



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From James Morris MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Primary Care and Patient Safety*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

PO-1414760

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

5 September 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 August about access to NHS dentistry.

I understand your concerns and I am grateful that you have taken the time to write about this important issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on NHS dentistry, with capacity greatly reduced because of the additional risks associated with aerosol-generating procedures. These required additional infection prevention and control measures to protect patients and staff.

NHS England asked dental and orthodontic practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July. Many contractors have already been delivering 100 per cent or more of their contracted activity for some time, and the sector is working hard to deliver as much NHS activity as it can.

NHS dental practices have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focusing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups, including children, followed by overdue appointments. Urgent care has been back at pre-pandemic levels since December 2020. Over 550 urgent dental care centres remain open across the country to support the provision of urgent care, where a patient does not have, or cannot access, a regular dentist.

An additional £50million in funding for NHS dentistry was made available towards the end of the 2021/22 financial year to give more patients access to dental care.

On 19 July, the Government announced a package of improvements to the NHS dental system, which will improve access to care and provide better targeted care for patients with greater oral health needs.

The 2006 dental contract has been revised to ensure better remuneration for practices for providing complex treatment to patients and to enable dentists to make better use of all the staff in their teams to deliver NHS treatment. Clear guidance has been issued on how often patients should expect to attend for check-ups.

NHS commissioners will have greater flexibility in commissioning dentists who can deliver more treatment to do so where needed, and dentists will be required to update their information on the NHS website to improve the information available to patients.

It may be helpful to note that patients are registered with a dental practice only during the course of their treatment, meaning there are no geographical restrictions on which practice a patient may attend.

Patients who are struggling to find a local dentist for urgent care can contact NHS 111.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM', enclosed within a light grey rectangular border.

JAMES MORRIS MP