

# Healthy Mouths Poster: Guidance notes for homelessness services

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Homelessness & Oral Health .....	2
Become an Oral Health Champion! .....	2
Oral Health Champion responsibilities .....	3
Step-by-step guide to being an Oral Health Champion .....	3
Types of Dental Services .....	4
General Dental Practices.....	4
Community Dental Services .....	4
NHS treatment .....	5
Help with dental costs while on benefits.....	5
Help with dental costs while on low incomes .....	5
Migrants and people with No Recourse to Public Funds.....	6
What's on offer from an NHS dentist? .....	6
NHS dental charges.....	7
Appointments and sign up with dental surgeries.....	7
Signing up for a dentist.....	7
On the day of the appointment .....	8
Your first appointment.....	8
Getting treatment when in Pain .....	8
Emergency/Out of hours Dentists .....	9
Further information .....	9
Community Dental Services in London .....	10

## Introduction

Poor access to dental services has a significant impact on the lives of people experiencing homelessness. Poor oral health commonly causes pain and suffering; dental pain can have a negative impact on mental and physical health and in some cases can cause people to use alcohol or drugs to control their pain. The Healthy Mouths project aims to promote good oral health, help homeless people into dental services and create inspirational local 'oral health champions' because we believe that everyone has the right to a healthy mouth.

These guidance notes are designed to be used alongside the Healthy Mouths poster. We recommend that you nominate someone who can update the poster and can be the designated **Oral Health Champion**. These notes give guidance on how to make the most of the posters, and also provide key information that may be helpful when supporting people to access dental services.

## Homelessness & Oral Health

Healthy mouths – A research project undertaken by Groundswell in 2017 – used focus groups and one-to-one surveys to gather the views of over 260 people currently experiencing homelessness. The findings of the study highlighted the shocking extent of the oral health problems among people experiencing homelessness;

- 90% of participants had an issue with their mouth health since becoming homeless
- 30% of homeless people are currently experiencing dental pain.
- 70% reported having lost teeth since becoming homeless.
- 15% of homeless people have pulled out their own teeth.
- 27% of participants have used alcohol to help them deal with dental pain and 28% have used drugs.

Difficulties accessing treatment, lifestyle factors and low levels of self-care were a barrier to maintaining a healthy mouth:

- Only 23% of participants had been to the dentist in the last six months.
- 58% were not clear on their rights to NHS dentistry.
- Despite the many difficulties, participants clearly valued good oral health and believed dentists were there to help.

## Become an Oral Health Champion!

We recommend that one person in your service takes the lead for identifying relevant services that people can access locally and updating the poster. There may be someone in your service who is already leading on health and wellbeing, if so this is the perfect person to take this role.

## Oral Health Champion responsibilities

As an oral health champion, you will:

- Check with local dental services to confirm whether they are taking on NHS patients and the days and times they offer appointments
- Use the Healthy Mouths poster to display service information in a place where people who use your service can easily see it
- Answering queries about finding dental services, what to expect at a dental visit and what documentation is needed to sign up
- Where possible assist people with booking dental appointments.

## Step-by-step guide to being an Oral Health Champion

Follow these easy steps to improve the oral health of the people who use your service.

### Step 1: Find dental practice accepting NHS patients.

We recommend looking on NHS choices to find your local dental practices. NHS choices is available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

### Step 2: Make contact with the dental practice.

It's worth calling your local practices; introduce yourself and find out if they are taking NHS patients and the availability of appointments. Don't worry if no one gets back to you straight away, don't take it personally they are often just quite busy! Give them a call later on in the day.

### Step 3: Fill in the poster.

Add the details of 2-3 local practices on the poster in the designated box and your name as a designated contact in your service. If you use a **dry wipe marker** you can easily change the information if you need to. It can be useful to plan how to get to the practices so that when people ask you can quickly direct them to the site.

### Step 4: Repeat process.

It's worth repeating this process as services change and availability of appointments often fluctuate. Try to call every 3 months to confirm that they are still taking on NHS patients. Put a reminder in your calendar to prompt this.



Public Health  
England

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Groundswell  
Out of homelessness

## Types of Dental Services

There are different types of dental services available that may be suited to people's different situations or needs. Broadly speaking these may fall in to two categories:

### General Dental Practices

General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) make up the vast majority of dentists in the UK. They are commonly known as "high street dentists" and provide general primary care services to patients. GDPs can work either wholly within the NHS, wholly privately, or any mixture of the two. Please make sure when finding practices to check what sort of general dental practice it is: While you may get more flexible service with a private dental service you will also need to pay the full cost of treatment. All GDP practices should give you a full written estimate of the costs of your treatment before they begin the treatment.

Please also note that some dentists may be not be able to treat people with special needs like some disabilities or medical conditions in their surgery. It's best to call and check and if they can't the patient may be better off with a community dental service.

You do not need a referral to use a general Dental Practice. Find your local dental practices using NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

### Community Dental Services

Community Dental Services (CDS) are centres for specialised dental care for patients which require care beyond that which a high street dentist could provide. These are provided across London and can take place in a variety of places to ensure everyone can have access to dental care. CDS Dentists are able to provide both General Anaesthetic (GA) and sedation for some treatments while patients which require the most complex care can be referred by the CDS to hospital. CDS Dentists are able to provide a level of flexibility in their approach to a patient's needs and requirements, including longer appointments when required and experience in dealing with anxiety and/or complex situations.

London's Community Dental Services specifically offer services to people experiencing homelessness or in temporary accommodation. They provide a range of services, provided in different settings at either mobile or fixed locations as the local homeless population requires.

Typically you would be referred to the Community Dental Service by a GP, General Dental Practice or agencies such as social services. For homeless people it may be possible to make a referral from homelessness service staff.

**There is a full listing of CDS services in London with contact details at the end of this document.**

## **NHS treatment**

Broadly speaking, dentistry is either free or subsidised by the NHS. The NHS sets out that 'All treatment that is, in your dentist's opinion, clinically necessary to protect and maintain good oral health is available on the NHS. This means the NHS provides any treatment that you need to keep your mouth, teeth, and gums healthy and free of pain.' However a person's situation or circumstances will affect the cost, if any, of receiving treatment.

### **Help with dental costs while on benefits**

If you have a low income or are most benefits you can get NHS dentistry for free. A person is entitled to full help with health costs like dentistry and prescriptions if they or their partner get:

- get Income Support
- get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- get income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- get Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are named on or entitled to a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate – if you don't have a certificate, you can show your award notice; you qualify if you get Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits with a disability element (or both) and have income for tax credit purposes of £15,276 or less
- get Universal Credit and meet the criteria

To be entitled to free or subsidised care when you are in receiving benefits, you'll need to take with you proof of benefits each time you go to the dentist. This is generally a headed letter from the last 3 months from the Jobcentre or DWP.

If a person is on Universal Credit then a copy of your Universal Credit award notice is the best evidence to provide. If this is not available a print out of your last payment from the online system should be accepted as proof. Please be aware that dental surgeries may not always be aware of this. So if they query this you can tell them this is valid proof.

### **Help with dental costs while on low incomes**

If the person signing up needs help with paying for dental costs because they have a low income they'll need to fill out a HC1 form which are available online. Download here: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2017-05/HC1-health-costs-help-claim-form.pdf>

Once a person has completed and submitted a HC1 and if they are seen as eligible they should receive a HC2 certificate (full help with health costs) or HC3 certificate (limited help with health costs) depending on their eligibility. It is best to bring the certificate, or at least the certificate number to each dental appointment.

## **Migrants and people with No Recourse to Public Funds**

NHS dental services from General Dental Practitioners or from the Community Dental Service are primary care services. These dentists cannot turn down an applicant for NHS treatment on the grounds of race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, disability or dental condition.

When you apply to become an NHS patient of a particular dental practice, you don't have to prove identity or immigration status.

You can find more information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide#dental-treatment>

<http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/Documents/NHS-healthcare.pdf>

The arrangements for charges and exemption from charges are the same as for all patients. You can find these in the sections above about costs.

## **What's on offer from an NHS dentist?**

NHS dental practices will offer you the following services/procedures:

**Examinations.** A full assessment of the mouth better known as a 'check-up'.

**Scale and Polish.** Sometimes using an ultrasonic water jet and sometimes by gently scraping any hardened plaque off of the teeth.

**Filling and sealing teeth.** This involves cleaning out dental decay and building the tooth back up with filling material (fillings).

**Extractions.** Removing teeth that cannot be saved.

**Root canal work.** Cleaning out an infected tooth rather than taking it out (this can only be done when the dentist believes the tooth is saveable).

**Crowns.** A tooth-shaped "cap" that is placed over a tooth - to cover the tooth to restore its shape and size, strength, and improve its appearance.

**Dentures.** A partial or complete set of artificial teeth for either the upper or lower jaw. Also called dental plate.

**Bridges.** A fixed set of artificial teeth used to replace one or several missing teeth by permanently joining an artificial tooth to adjacent teeth or dental implants.

**Laboratory work.** Work undertaken in a laboratory can include the manufacture or customization of a variety of dental products including crowns, bridges, dentures and other dental products.

**For most people cosmetic treatments like whitening or implants are not available on the NHS.**

## **NHS dental charges**

When patients are not entitled to free or subsidised NHS dental care then NHS dental charges will apply. These work in a band system where the cost depends on the treatment you need to keep your mouth, teeth and gums healthy.

You'll only ever be asked to pay one charge for each complete course of treatment, even if you need to visit your dentist more than once to finish it. Costs listed below are correct at the time of producing this document (April 2018).

### **Band 1 course of treatment – £21.60**

This covers examinations, diagnosis (including x-rays), advice on how to prevent future problems, scale and polish if clinically necessary, and preventative care (for example, applications of fluoride varnish or fissure sealants which are a plastic coating to protect teeth).

### **Urgent dental treatment – £21.60**

This band covers emergency care, such as pain relief or a temporary filling, in a primary care dental practice. Find out more about dental emergency and out-of-hours care.

### **Band 2 course of treatment – £59.10**

This covers everything listed in Band 1, plus any further treatment, such as fillings, root canal work, or if your dentist needs to take out one or more of your teeth.

### **Band 3 course of treatment – £256.50**

This covers everything listed in Bands 1 and 2 above, plus crowns, dentures, bridges, and other laboratory work.

## **Appointments and sign up with dental surgeries**

### **Signing up for a dentist.**

When you sign up for a dentist it is best to be prepared. Follow the following steps:

- You may have to sit in the waiting room for some time before seeing a dentist, they can be very busy at times but they will try to get you in as soon as possible.
- If you need to fill in a HC1 form it's best to complete the form in advance and take it with you it may speed up the process.
- If you are in receipt of benefits, bring proof with you.
- You don't need to bring ID unless you need to prove that you are under 18.
- You don't need to bring proof of a fixed address - a 'care of' would be fine on the sign-up form.
- You might be asked to fill out a medical history. If you have been asked to fill it in before-hand please remember to bring it with you to speed things up.
- Unlike GPs, dentists can take on people from any location, they are not restricted to geographical boundaries.

## **On the day of the appointment**

Each time you have an appointment remember the following things:

- If you need help paying for dental costs bring your proof of benefits or HC2/HC2 certificate every time (See above).
- Give as much notice as possible if you are going to miss appointments. Cancel beforehand to avoid being removed from the practice patient list.
- If you accidentally missed the appointment ring them as soon as possible and see if the dentists can re-arrange.
- If someone isn't able to go, give the practice a call and see if they can slot someone else in.

## **Your first appointment**

At your first appointment with a dentist you should expect:

- To be greeted with a smile
- A thorough check of your mouth and teeth including.
- Any x-rays you might need.
- An explanation of your treatment options.
- The dentist will try their best to send you home pain free.

## **Getting treatment when in Pain**

Having to face dental pain or toothache can have a big impact can have a detrimental effect on people's quality of life. If someone is suffering from dental pain they should see a dentist as soon as possible and not a GP as they won't be able to offer dental treatment. In emergency situations you may need to go to an out of hours dentist or to an A&E department. The following demonstrates when you should go to which.

### **See a dentist if you are in pain and:**

- the pain lasts more than 2 days
- the pain doesn't go away when you take painkillers
- you have a high temperature, pain when you bite, red gums, or a bad taste in your mouth
- and/or your cheek or jaw are swollen

### **Go to A&E if you have toothache and:**

- the area around your eye and your neck is swollen
- you have swelling in your mouth or neck that is making it difficult for you to breathe, swallow or speak



## Emergency/Out of hours Dentists

If you need to see a dentist in an emergency or out of hours there are some different ways you can do this.

- **Call your dentist** – They may be able to offer you a last-minute appointment and if they're closed, their answerphone may tell you what to do.
- **Call NHS 111** – they can advise you where to go for treatment.
- If you don't have a dentist or can't get an emergency appointment:
  - Find a dentist near you - <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>
  - NHS Choices have a useful page on what to do if you have toothache <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/toothache/>

## Further information

You can find out more information on dental services and entitlements using the following resources:

**Find your local dental practices using NHS Choices:** <https://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

**Entitlement to free NHS dentistry:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1786.aspx?CategoryID=74>

**NHS healthcare for migrants with NRPF (England):**

<http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/Documents/NHS-healthcare.pdf>

**NHS Entitlements for migrants:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide#dental-treatment>

**Information on dental charges:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Dentalcosts.aspx>

**NHS Help with health Costs:** <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-help-health-costs>

# Community Dental Services in London

<b>KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST</b>	
Referral address: 161 Denmark Hill, SE5 8EF	<b>Boroughs</b>
Contact Name (Clinician): Rob Hale	Richmond, Kingston and Wandsworth
Telephone: 0203 299 3480	Sutton, Merton and Croydon
Email: <a href="mailto:Kch-tr.cdsreferrals@nhs.net">Kch-tr.cdsreferrals@nhs.net</a>	Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark
Website: <a href="http://www.kch.nhs.uk">www.kch.nhs.uk</a>	
<b>KENT COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST</b>	
Referral address: 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Capital House, Jubilee Way, Faversham, ME13 8GD	<b>Boroughs</b>
Contact Name: Referral Management Centre	Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Havering
Telephone: 0300 7900 158	City & Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham
Email: <a href="mailto:kcht.communitydentalservice@nhs.net">kcht.communitydentalservice@nhs.net</a>	
Website: <a href="http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/dental-services">www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/dental-services</a>	
<b>WHITTINGTON HEALTH NHS TRUST</b>	
Referral address: Hunter Street Health Centre, 8 Hunter Street, WC1N 1BN	<b>Boroughs</b>
Contact Name (Clinician): Andrew Read	Camden, Islington, Enfield and Haringey
Telephone: 020 3317 2353	Barnet, Brent and Harrow
Email: <a href="mailto:dentalreferral.whitthealth@nhs.net">dentalreferral.whitthealth@nhs.net</a>	Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing
Website: <a href="https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=10989">https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=10989</a>	
<b>BROMLEY HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY</b>	
Referral address: Eldred Drive Clinic, BR5 4PE	<b>Boroughs</b>
Contact Name (Clinician): Andrew Bottomley	Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich
Telephone: 01689 806859	
Email: <a href="mailto:BROMH.dentalreferrals@nhs.net">BROMH.dentalreferrals@nhs.net</a>	
Online Referral Form: <a href="https://www.bromleyhealthcare.org.uk/">https://www.bromleyhealthcare.org.uk/</a>	
<b>CENTRAL LONDON COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST</b>	
Referral address: Soho Centre for Health & Care, 1 Frith Street, W1D 3QS	<b>Boroughs</b>
Contact Name: Referral Management Centre	Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster
Telephone: 020 7354 6529 / 6524	
Email: <a href="mailto:Clcht.dental@nhs.net">Clcht.dental@nhs.net</a>	
Website: <a href="http://www.clch.nhs.uk">www.clch.nhs.uk</a>	