

Liverpool University Dental Hospital Listening Event Report

Tuesday 16th January 2024



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Introduction

On Tuesday 16th January 2024 Healthwatch Liverpool held a Listening Event at Liverpool University Dental Hospital, which is part of Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LUHFT). We spoke with patients, family members and staff and listened to what they had to say about their experiences. We wanted to find out what people thought was good and what they thought needed improving at the hospital.

This event was part of our ongoing programme of visiting local health and social care providers to speak with patients/service users and collect their feedback about the services. It had been several years since we last visited the Dental Hospital and we were keen to learn what patients had to tell us.

Four members of Healthwatch Liverpool staff took part in the visit. We spoke with people in various areas across the building and made them aware that there was no obligation to speak with us and that everything they told us was voluntary and anonymous (unless safeguarding issues were raised that we were required to share with staff). Not all patients or family members were willing or able to speak with us and we used our judgement about who to approach. No safeguarding concerns were raised.

35 surveys were completed or partially completed. In several cases, patients were called into their appointments while we were speaking with them, so part of their surveys were left incomplete. However, we took it as a positive sign that patients were generally called in promptly and were not having to wait very long to be seen.

Where questions were left unanswered, either because patients were called into appointments or because they chose not to answer them for another reason, they are recorded as 'Unknown' in the charts below.

This report details all the feedback gathered on the day, and also includes our own comments and observations.

Thanks to all the hospital staff who took the time to welcome and speak with us. Thanks in particular to Lisa Marginier, Shelley Connelly and Alison Marks at the Dental Hospital and to Alison Germain-Martin (Patient Experience Manager, LUHFT) for all their support prior to the visit and on the day itself.

Thanks are also due to the patients and family members who agreed to share their experiences with us on the day.

Prior to speaking with patients we were shown around the building to get an overview of the layout and departments, which was very helpful.

We then spoke to patients in Reception 3, X-Ray, Restorative Dentistry, Special Care Dentistry, Orthodontics and Paediatrics.

Although the building is aging and in need of structural repairs to address issues including leaks, the building environment was clean and generally well-maintained throughout. Work was taking place on the ground floor to replace pipework due to the installation of new dental chairs upstairs.

The week we visited was the first week of the EPR (Electronic Patient Records) roll-out for students – a move away from paper-based records. Although this had the potential to impact on services we did not receive any negative feedback about this and, from a patient perspective, everything appeared to be running smoothly.

We also visited on a day on which snow had caused travel disruption for patients and staff, and we were informed that 45 appointments had been cancelled/patients had not arrived. This meant that we spoke with fewer patients than we had originally hoped to, but we feel we received a good, representative, sample of patient feedback, except for the Special Care unit which we would like to visit again as soon as possible, to spend more time with patients and staff and to learn more about the work of the unit and how it supports people with additional needs, for example those who are neurodiverse.

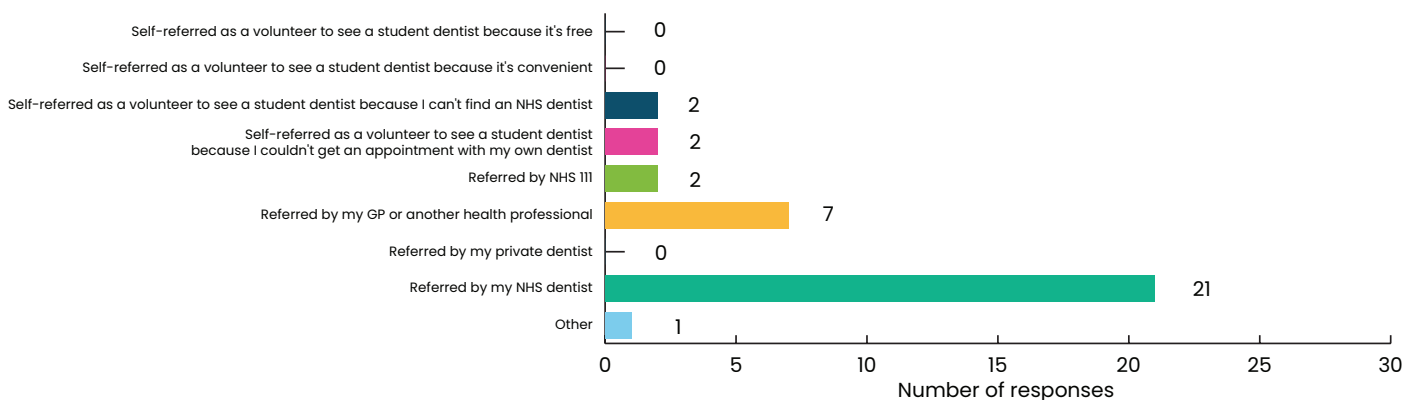
In the afternoon we noticed that the overflow from the waiting rooms upstairs was kept downstairs in the main reception area but dispersed very quickly.

Although we were not officially surveying staff members we did speak informally to several during our visit and a number of topics came up in these conversations. One particular issue raised by staff was that retention of administrative/reception staff was difficult and this was thought to be related to pay bands. Whilst we understand pay constraints within the NHS, as in all sectors, it would be useful to look at ways of retaining knowledgeable and skilled staff at all levels, as this can have a positive impact on patient experience – as feedback from patients during our visit demonstrated.

Survey responses

During our visit we spoke with 35 patients or family members. Not everyone answered every question, but the charts and graphs below summarise the responses we received to each question. Some questions allowed for more than one answer.

1. Why are you visiting the Dental Hospital today?



Over half (58%) had been referred by their NHS dentist. 11% had volunteered to be treated by students – with half of these saying this was because they couldn't get an appointment with their own dentist, and the other half saying it was because they couldn't find an NHS dentist at all.

Additional comments included:

"I was referred as part of the cancer pathway – via the head and neck cancer team at Aintree"

"I'm having x-rays. I've just managed to get on the NHS list. I haven't seen a dentist in 7 years prior to this."

"Toothache. I had a dentist before Covid but got kicked off their list."

"Root canal on a front tooth. I've had root canal here previously on another tooth and I was very happy with it."

"I'm having root canal work with a student and I've got to have an x-ray."

"I had to attend the Dental Hospital as I couldn't afford dental treatment elsewhere."

"Referred via hospital."

"I'm on the Aintree Hospital Cancer Pathway. I'm here for a pre-radiotherapy check-up."

"I was referred via Alder Hey for braces." (This patient's mother added "I had to push for referral as they were not doing much in Alder Hey.")

"I went to hospital for a check-up and was referred by Alder Hey."

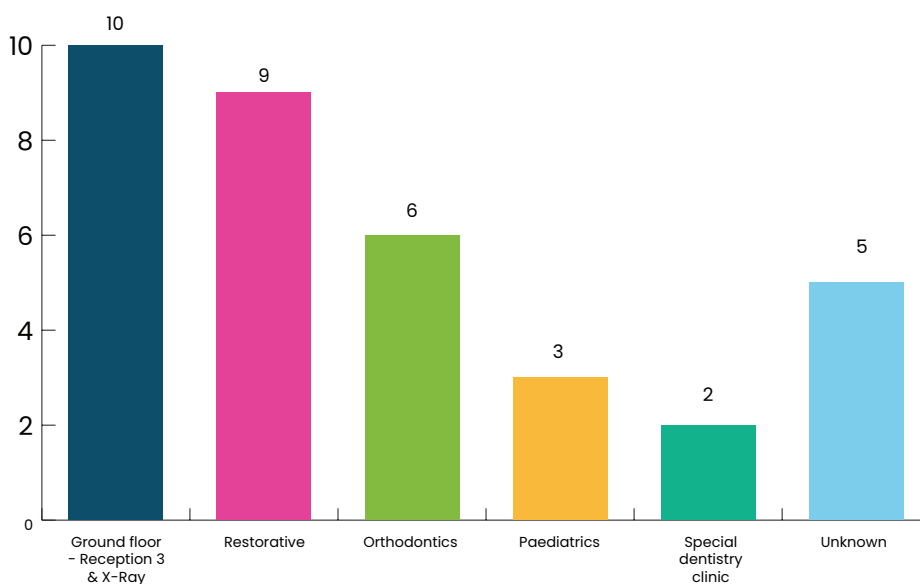
"I had surgery for cancer at Aintree. They had to remove my teeth, and I was referred here to get implants afterwards."

"Referred by my surgeon as part of ongoing treatment."

"I'm here with my girlfriend. She's recently moved up from down south and can't get a dentist. She's seeing a student as she thinks she's got a wisdom tooth coming through."

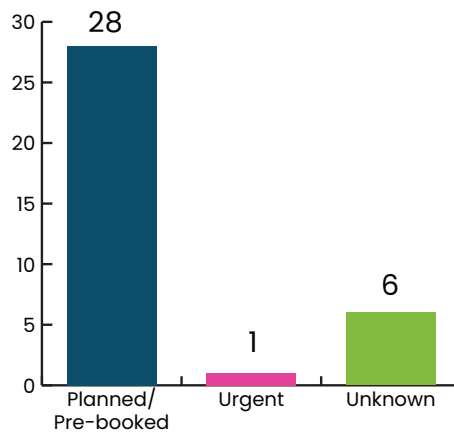
In addition, 3 people said they had come for orthodontic treatment.

Which Department?



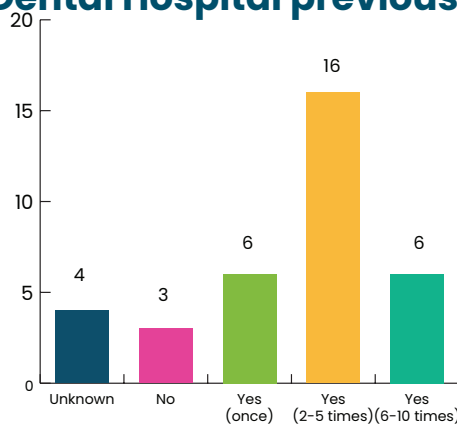
We spoke with patients and family members across the Ground, First and Second Floors over the course of the visit, with their consent and when they had time to engage with us.

2. Is your appointment today for planned/pre-booked or urgent care?



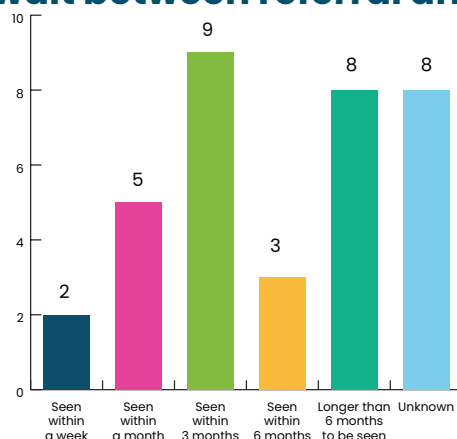
We asked whether people were attending for planned/pre-booked or urgent care. The vast majority (28) were there for planned treatment but one person was an urgent referral.

3. Have you visited the Dental Hospital previously in the past 12 months?



80% of those we spoke with had attended the hospital previously within the last 12 months with 46% having attended between 2 and 5 times previously and 17% having had between 6 and 10 appointments.

4. How long did you wait between referral and your first appointment?



Approximately 20% had been seen within a month, of whom almost 6% had been seen within a week. 26% had been seen within 3 months and a further 23% had waited over 6 months.

Of the 8 people who said they'd waited longer than 6 months, the additional information provided was:

"8+ months."

"A year"

"More than 1 year"

"It's ongoing treatment, I was on a list for a year before."

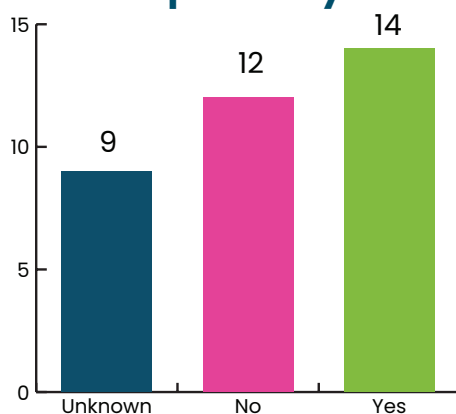
"About 18 months. I had to wait longer than planned because of a record mix-up during the transfer from paper to electronic records."

"4-5 years - referred aged 8, waited 4-5 years then had surgery and braces."

"6 years. Initial referral at 15."

"My referral was 20 years ago, and I have been under the hospital ever since. I can't remember how long that original referral took."

5. Are there any factors which impact on your mouth health?



Fourteen people told us that there were factors which impacted on their mouth health, or that of the person they were accompanying. Additional comments about this question were:

"Cancer treatment has led to weakening bones and teeth. The GP called, has taken me off the medication that causes this and will prescribe something else."

"Cleidocranial Dysplasia. I feel the staff have good knowledge about it."

"I fell over at Brownies and knocked my front two teeth out. I had knocked them out before in another fall so they were already weak."

"I had massive surgery for cancer and needed a full mouth/dental reconstruction following that, everything's been rebuilt. I'm here for the final fitting today."

"I had a bad underbite and it was at a level where dentists felt it was going to impact my ability to eat, not just my appearance. I've had surgery to remove some teeth as part of this."

"I had radiotherapy."

"I have broken my tooth playing football and needed a root canal. The staff have been fab."

"I have had 20 years of treatment. I have had times when my mouth was so bad I could only eat liquidised food - I lived on that for 2 years once. I have needed dental implants and my lower jaw built up with bone from my hip and a new set of top teeth."

"I have an awkward mouth and jaw so it is difficult to get anything to fit"

"I have veneers that I had fitted abroad with some teeth now missing and cannot afford the veneer replacement."

"I will be getting precautionary chemotherapy and radiotherapy."

"I'm currently having to access my pension fund to support myself as I'm on flat rate sick pay at work."

"I was seen for the first time in late '22 - the referral then took a couple of months to come through. I had a programme of treatment and I've now been referred back by the dentist for it to be checked up."

"It's just really painful. My teeth and my gums. Which is why I'm having an x-ray."

"Jaw issues. An underbite."

"I'm on a course of 6 treatments. This is the 4th."

"My daughter had braces, there is no health impact. They are going to align her teeth today."

"My teeth aren't fitting properly and it's hard to chew. He's made me a fit."

"My wife takes steroids that impact on her oral health."

"I'm not sure what it is but it's been ongoing for a lot of years although they say it won't last forever."

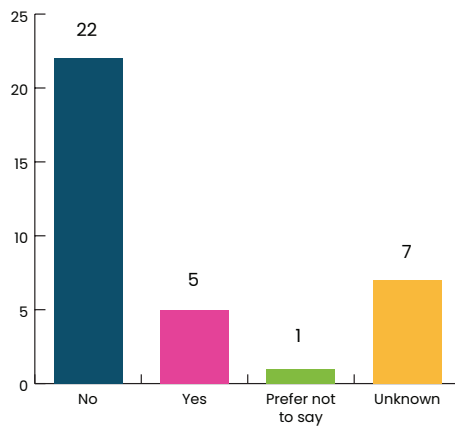
"I have canine teeth growing through my gum."

"Staff are absolutely amazing."

"They made sure she saw the same dentist each time with the dentist even swapping shifts so she could be the one to see my daughter."

"The referral took 6 years and involved both an NHS dentist and a private dentist having to keep chasing it up."

6. Do you have any additional support needs?



This question aims to uncover additional information about e.g. learning disabilities/ neurodivergence/language support needs/sensory impairment/mobility difficulties/ physical health/mental health/traumatic experiences which may have an impact on patients' willingness to seek treatment or their anxiety levels when undergoing treatment. Issues which may require additional pro-active support and sensitivity from staff.

Whilst a clear majority (63%) did not consider themselves to have any additional support needs, a significant minority (14%) told us that they did.

Eight people provided further comments:

"My son doesn't have any immune function presently so he benefits from a quiet clinic with few other patients. We're both wearing masks because of his vulnerability."

"Arthritis."

"I am in heart failure. I also have very bad osteoarthritis. I have been deaf in one ear since childhood and my hearing in the other ear has deteriorated with age."

"Medical needs which include liver disease and allergy to opioids which mean she can't be put to sleep. There has been miscommunication between the orthodontist and dental team in the hospital as the plan was not transferred across. We wasted a year because of them not doing anything. As my daughter's teeth are healthy she gets less priority than others who didn't look after theirs. But this shouldn't happen as she has a medical condition. People in pain are prioritised over genetic conditions."

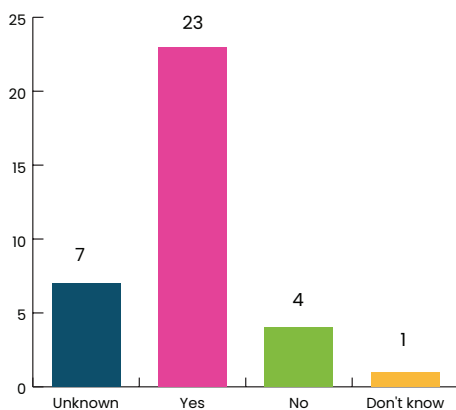
"I'm autistic but don't feel I need additional support."

"Travel to the dentist is fine. I have a disability but it is still not difficult to access."

"My daughter has suspected autism. She is under CAMHS and they pointed it out. She is waiting for her assessment. When she was younger I told the GP that I thought she might be on the spectrum but the GP didn't agree and left it."

"My wife is a vulnerable patient."

7. Are you clear what the next steps are in your treatment?



We asked this question to see whether patients knew, for example, who they were due to see, what for, and what was likely to happen next.

Again, a clear majority (66%) felt clear about their treatment plan. However, 11% were unclear and one other person was unsure.

Nineteen people gave us additional comments.

"It has been complicated. The surgery went wrong the first time and had to be redone. That didn't work either so now they are doing preparation for a third surgery."

"I know that they are doing a sensitive tooth test. They need to find out if the teeth are still alive to decide the next steps. It has taken quite a lot of visits and it still isn't clear if they are alive. Lots of tests and x-rays."

"It's my last appointment today and I was kept well informed throughout."

"I know what's got to be done but not the order or the timescale. They're very good at communicating, I can't fault them on that."

"Not yet."

"I just wait to see what comes in the post."

"This is my first appointment for this treatment so I don't know. There's no treatment plan yet and I can't comment on their communication."

"Very clear about what will happen."

"They are very clear. They usually tell you what to expect next time. I also know a lot after coming so many times over 20 years!"

"I know who but not yet what. I have been waiting for an appointment to see what needs doing."

"I know I've got this appointment and will be given the information for follow-up treatment after this. But I haven't been given a telephone number to contact."

"The service has been very clear. We were given a contact number that got us through to the reception here (2nd floor) and have used it before."

"It's been brilliant so far. I have contact numbers for Aintree hospital and it is all organised at the hospital. I get emails texts and letters."

"Braces have been fitted but not clear on treatment pathway. Things have been moving much quicker in the latter end of last year. It is disheartening as a parent when there are delays and seeing my daughter become paranoid about her teeth."

"I had to go for St Helen's for sedation and was not told why this was the case."

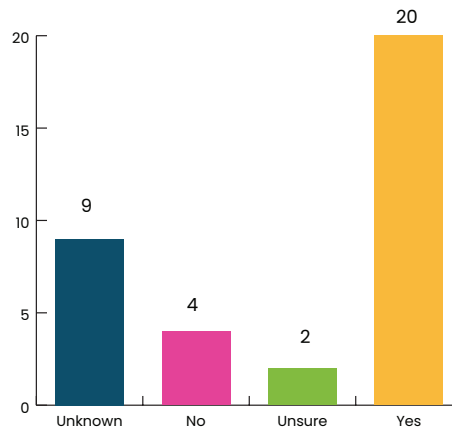
"They tell us each time we're here. We don't really need to contact anyone in between."

"Antibiotics and then an extraction."

"Take the tooth out and that's it."

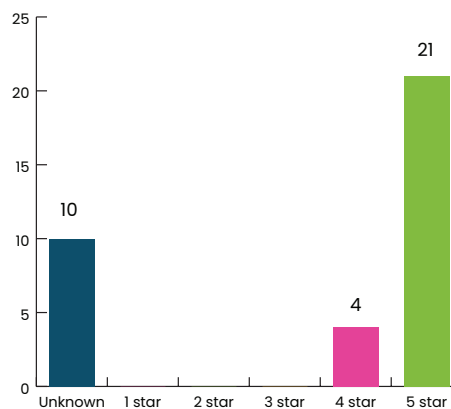
"Hopefully will find out today what the next steps are."

8. Do you know who to ask or where to go if you're not clear about what will happen next?



Over half the respondents (57%) said they were confident about who to ask if they had any questions or were unsure about their treatment plans, but 17% were not clear or unsure.

9. How would you rate staff attitude today?



Patients were invited to rate staff attitude from 1 Star (Very Poor) to 5 Stars (Very Good), with everyone who rated staff on the day giving them a 5 Star (60%) or 4 Star (11%) rating.

One young patient wanted to give a 4.5 rating for staff but their mother opted for 5, she added that:

“the staff have always been really nice but my daughter is just getting a bit fed up of it all now. It’s been quite a long-winded process.”

Another young patient gave a 4-star rating but their father also opted for 5.

Other comments about staff (including students) included:

“I haven’t had my appointment yet today but at my first (previous) appointment the student was amazing.”

“Students are good at chatting and putting you at ease. They’re kind people.”

“They’re all hardworking. Based on previous experience they have a fantastic attitude to their work. I’m grateful that staff still make an effort to come in in bad weather.”

“Friendly.”

“I have NEVER found anything wrong with staff here. They are always unfailingly polite, kind, sympathetic. Great.”

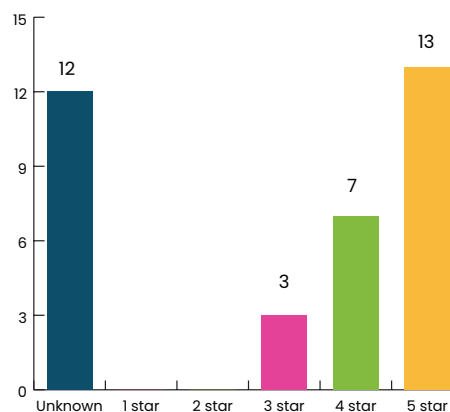
“Very kind.”

“Generally good.”

“It has all been fantastic.”

“Staff are always good, even when they have changed over. My other son has Autism and ADHD and fainted in the dentist’s chair but staff were fantastic with him.”

10. How would you rate your overall experience of treatment at the Dental Hospital?



We then asked patients to rate their overall experience of treatment at the Dental Hospital.

Again, the vast majority (57%) rated their experience as being 5 Stars (37%) or 4 Stars (20%).

Again, one father gave a 5-star rating and his child opted for 4 stars.

Additional comments included:

"They did everything they needed to. They were brilliant with my son."

"Everything here is wonderful because of the way dentists are these days. Everyone's very attentive. They're very good. People are always ready to criticise, but praise should be given where it's due. My husband has had all his appointments booked up until March. It's very good. Training hospitals should be recognised for what they do. After Covid [high street] dentists don't keep you on their list, and our dentist seems to resist giving you treatment. Time and care are so important but in this climate no one seems to offer it. It's a different case here [at the Dental Hospital]. I've been in hospitality all my life and it makes a difference when people recognise what's good as well as what's bad about services."

"Everything seems great and runs smoothly."

"They go above and beyond. They did an extra course of tooth whitening for me so I'd feel more confident, as things had got discoloured during treatment. They didn't have to do that OR give me tooth whitening stuff to take home. But they did."

"They could've done the work earlier."

"Although the waiting list is long, once you're seen they're very clear with the treatment plan (based on past experience)."

"They have gone out of their way to make it as painless as possible. I have had some difficult treatments, but it was that or not be able to eat. I had two years of not being able to eat and I really appreciate it now I can."

"Too slow for the initial appointment, waited a long time."

"It's accessible. Everyone is helpful especially at reception."

"Always been fantastic."

"It is only 3 Star because I can't get in touch with the hospital if anything goes wrong. There is no way to reach the consultant and no direct line."

"They are outstanding I couldn't recommend the dentist high enough. From X-ray to the wards the staff are fantastic."

"It's good, but waiting times at appointment are a bit long. I had to go to several areas and last time the appointment was at 9 or 10am, and I left at 4pm."

"I am waiting for my treatment today but had X-Rays last week."

11. Is there anything particularly good about your care at the Dental Hospital? (e.g. staff attitude, communication about treatment, waiting time, quality of treatment).

Responses to this question included:

"Staff are the best bit. They have been great with my child."

"Everything has been brilliant."

"Nice staff. Very well communicated."

"They're very patient and take time to explain. I've learnt things from them."

"They keep you up to date. They're more thorough than normal dentists. Students are trustworthy and well-supervised."

"It's all good. Root canal isn't nice but you expect that!"

"It's alright. I can't complain."

"Staff."

"It's good to get reminders on my phone for appointments."

"The staff in all honesty."

"Mr Butterworth is very good"

"It's my 3rd visit so I don't have a lot of knowledge."

"Face-to-face service is spot on. Nomenclature used is aimed at my [teenage] daughter's level."

"The information from staff. They say what is going to happen, how long the treatment is and what the next steps are."

"The continuity of care and seeing the same person each time. My daughter has an anxious personality and needs surgery to expose a tooth which requires co-ordination (between staff)."

"All the staff are fantastic from the moment you walk in. I can't ask for more."

"Staff were great with my daughter and very supportive."

"Everything runs smooth and they are doing good."

"They explain everything very well. They are patient, punctual, and you get to see the same people. As this appointment is part of a much bigger, longer, process it is good to see the same people."

"The helped to get here today (the appointment). We made 44 calls in 10 days to get seen. Shelley, the PA to the dentist here pulled out all the stops. The referral from our own dentist in September didn't come through, at first we were referred

to somewhere in Speke who said they couldn't deal with it as my wife's health (the patient) was 'too critical'. We were first offered an appointment here in February but Shelley called back on the same day last week to say that there had been a cancellation for today. The referral service helped out too."

"Everyone is really nice and they put you at ease."

"They explained everything well to me."

"They sent text messages, that was straightforward for the appointment."

12. Is there anything which could be improved?

Responses to this question included:

"More x-ray rooms or x-ray staff. She has needed x-rays on almost every visit and there can be a long wait which means each appointment takes a long time. Today there was also a 2-hour journey to get here. She misses a lot of school."

"There was a gap between my treatments and it would have been good to have had more updates during that period."

"They're students. They always seem to be short of a supervisor. If they need to call someone for advice or help they need to wait with their hands up so they can't get on with anything. If they had a call system with flashing light like they do in supermarkets it'd be helpful."

"Not regarding the treatment. The delay to being seen did cause some stress but I appreciate that a big change in admin systems does take time."

"Access from the Wirral. I spent 90 minutes in the tunnel. It takes an hour even without the snow."

"They don't wait long enough before they discharge you. The post-treatment follow-up isn't effective as similar problems can arise with the same tooth [that's been treated]. They need more follow-up - maybe 2 more appointment or check-ins. Your gums and nerves can take a while to settle down and you may not be aware of issues until months later. This isn't due to poor treatment, it's just the length of the healing process."

"It took a long time to get a referral and it was a good 2 years to get a referral from my NHS dentist. During which time I had a tooth taken out unnecessarily (a molar) which impacts on the way I eat. I feel that the NHS dentist was very reluctant to make a referral and I ended up having root canals and oral surgery as a result of the delay. My own dentist couldn't do it as it was so deep."

"I'm an articulate person and I feel sorry for people who aren't. I feel my dentist didn't take me seriously when I said I was in pain. You can't self-refer to the dental hospital and that's a huge issue. People aren't time-wasting, they just want to be seen by a dentist. There's a need to resolve teeth and gum issues for e.g. homeless people, or people experiencing domestic abuse. You should have access to a hospital like you do to A&E at The Royal. The system's changed but the public don't know about it. I'm a carer for my father and I know what it's like for someone who's starting to have dementia."

"Would be good to be able to contact the clinic reception direct. My train was an hour late because of the snow and that was going to make me late to my appointment. I called the hospital switchboard and left a message but I have no idea if they played it back or passed it on to the clinic. I don't like being late and it felt stressful to not be able to tell them. I tried to get a taxi from the station but the queue was huge so I walked up thinking that I might be too late anyway."

"There can be long waits but that isn't the fault of staff. Sometimes a patient before you might have needed a bit longer. You understand because there will be times when you've been that patient."

"Only the waiting list."

"It's hard to get through to the reception on the phone."

"It is very open where the treatment area is and is not very private."

"Appointments were only offered on Thursdays due to consultants working hours. This meant that my daughter had to change shifts at work."

"More money for building improvements from the government."

"Nobody knows who's who and what's what. Seems to be problems with communication internally."

"Parents should have a contact number."

"The wait from referral - I had no bottom teeth for 3 years, I'm getting them today. It's been a long process."

"Can't a vulnerable patient not be registered as such, instead of having to have referrals each time?"

"Apart from the wait at appointment I mentioned earlier, no."

"No, it's pretty good."

Other comments and feedback that we received included:

"I was late getting in due to the weather. My train stopped for 2 hours and I missed my appointment. I need to be seen today if possible. Reception told me to wait and see whether I could be seen. My wife was due to come with me but she stayed at home to ring up but she couldn't get through."

This last patient was elderly, deaf and appeared to be quite confused. He was reluctant to go up to the Reception desk again after having checked in, even after he'd waited over 15 minutes (which patients were invited to do according to a sign displayed at Reception), so one of the Healthwatch team went and asked on his behalf whether he would still be seen. Staff chased things up and he was eventually sent home without being seen but with a promise to contact him and rearrange his appointment. Staff also took his mobile number which they did not have previously.

13. Please tell us the first part of your postcode (e.g. L8, L11, L24)

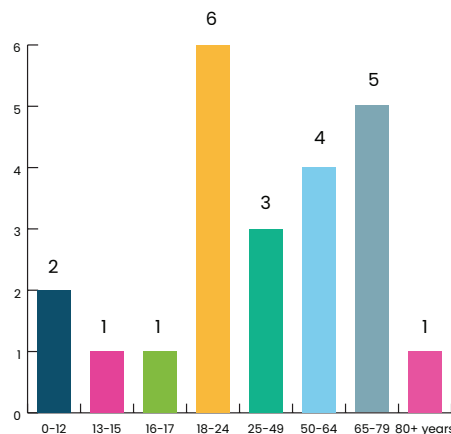
We ask this question as a way of recording the areas from which patients are accessing the hospital. Nineteen people told us the area in which they were living. These included 9 from Liverpool, 3 from Wirral, 1 from Sefton, 2 from Ellesmere Port, 1 from Crewe, 1 from St Helens, 1 from Warrington and 1 from Whiston.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The following questions are based on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) questions developed by Healthwatch England and designed to help us to monitor any evidence of health inequalities in treatment or outcomes. As with the questions above they are entirely voluntary, and patients may choose not to share this data with us. In some cases patients were called into their appointments before reaching this section of the survey.

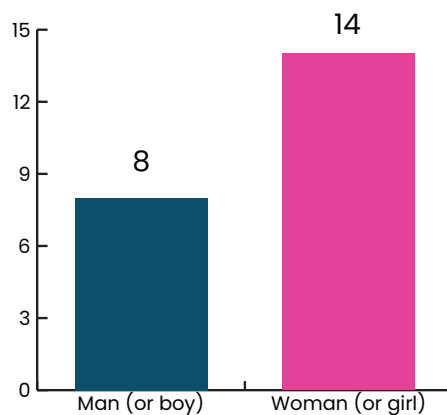
A) What age group are you in?

23 people answered this question.



B) Gender

22 people answered this question.

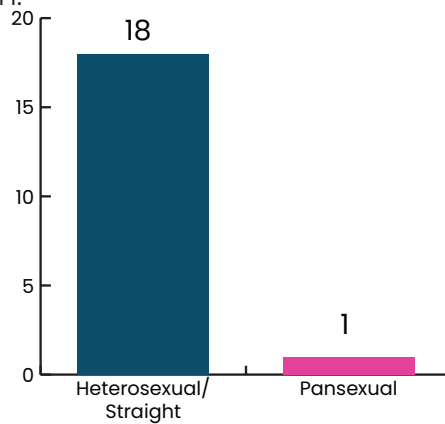


C) Gender identity

22 people answered this question. All said that their gender identity was the same as their sex recorded at birth.

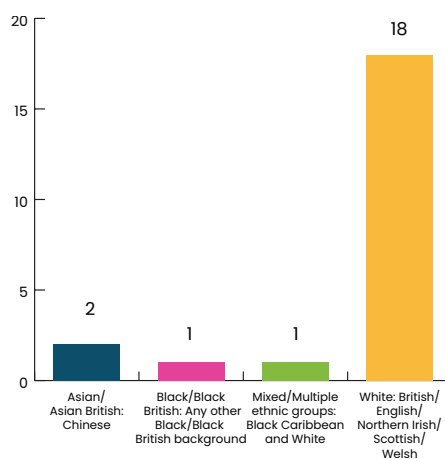
D) What is your sexual orientation?

19 people answered this question.



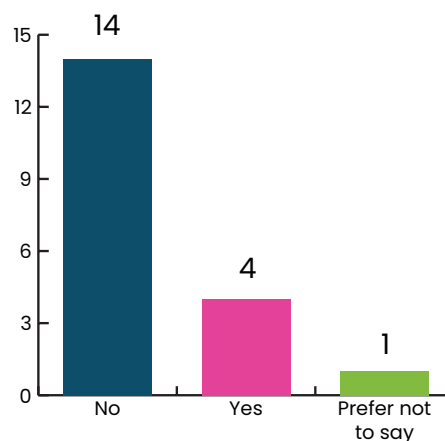
E) How would you describe your ethnic group?

22 people answered this question. We gave the patient who identified as 'Black/Black British: Any other Black/Black British background' the opportunity to be more specific but they did not chose to do so.



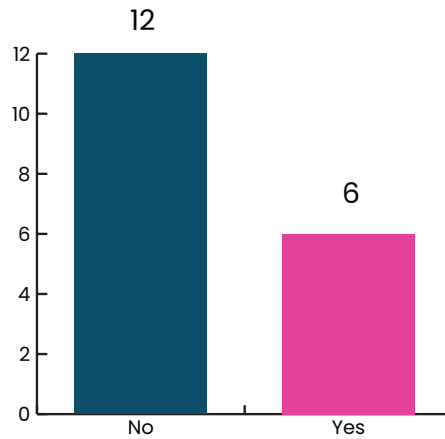
F) Do you have a disability?

19 people answered this question, of whom over a fifth (21%) had a disability.



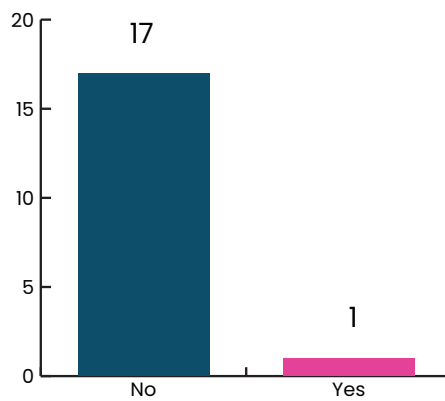
G) Do you have a long-term health condition?

18 people answered this question, of whom over a third (37%) had a long-term health condition.



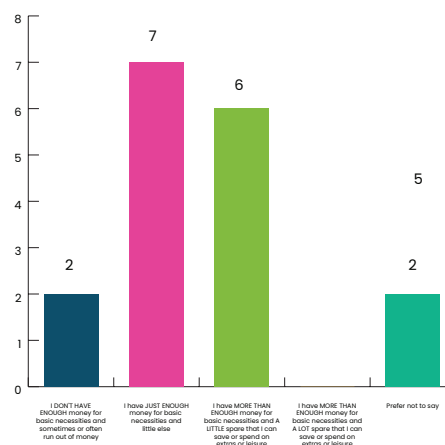
H) Do you consider yourself to be a carer?

18 people answered this question.



I) Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?

17 people answered this question.



Additional Comments, Questions & Recommendations

1. We were pleased to see that Healthwatch Liverpool information was visible on posters displayed around the hospital on the day of our visit, although these were not the most up-to-date posters (which include QR codes) produced by Healthwatch Liverpool, Healthwatch Knowsley and Healthwatch Sefton. We would like to re-send these so that they can be displayed around the building allowing patients an easy way to share feedback with us, which will then form part of monthly data-sharing with LUHFT.
2. We were not able to speak with as many patients in Special Care Dentistry as we had hoped to. This was partly because Healthwatch Liverpool's Lead for Learning Disability and Neurodivergence was unable to take part in the visit due to the weather conditions. We would therefore like to arrange a visit specifically to this department to learn more about its work, and, potentially, to act as a precursor to arranging a visit by members of our Learning Disability and Neurodivergent Sub-Groups.
3. It may be useful to place 'up' and 'down' arrows on the staircases to reduce the incidence of people colliding when moving between floors.
4. One patient suggested that a review of the 'call system' for students needing assistance from supervisors would be useful, and that a system using lights or something that allowed students to maintain the use of both hands whilst waiting for help or advice might save time for students and patients.
5. Although the majority of patients who spoke to us felt confident that they knew who to contact if they had any questions, and how to contact them, there was a significant minority who were unsure. Therefore, more information about Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and how to contact key staff in each department might be welcome.
6. Similarly, a more pro-active approach to keeping patients updated during gaps between treatments, and asking whether they have any questions during these periods, would help to reduce uncertainty or anxiety.
7. Does the Dental Hospital have targets for answering telephone calls within a set timeframe? Any additional capacity on the main switchboard or departmental reception desks would be helpful to patients.
8. Access to treatment spaces with additional privacy for patients who request them would also help to reduce anxiety for some people – and not only those who attend the Special Care Dentistry unit.
9. We'd be interested to know how vulnerable patients are identified and how this is flagged up in their records. Any reduction in the number of times that vulnerable patients have to re-tell their stories or explain their circumstances to staff would be welcome.
10. We understand the constraints on the Dental Hospital and that self-referral is not currently an option but given the extent of the dental care crisis locally (as nationally) it may be helpful to improve communications about this with the public who may feel that a dental hospital is the logical place to come when experiencing dental/gum pain.

Additional Feedback Received about Liverpool University Dental Hospital (2023/24)

In addition to the Listening Event feedback set out above, we have also decided to include this section which sets out the feedback we've received during 2023/24 (to date) which relates to the Dental Hospital in some way. This feedback has been received from patients and professionals who have contacted us independently during this time. It includes 15 pieces of feedback.

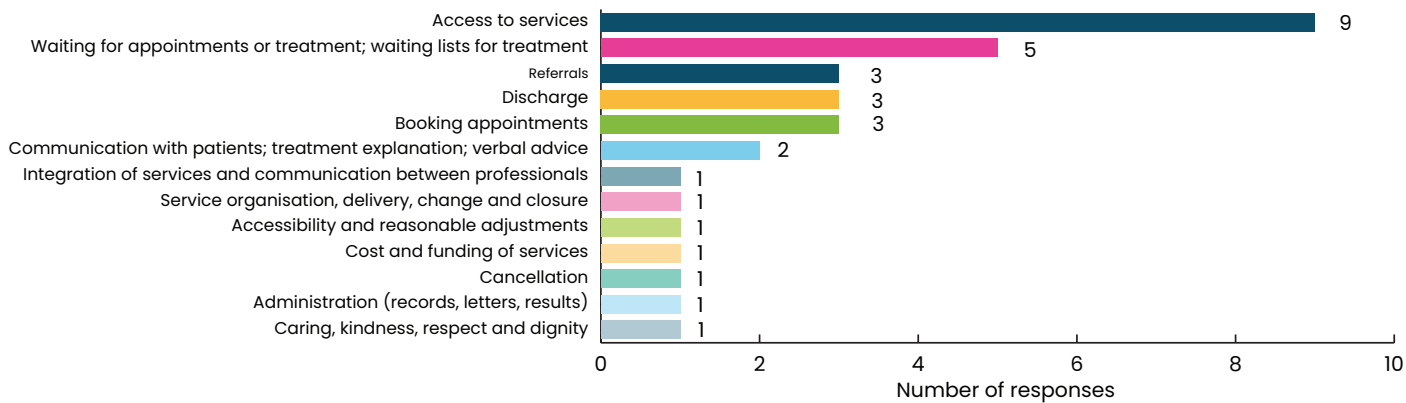
Summaries

1. Patient with broken dentures causing pain was unable to access dental care and couldn't be seen at Dental Hospital due to it being out of term time for students. Patient has tried to fix dentures with superglue.
2. Staff were unhelpful when trying to rebook a long-awaited appointment due to a diary clash.
3. Patient received a letter from the dental hospital discharging them for failing to attend an appointment, however, a professional had called the hospital on the client's behalf and left a message cancelling the appointment due to a bereavement. This was not a 'did not attend'. Patient was in very distressed state. Patient said Healthwatch Liverpool's number was given on the discharge letter, but Healthwatch Liverpool does not have access to dental appointments, so patient felt this was not a useful wording to include on discharge letters.
4. Patient had a genetic connective tissue disorder which affects their mouth and was struggling to access dentistry. Attended an emergency dentist who diagnosed a gum infection in the socket of a previously lost tooth. Dentist reluctantly prescribed antibiotics, but client had no benefit from these. Issues with referral to dental hospital, as patient was advised to contact the hospital who diagnosed a genetic condition, to get referral to the dental hospital, but as the client was diagnosed years ago, they have no idea who to contact or how. Patient had tried hundreds of dentists without success.
5. Patient received a letter telling them they had failed to attend scheduled appointments with a dental student at the dental hospital and so have been discharged.
6. Patient said they did receive notification of an appointment which they replied to by text with 'CHANGE' as directed to do if they couldn't attend. This is the only instance the patient is aware of. Patient's treatment programme began with an initial assessment pre-Covid and was reaching its completion, and now the care hasn't been completed. The patient shared they have always appreciated the work and dedication of the students and was very disappointed that treatment would not be finished.
7. Patient had been discharged from the dental hospital and wished to dispute this as they had given notice of an appointment cancellation. They need to be under care and treatment as they have struggled to register with an NHS dentist.
8. Patient from outside Liverpool was given Healthwatch Liverpool's details in order for find a dentist, despite not being in Liverpool. Patient felt their expectations were not managed due to incorrect signposting. Patient expressed that they feel the dental hospital should find out

where a person lives and give them the correct details.

9. Patient was referred to the dental hospital by their GP, then got a letter stating that the referral was rejected. Patient called the Dental Emergency Line who advised them to call Healthwatch Liverpool for advice.
10. A dental professional contacted us about the barriers to orthodontic work, due to the lack of NHS general dentistry. The professional shared that this is a problem within their department, around getting extractions done at general dental practices as part of orthodontic treatment plans. Many patients also require oral hygiene advice and fillings from general dental practices before orthodontic work can begin, but this is unavailable.
11. Patient's former dental practice had gone private. Patient was also under the Restorative Department at the dental hospital and had asked them to make a referral to an alternative NHS dentist. This was about 3 years ago, and no referral had been made yet. The dental hospital had informed the patient that they needed to find a regular dentist for check-ups, regular appointments etc between visits to the hospital, but patient said emails are sent and people come and go and pass them along, but they still don't get referred/registered anywhere. Patient explained that they have tried several places themselves, but most don't have the correct facilities and are not fully accessible to their mobility needs.
12. Patient had recurring dental infections for many weeks and had tried to register with a dentist to no avail. They had been to the dental hospital and had been given a leaflet with the Emergency Dental Helpline and Healthwatch Liverpool on it and been told to attend the dental hospital during term time. Patient said they were in pain and couldn't eat properly. Patient had a genetic condition which can affect the teeth.
13. Patient had broken teeth causing their denture to no longer fit properly, making it difficult to eat. The dental hospital told the patient they would need a referral. Patient had tried their GP who said they couldn't refer to the dental hospital as they needed something in writing from the dental hospital.
14. Patient had been referred by their private dentist for restorative treatment and had attended several times over the past year after waiting over 6 months to be seen. The patient had impaired sight and a neurological condition. They felt they had been lied to when promised a timely referral to another department for an emergency extraction. The referral had not happened – despite further requests from their GP – and they felt an untreated infection had worsened their neurological condition. Patient was told by dental hospital staff to take strong antibiotics but these were dangerous given their medical history and caused hallucinations. Patient felt this was a possible safeguarding issue and said several staff were rude and unprofessional although some in X-Ray were good. There were further issues with a poorly-fitting denture which the patient complained about but said this had been ignored.
15. Patient had an extraction at the dental hospital which referred them to Healthwatch Liverpool as they required further work. Given that there are (at time of writing) no NHS dentists in Liverpool taking on new adult patients the patient's expectations were not managed with this signpost. Patient had spoken to multiple dentists across the city but had been unable to register anywhere as an NHS patient.

The feedback in this section has been thematically tagged in our records, as set out below.



Response from Liverpool University Dental Hospital

	Theme - Recommendation	Response	Complete by
1	Update Healthwatch posters (which include QR codes)	Patient Experience team to obtain updated posters and replace existing posters displayed throughout the Dental Hospital	August 2024
2	Healthwatch follow up visit to Special Care Dentistry	Invitation to Healthwatch colleagues to return to Special Care Dentistry. Service would also welcome return visit to Paediatric Dentistry.	July 2024
3	To consider signage on staircases	Review of signage to take place	August 2024
4	Review of system for dental students requiring assistance from clinical supervisor	Within a clinical learning environment, the clinical lecturer supervises a small group of dental students overseeing patient care at each stage of treatment. The clinical area is open plan to enable visibility of activity however due to the nature of clinical supervision, there can be slight delays for patient and dental students depending on individual needs. The students are required to have clinical oversight at key stages in treatment and are not able to progress with patient care until this has happened. A system using lights to alert the clinical lecturer the dental student needs assistance would not enable the students to proceed with treatment any faster. There are qualified dental nurses within the clinical area who will alert the tutors should there be an urgent need.	June 2024
5	Review patient information to explore whether Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and how to contact key staff in each department might be welcome	Review of ways of highlighting how patients can contact the Dental Hospital eg telephone numbers, email address for patient queries and Dr Doctor text messaging system. Review of patient information leaflets regarding procedures to ensure all frequently asked questions are included.	November 2024
6	Consider pro-active approach to keeping patients updated during gaps between treatments, and asking whether they have any questions during these periods, would help to reduce uncertainty or anxiety	Review patient information leaflets to ensure patients are advised to contact the Dental Hospital if they have any concerns in-between appointments.	November 2024

7	Additional capacity to answer telephone calls from patients	There is an on-going review of how we manage telephone calls in to the Dental Hospital. We are incorporating Healthwatch feedback into this review	November 2024
8	Access to treatment spaces with additional privacy for patients who request them would also help to reduce anxiety for some people – and not only those who attend the Special Care Dentistry unit	We have access to individual surgeries throughout the Dental Hospital which can be used to accommodate patients who request additional privacy.	June 2024
9	We'd be interested to know how vulnerable patients are identified and how this is flagged up in their records. Any reduction in the number of times that vulnerable patients have to re-tell their stories or explain their circumstances to staff would be welcome.	The clinical team will record details of each patient's individual needs including reasonable adjustments, social history, medical history, clinical assessment, and treatment within the electronic patient record. Prior to the commencement of each clinic, the clinical team review individual patients electronic record together to ensure they are fully informed of patients situation and needs highlighted on previous episodes of care. Where patients may hold a health passport or other documentation, they are encouraged to bring this to their appointments and relevant details and alerts are captured in their clinical records.	June 2024
10	We understand the constraints on the Dental Hospital and that self-referral is not currently an option but given the extent of the dental care crisis locally (as nationally) it may be helpful to improve communications about this with the public who may feel that a dental hospital is the logical place to come when experiencing dental/gum pain	Patients can apply to be a volunteer patient to support dental undergraduate training by completing an online application on the University of Liverpool School of Dentistry website. We will review the information on LUHFT's Dental Hospital website to ensure information regarding the volunteer patient application process is included as well as describing the secondary care services we offer. We have posters and patient information leaflets in the main hall area and throughout all clinical areas explaining how patients can access primary care services including telephone numbers and email addresses	September 2024

Response to Additional feedback section

- Please see section below from University of Liverpool's website which provides information to patients before they complete an application to become a volunteer patient. During the initial assessment clinic, patients will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement which outlines conditions including treatment is only available during term time, Monday to Friday.

To give our students the best possible training, we aim to provide experience in real-world scenarios. To do so, patients who need basic dental treatment are invited to register to attend our restorative dentistry training clinics. If you choose to do so, and are deemed to be eligible for treatment, you will be assigned to one of our students to receive high-quality, free dental care. During this treatment, students are supervised at all times by our experienced clinical team of qualified dentists and dental technicians.

As this treatment is delivered by students, it is only available during term time, Monday to Friday between 9am – 5pm when the allocated student is available. Appointments are likely to take a little longer than a normal dental visit.

www.liverpool.ac.uk/dentistry/freedentalreatment

- Discharge letter for volunteer patients contains Healthwatch Liverpool contact details. We will need to obtain contact details of Healthwatch teams outside of Liverpool area and include within discharge letter informing patients to contact the relevant Healthwatch team for their area.
- Thank you for sharing some individual patient experiences within the report. We would very much welcome they contact us directly so we can discuss and hopefully resolve the concerns or queries raised.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who took the time to share their stories, experiences, and information with us. Their contributions were anonymous, but very much appreciated.

About Healthwatch

Healthwatch is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

One of our main purposes is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

As part of a national network made up of local Healthwatch organisations in every local authority area of England (and Healthwatch England, the national body) our work contributes to a nationwide perspective on health and social care services.

At Healthwatch we also provide an information and signposting service which helps to put people in touch with services and activities that can help maintain and improve their health and wellbeing.

If you require a copy of this report in another format or language, please contact us and we will provide it.

April 2024

Contact

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Appendix A: Survey

LUHFT Dental Hospital
Listening Event Questionnaire

healthwatch
Liverpool

Healthwatch Liverpool is your local independent health and care champion and gives you the opportunity to share your experiences of using health and social care services. We're here today to speak to patients about their experiences of the hospital.

1. Why are you visiting the Dental Hospital today? (please tick all that apply)

- Referred by my NHS dentist Referred by my private dentist Referred by my GP or another health professional Referred by NHS 111
- Self-referred as a volunteer to see a student dentist (if so, why?)
- Because I couldn't get an appointment with my own dentist Because I can't find an NHS dentist
- Because it's convenient Because it's Free

Another reason (please tell us more using the box below)

2. Is your appointment today for planned/pre-booked or urgent care?

- Planned/pre-booked treatment Urgent (already under the care of the Dental Hospital OR urgent referral) Urgent care via NHS 111

3. Have you visited the dental hospital previously in the past 12 months?

- No Yes (once) Yes (2-5 times) Yes (6-10 times)

4. How long did you have to wait between referral and your first appointment at the Dental Hospital?

- I was seen within a week I was seen within a month I was seen within 3 months I was seen within 6 months

It took longer than 6 months to be seen (Please tell us how long)

5. Are there any particular factors which impact on your mouth health?

- Yes No *If you would like to tell us more about this, please use the box below.*

6. Do you have any additional support needs? (e.g. Learning Disability/Neurodivergence/language/sensory impairment/mobility/physical health/mental health/traumatic experiences)

- Yes No
 Prefer not to say

Please tell us more if you wish

7. Are you clear what the next steps are in your treatment? (For example, who will see you next/why they need to see you/ What will happen then?)

- Yes No
 Don't know

Please tell us more if you wish

8. Do you know who to ask or where to go if you're not clear about what will happen next?

- Yes No Unsure

9. How would you rate staff attitude today?

Very poor



Very Good

Please tell us more if you wish

10. How would you rate your overall experience of treatment at the Dental Hospital?

Very poor



Very Good

Please tell us more if you wish

11. Is there anything particularly good about your care at the Dental Hospital? (e.g. staff attitude, communication about treatment, waiting time, quality of treatment).

12. Is there anything which could be improved?

13. Please tell us the first part of your postcode (e.g. L8, L11, L24)

This survey and your comments are confidential. You do not have to give your name or contact details. However, if you would like us to contact you to talk about your feedback you can share your details below:

Yes – Please share your phone number and/or email address No

Name

Telephone number or email

We will only contact you for the purposes indicated. By entering your contact information on this survey, you are confirming that you consent to Healthwatch Liverpool contacting you for these purposes. If you share your details with us, they will be kept separately from the other information you share here. You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. All personal data will be stored in accordance with Healthwatch Liverpool's Privacy/Data Retention policy.

Some questions about you (We don't ask for your name, so any information you give is anonymous)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring. We ask these questions because it helps us to understand how your life circumstances impact your experience with health services.

14. What age group are you in?

- 0-12 years 13-15 16-17 18-24 25-49 50-64 65-79 80+ years Prefer not to say

15. Are you a

- Woman Man Non-binary Intersex Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe

16. Is your gender identity the same as your sex recorded at birth?

- Yes No Prefer not to say Not known

17. What is your sexual orientation?

- Asexual Bisexual Gay man Heterosexual/Straight
- Lesbian/Gay woman Pansexual Prefer not to say Not known

Prefer to self-describe

18. How would you describe your ethnic group?

- Arab
 - Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi
 - Asian / Asian British: Chinese
 - Asian / Asian British: Indian
 - Asian / Asian British: Pakistani
 - Asian / Asian British: Any other Asian / Asian British background (please specify below)
 - Black / Black British: African (please specify below)
 - Black / Black British: Caribbean
 - Black / Black British: Any other Black / Black British background (please specify below)
 - Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White
 - Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White
 - Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White
 - Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups background (please specify below)
 - White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh
 - White: Irish
 - White: Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller
 - White: Roma
 - White: Any other White background (please specify below)
 - Any other ethnic group (please specify below)
 - Prefer not to say
 - Not known
- Prefer to self-describe

19. Do you have a disability?

- Yes No Prefer not to say Not known

20. Do you have a long-term condition?

- Yes No Prefer not to say Not known

21. Do you consider yourself to be a carer?

- Yes No Prefer not to say Not known

22. Which of the following best describes your current financial situation?

- I have MORE THAN enough money for basic necessities and A LOT spare that I can save or spend on extras or leisure.
- I have MORE THAN enough money for basic necessities and A LITTLE spare that I can save or spend on extras or leisure.
- I have JUST ENOUGH money for basic necessities and little else
- I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH money for basic necessities and sometimes or often run out of money
- Prefer not to say Not known

Thank you for taking part in this survey.