and 15.4% aged over 65. Therefore, our sample skews towards an older population.



Gender

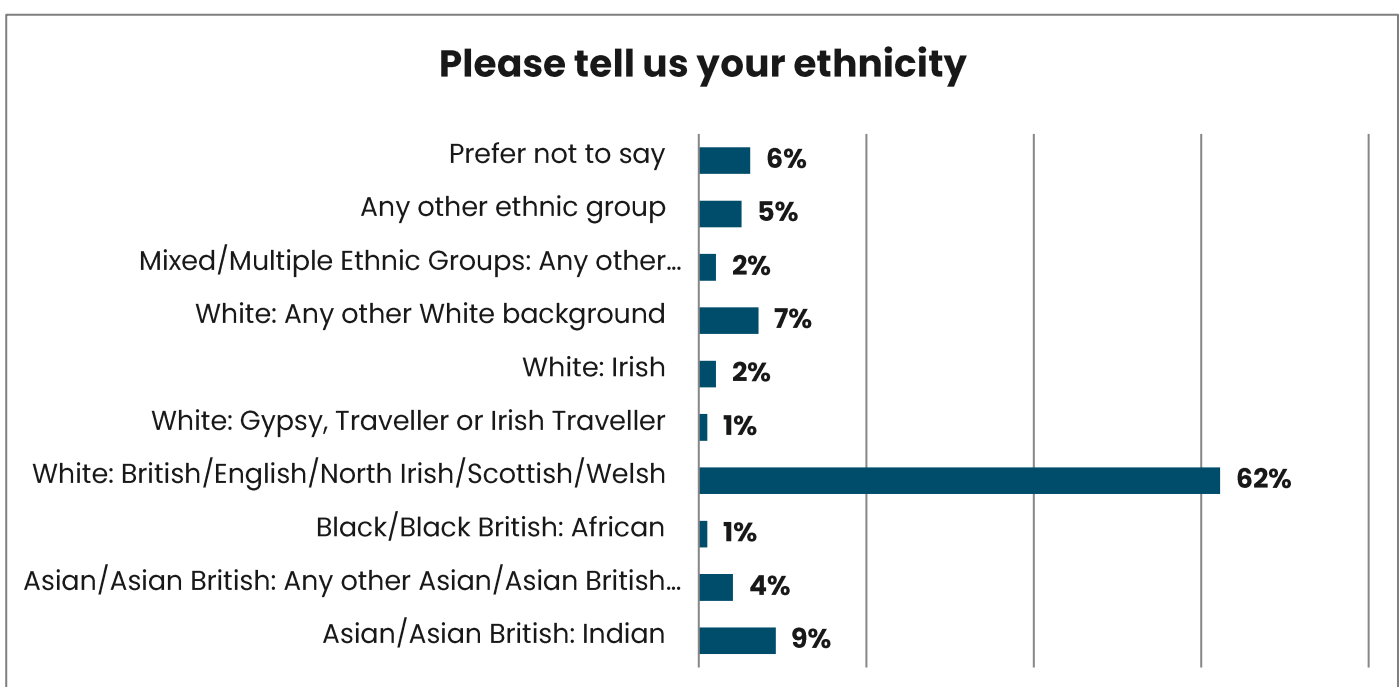
The majority of the respondents (69%) identified as women. The population in Sutton is 49% men and 52% women. Therefore, our sample skews towards women's experiences.



Ethnicity

The majority of the respondents (62%) identified as White British which is close to the Sutton population.

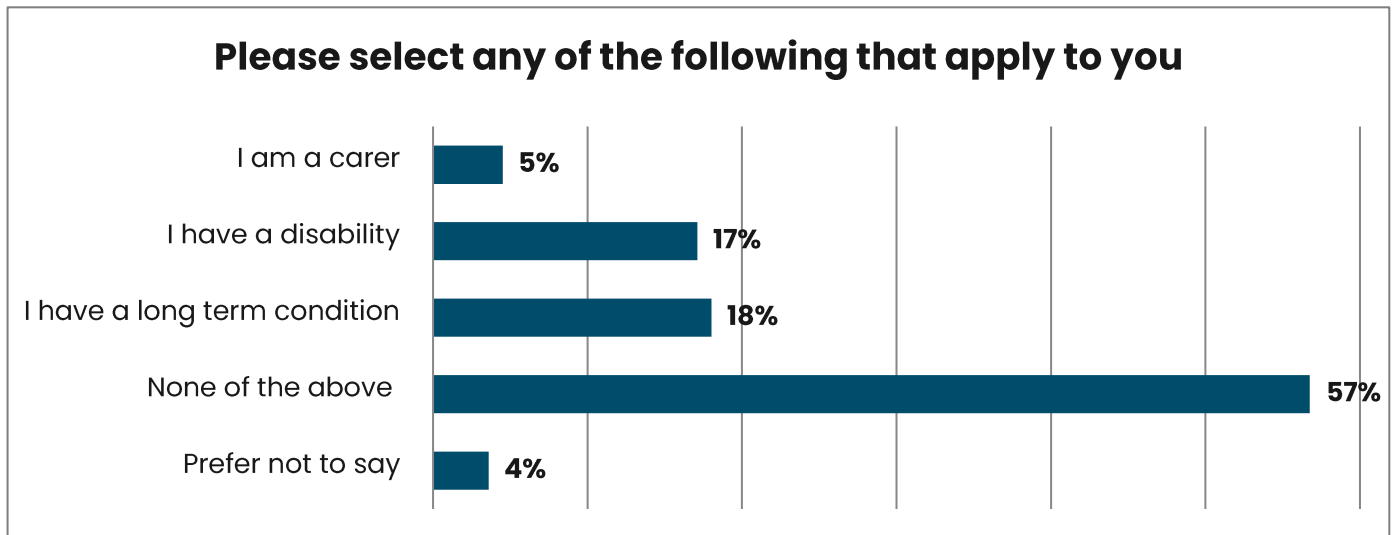
However, it is important to note that relatively few respondents identified as being from a Black and Minority Ethnic background and 6% did not provide their ethnicity. It is therefore difficult to say to what extent the results are



representative of the community. However, the small actual numbers also mean that we are unable to comment specifically about the experiences of minority communities.

Other

The majority of respondents reported that they had no health conditions or caring responsibilities (57%). 18% of respondents reported a long-term condition and 17% of respondents reported a disability. 5% of respondents identified as a carer.



It is unlikely that any minor variation in the demographics of our respondents from the general population of Sutton is unlikely to have identified any significantly different experiences from those who have not responded. We feel that this sample is reflective of the general experience of people accessing dentistry in Sutton.

Key findings

1. All respondents who tried to register with a dentist after March 2020 told us that they were unable to register because they contacted surgeries but they were not accepting NHS patients.
2. Almost 1/5 of respondents who were registered with a dentist told us that they wanted to register as an NHS patient but they could only be registered as a private patient.
3. There has been a significant decline in the number of people who were able to register as an NHS patient when they wanted to after the pandemic started.
4. More than ¼ of respondents who had attempted to book a routine appointment had to wait 1 month or more for an appointment.
5. 13% of respondents who had attempted to book an emergency appointment were unable to get an appointment

Recommendations

Recommendations will be developed using the key findings above. They will be created in consultation with key stakeholders including:

- Local Dentistry Committee
- South West London Clinical Commissioning Group
- Local dentist practice managers and staff
- Relevant voluntary and community groups
- Residents who have accessed, or tried to access, dentistry services since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will also share this report with Healthwatch England who are working on the national issue of accessing dentistry services.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who took part in our survey.

Thank you to Healthwatch Richmond for sharing their survey questions and methodology with us.

Thank you to Martin Skipper and Jayendra Patel at the Local Dentistry Committee, and Aishling Cahill at South West London Clinical Commissioning Group for their help in the development of the survey questions.

Thank you to our volunteers for their feedback when testing out the survey.

Appendix 1

All responses to *Why did you need to book an emergency appointment?*

"Pain"

"Broken tooth"

"Toothache and dental infection"

"Toothache"

"Lost filling"

"Broken tooth"

"Filling fell out and tooth broke"

"It turned into an emergency appointment as when I reached there they said I had booked it another day!"

"Toothache and worried about infection."

"Broken tooth"

"My crown fell out"

"Infected back tooth"

"Toothache"

"Broken tooth"

"I had a toothache"

"Pain in tooth"

"Front tooth fell out (2nd incisor)"

"Root canal"

"Lost crown"

"Denture broke"

"Pain/antibiotics"

"An ulcer"

"Broken tooth giving me pain"

"Abscess"

"Overlapped teeth"

"Broke a tooth"

"Lost a filling, no, pain"

Appendix 2

All responses to *Please could you tell us the reason(s) why you were unable to attend your dentist appointment?*

"Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, this year due to my ill health."

"I was notified by someone I had been with a couple of days that they had tested positive. I moved my booking by a couple of weeks before getting tested."

"Dentist closed for routine appointments."

"The previous owner died and the practice closed down. A new owner has taken over but they will not provide NHS services."

"Dentist was closed to patients for a while because of national regulations."

"Not accepting NHS patients. Can't afford private dental care."

"May be confusion in dates and day."

"Vulnerable patient"

"First lockdown"

"Covid"

"Cannot have the vaccines due to health issues and so very anxious about going there."

"Question is irrelevant."

"The children's school told their whole class to isolate."

"Many practices closed or reduce their hours of operation, making it difficult to get an appointment that worked with my schedule."

"Appointment cancelled in 2020 by dentist."

"Snowed in. Garage door frozen."

"My FORMER practice shut as the leading dentist/owner died."

"Not open for routine appointment."

"Lockdown rules. Then the dentist I was registered with at the start of the pandemic closed so had to find another."

"The dentist was not doing regular check-ups."

"My dental surgery changed from NHS to private."

"Because dentists would only treat private paying patients."

"Had Covid and appointment cancelled by dentist."

"Because the previous dentist closed for a while during Covid, then closed completely."

Appendix 3

All responses to *Do you have any other feedback about your experience of accessing dentistry since the COVID-19 pandemic began?*

"It's been impossible to find an NHS dentist. Only recently was I able to go to a private dentist because my job gave me dental insurance. But it's not fair how difficult it is to find a dentist with NHS spots in or around Sutton. I've called nearly 30 dentists across London and none have any NHS spots and are commuting distance."

"Couldn't make an appointment, and still can't as they never answer the phone. I keep leaving messages, but they never return my call. I have been trying for nearly two years. I am very frustrated with the lack of service I am receiving."

"Our dentist died during Covid and there was no appointment availability and we had to find a new dentist. We couldn't find any local dentist that seemed to have NHS provision and my husband has insurance for himself anyway so we decided to register for private care for the family. We have never had to use private dental services before."

"I attempted to book an appointment around March 2020 due to what I thought was a filling coming out of a tooth but had to wait more than a year to get an appointment."

"It was all fine when I had an appointment and I was able to see both the dentist who fitted me in quickly for a filling, and the hygienist (but I didn't try to make an appointment during the early part of the pandemic so I don't know how that would have been)."

"No issues"

"My dental practice has been very helpful and accommodating."

"I had no problems."

"Hear getting registered at an NHS dentist is impossible in Sutton."

"Impossible to get appointment - had to pay for online antibiotics."

"My care has been excellent throughout the pandemic. I have been able to see my dentist and hygienist every 6 months and have had treatment done in a timely manner."

"My dental practice is no longer registered as NHS since 2021 and their communication with patients was non-existent. I am now unable to access NHS dental treatment as I cannot find an NHS dentist that is taking on new patients."

"No dental appointments at all."

"As I have been going to my dentist for many years - I have had no problems accessing dentistry during the pandemic."

"We moved to the borough in May 2020, I have not been able to register my son anywhere (he was born in October 2020), the rest of our family have had to travel to our old dentist miles away (who are also not accepting registrations). To date my son has never seen a dentist, he's now 16 months old and has nearly all his teeth through."

"Terrible. NHS website is misleading as it shows that dental practices are accepting patients and in fact is not true. I called over 10 dentists practitioners within my area and none of them was accepting NHS patients."

"Very poor experience I had!"

"Getting appointments with dentist is nearly impossible. I am planning to get the treatment done when I go to holiday abroad."

"Anything on NHS takes three times the time compared to paid service. It's disgusting as a working person and paying my taxes I also have to fork out extra money for the dental issues which I should be able to access easily. It's really unfair people on benefits are entitled to everything whereas an NHS worker on band 2 has to save and wait for the services. I'm disgusted by this."

"Because local practices don't accept new patients i have to take annual leave and spend a 4 hour round trip to visit dentist on the other side of London."

"It is terrible. I called NHS England to ask for help finding a dentist and all they did was give me the same list of dentists available online and they were telling me I needed to travel 3 hours away because there were spots available in the middle of nowhere. NHS Dental services are near impossible to find. I pay all my taxes but can't access this system which is meant to be available to everyone. NHS England is not properly doing their job to meet the needs of the local population for dental services."

"Only that prices seem to have gone up."

"Apart from earlier in the pandemic when no appointments were available, we have been able to access appointments in 2021 myself and one daughter for routine appointments. My other daughter for routine, orthodontic tooth extraction and a filling. Have recently made another appointment and being seen within a couple of weeks. No problems."

"Nobody wants NHS patients."

"The telephone response was speedy and effective."

"Every time I tried was told that dentist would not do drillings."

I have three regular appointments a year with a hygienist and two with the dentist for a check-up. I was due to see the hygienist at regular intervals during the time from March 2020 to the present time, but because of a combination of my own underlying health problems which made me very much confined to home and the fact the Practice was closed due to government regulations I did not have my regular appointments all of which were cancelled. I have now my annual check-up (I have very strong teeth with a filling of one) will take place in April 2022 but as yet the hygienist has a backlog of appointments so I have not had a regular appointment set up. I did not want an emergency appointment."

"My dentist referred to me to Kingston hospital since July 2020 and I am still waiting."

"We have been trying to register our 2 year old son with a dentist, but my dentist won't answer the phone or return my calls. I've tried with another dentist, but they don't have any NHS places available and only offer private, which seems strange for a child."

"My experience has been fine but I'm a carer for my husband who is in a wheelchair and the practice has changed its physical layout. He now can't get in to the dentist's room and so they accommodate him for check-ups in the hygienists room. The old dentist's room was big enough for the dentist to treat him in his wheelchair. Unfortunately they are not able to carry out procedures in the smaller room now and he has he been referred to Kings for triage who have allocated him elsewhere for treatment. The referral did not go through initially and after he did a lot of chasing on the phone to check emails had actually gone through from the practice to Kings (they hadn't gone through for 6 months), he is hopefully on a shortish waiting list of up to 6 weeks. It's worrying because he needs a new cap or inlay and his MS means he is highly susceptible to infections and risks further neural complications from them. Also my son who is a low wage earner (supplemented by Universal Credit) has a private dentist which he's been with for many years but is unable to find or switch to an NHS one. He has avoided appointments because of the cost. I've persuaded him to go for an appointment which he now has but is obviously concerned about costs with the private practice."

"Impossible to find somewhere local to Hackbridge to register to an NHS dental surgery."

"The main dentist died so the surgery was closed until September this year while they found a replacement. As I needed an appointment I moved to a private dentist near me. The hygienist could only take half her normal number of patients because of the covid requirements and so her earnings went down by half."

"I had a booked appointment cancelled by the surgery in April 2020 which was completely understandable at the time. This was not rebooked automatically for me later on which I was expecting but due to the pandemic lasting much longer than anyone could have foreseen this is again understandable."

"Moved to Sutton 18 months ago. Need to find dentist now for check-up."

"Waiting times have increased since the pandemic. I feel this is because of extra measures dentists have to do to safeguard patients regarding number of patients allowed in the surgery at a time. Personally I'd rather be assured that my visit to the dentist is safe rather than get an appointment unless an emergency quicker."

"They are offering appointments in 6 months' time. Ridiculous!"

"My dental practice has been nothing but kind, supportive, efficient, practical and value for money."

"I can't even register my 3 year old!"

"It was difficult to find a dentist taking new NHS patients during the pandemic. I found one eventually through Healthwatch Sutton."

"I have been able to access my dental practice throughout most of the pandemic without difficulty."

"I have impacted wisdom teeth and so would like to be able to have them removed but there are no dentists who are accepting NHS patients and I cannot afford to have private dental care."

"The dentist won't take on any more NHS patients now. The practice tries to switch us to private dentistry."

"I desperately need a root canal but cannot find a dentist that will register me as an NHS patient and I cannot afford private treatment for a root canal."

"It seems that some surgeries are managing it well, with hardly any delays and others just can't cope with the workload."

"Am happy with private dentistry although costly. I have been going private since March 2020, including emergencies."

"Both my wife and I have been able to access dental appointments in a reasonable time."

"My dental appointment was pre-booked – every 6 months."

"After my previous dental practice closed during 2020 (due to death of owner) I saw a new NHS dentist on its temporary reopening. He gave me very bad news about the health of my gums & work needed & suggested Private treatment would be necessary. The practice then closed again. In 2021, with some difficulty, my husband & I were able to find a new NHS practice (as previously stated). I have been very pleased with the treatment I have received."

"Impossible to register for a NHS dentist – where we were before have turned private & don't want to know us – have no idea now how the elderly can register – my husband had cancer resulting in his teeth being removed prior to radiotherapy for safety reasons, he is now unable to have dentures, so can only eat soft food."

"The practice do a great job."

"If I had been a private patient, I believe my appointments would have continued as normal. I only got my emergency appointment the next day by going private. My follow up appointment with a hygienist was meant to have been 3 months afterwards. I was not allowed to make it immediately. 6 months later, I was able to make it – no explanation offered as to why the automatic follow up had not been booked in a timely fashion."

"My original dentist closed down in first lockdown, i tried for over a year to find an NHS dentist but unable to stop had to go private."

"The dental practice is professional, friendly and helpful. Unfortunately, they have been unable to expand and a lot of people, my mother included, are unable to access an NHS dentist. Sutton is expanding quickly but nothing enough is done to ensure people moving to the borough can access a dental surgery as an NHS patient."

"My dentist have cancelled as I have not attended for two years and said that they no longer take NHS patients."

"My practice closed during the pandemic and I had great difficulty finding an NHS dentist. I found one, got an appointment two months later, the dentist gave me an

examination, no treatment or clean and polish and an appointment for six months was made. Luckily I have no dental problems, glad I have enrolled with a new dentist."

"No contact from dentist during pandemic, no contact about annual check-ups."

"My dentist passed away during the first lockdown and the NHS removed funding from his surgery. There are not enough NHS dentists in my area so the waiting list for an appointment is ridiculously long, and it is too expensive to go to a private one."

"The waiting period for appointments is extremely long especially for children who need it the most."

"My experience has been good, and at the same level before the pandemic, my routine appointments are booked every 6 months."

"Actually I didn't attempt to be seen elsewhere so I don't know if I could have had an earlier appointment."

"Dentist has always followed covid rules and reopened as soon as allowed."

"I go for 6 monthly routine check-ups booked 6 months in advance. My practice have continued to provide check-ups and any follow up treatment in the last 2 years. After the initial suspension of appointments I was able to get a new date within a reasonable time period and feel I have continued to receive a high standard of care."

"Understand especially with all the COVID precautions, but have often find it difficult to get a basic scrape and polish within check-up appointment under band 1."

"Only needed routine check-up, delayed it until surgery resumed services."

"The service is pathetic and a hindrance to public health."

"Required tooth on plate. Very safe and hygienic."



healthwatch Sutton

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