

# Special Care Dental Service Report:

The views of

Gloucestershire residents

Local health  
and care  
shaped by you

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [info@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk)

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# Background

NHS England (NHSE) South West is looking to re-commission special dental services in the South West in 2019. NHSE and NHS Improvement wanted to gather feedback from patients, potential patients, carers and advocates of those using special care dental services in the following areas:

- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- Devon
- Wiltshire
- Gloucestershire
- Somerset
- Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG)

Special care dentistry is concerned with the improvement of the oral health of individuals and groups in society who have a physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, medical, emotional or social impairment or disability; or, more often, a combination of these factors. Those who use special dental services include:

- People suffering from anxiety and/or extreme phobia of dental treatment
- People with learning disabilities and/or autism
- People with physical disabilities
- People experiencing dementia
- Patients who need bariatric equipment
- People undergoing treatment for cancer
- Some homeless people

The service in Gloucestershire is provided by Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (prior to October 2019, by Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust).

Healthwatch Gloucestershire were approached to help with this work. We were keen to get involved to ensure that local people are engaged with and have their voices heard in this re-commissioning process.

The engagement work ran from 27 August to 7 October 2019.



# Communications and engagement

Date	Activity
Throughout September until 4 October	3-4 social media posts a week with a link to the survey on Healthwatch Gloucestershire's Facebook page and Twitter, with occasional LinkedIn and Instagram posts.
28 August until survey closes	News story on Healthwatch Gloucestershire website.
17 September	Story with a link to the survey in Healthwatch Gloucestershire monthly ebulletin

There were 80 organisations that were sent individual emails with details of the project. The local Learning Disability Partnership Board also distributed the information to their network. We attended six events where we held information stands, and took leaflets and information to these to give to people face-to-face who may have used the services. Volunteers were also given leaflets to hand out to their local communities and networks.

The information about the project was posted on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The links were also sent out in the monthly e-bulletin, through our volunteer bulletin and through the website. The analysis of reach for these posts is below:

## Facebook:

26/9/2019 - 88 reach, 1 click, 1 reaction

18/9/2019 - 33 reach, 1 click, 0 reaction

2/9/2019 - 265 reach, 19 clicks, 6 reactions

27/8/2019 - 67 reach, 2 clicks, 0 reactions

Total: 4 posts, combined 453 reach, 23 clicks, 7 reactions

## Twitter:

2/9/2019 - 381 impressions

27/8/2019 - 434 impressions, 1 engagement

Two posts, 815 impressions, 1 engagement

## LinkedIn:

17 Impressions, 1 click

## Website:

[www.healthwatchgloucestershire/news/do-you-or-someone-you-care-for-use-nhs-special-care-dental-services-in-the-south-west/](http://www.healthwatchgloucestershire/news/do-you-or-someone-you-care-for-use-nhs-special-care-dental-services-in-the-south-west/)

79 page views, includes 44 clicked through from another link, e.g. ebulletin or social media (can't define which).



## Share your experience of special care dentists

If you or someone you care for use special care dental services in Gloucestershire, then NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE and NHSI) would like to hear from you.

Healthwatch Gloucestershire is collating the views of patients, potential patients, parents, carers and advocates to help shape future developments of special care dental services in the region.

Special care dental services focus on improving the oral health of people who have a health condition or have circumstances which prevents them from using a high street dentist. It is these people that the NHS would like feedback from about their awareness and experience of using these services. [Read more...](#)

E-bulletin item

## Focus groups

We spoke to 11 service users with learning disabilities, living in supported accommodation and all had experience of using special care dental services in Gloucestershire. They lived in two homes under one provider. The focus groups were held on 7 October 2019, and in total there were six women and five men that took part, aged between 18 and 74 years old (full breakdown of ages in Table 1).

All were white British and there were also five female support workers in attendance across the two groups to speak about their client's experiences and to support them to communicate these. All service users had been provided with easy read information about the discussion prior to the visit. The focus group was facilitated by a Healthwatch Gloucestershire member of staff.



**Table 1. - Ages of focus group participants:**

Age bracket	Total number of participants
18 - 24 years old	3
25 - 34 years old	1
35 -44 years old	1
45 - 54 years old	5
55 - 64 years old	5
65 - 74 years old	1

The discussion was broken down into the following themes:

- The Service
- Travel
- Making the service easier to use
- Communication
- High Street Dentists

## The service



The majority of participants used the service for routine checks ups with dentists and hygienists, every three or six months depending on their need. A couple of participants had used the service for urgent treatment, but not recently. The support workers told us that the next appointments were always made on the same day as treatments. This also meant that there were not long waits and that the appointments could be made for a time that suited the clients and their schedules. It also helped to plan for future months with all residents.

The participants in the focus groups were not aware of the service being specialist services, and just referred to 'the dentist'. All support workers were not aware of the service being specialist and assumed that this was just the NHS dentist that clients had to use. The participants all agreed that the service was easy, but all attend with a support worker, and not alone. The home referred all to the service and one client was new to the home, so was going through the process of becoming registered at the time of the focus group. The feedback on this from the support worker was generally positive, but there was some confusion about where the client would have to attend their first appointment. The wait for the first appointment was short, within 2-3 weeks of first registering.

No clients had seen the dentist at home, nor had been offered a home visit. All clients seemed happy to travel to the dentist, and often this was linked into other social activities in Gloucester. Support workers were happy to take the clients to the dentist and could not think of a client that would benefit from home visits.

## Travel

Clients all used Gloucester Dental Clinic and it took them less than 20 minutes to get from the home to the clinic for appointments. They all travelled by car or minibus and clients both were independently mobile and wheelchair users. Clients were able to access the clinic easily. Support workers talked about blue badge spaces being hard to find on busy days, and difficulties getting a larger minibus type vehicle into the closest car park. Often because of the vehicle that they have to use, they need to take up more than one space.



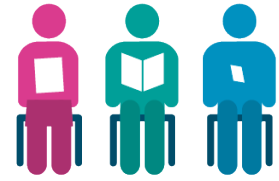
## Making the service easier to use

The clients and support workers were not concerned about the time of day of appointments specifically. The feedback was that they were more focussed on being able to make appointments that fitted into other planned activities, such as cooking or singing, to ensure that clients did not miss out on these social events.

All participants agreed that the clinic was easy to find, although the clients would not be able to access it without their support workers help. It was easy to access and identify where it is. There were concerns that for people with learning disabilities, without support workers it may be harder to find. Support workers agreed that if there was more parking available for blue badge holders nearby this would make visits easier.

All participants felt that they had all the equipment they needed available to them. Some clients use wheelchairs, which they can remain in if necessary to have procedures done. The only piece of equipment used was the recliner.

### WAITING ROOM



## Communication

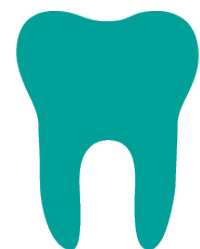


Participants felt that sometimes they are told information that they cannot remember. This may be helped by ensuring that there is easy read information leaflets or plans available to the users of the service. The support workers are present and are also given information about care plans and next steps for patients. The support workers receive phone reminders from the clinic about appointments, which they find really helpful.

Support workers felt that some of the advice they were offered can be 'unrealistic' to their client's needs and choices. Clients talked about how they enjoyed some biscuits and cakes and that they did not want to give those up because of their teeth. Clients and support workers talked about brushing their teeth better and more regularly to help the health of their teeth and gums. Dentists do give out advice to clients and support workers and offer them specialised equipment such as adapted toothbrushes and toothpaste. This is seen as useful from the support workers and clients.

## High Street Dentists

It was agreed from all members of the focus groups that they don't feel they would benefit from attending another high street dentist. The clients spoke positively about their dentists and the clinic and the support workers felt that it was convenient to get to. They also felt that it had easier access for those wheelchair users or those that needed more space, which may not be available in a high street dentist. Most clients had been using the clinic for a number of years.



# Clinic visits

A team of HWG staff and volunteers visited Gloucester Dental Clinic and Redwood House clinic in Stroud. The clinic in Gloucester was visited on 19 September 2019 by a team of staff and volunteers and the Stroud clinic was visited on 25 September 2019 by one volunteer.

There were 31 people that completed surveys in Gloucester, this was a mix of patients and carers. The majority of people spoken to were patients. There were six people who refused to take part in the survey at the clinic but took information leaflets and hard copies of the survey away with them. There were eight surveys completed in Stroud clinic, with only one person refusing to take part, but again took away leaflets and hard copies of the survey.



## Survey responses

67 people started the survey and 47 completed it.

### **CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR LAST OR CURRENT VISIT**

#### **1. Are you...**

17 people completing the survey were patients using the service, 14 people were parents of children using the service and 12 were carers for someone using the service. Three people completing the survey described themselves as 'other'; two of these were not using the service at the time of the survey, or not aware of the service. One was a parent of an adult with learning disabilities.

#### **2. Which clinic have you attended or are attending?**

There were 39 responses to this question. Three people indicated that it was not applicable to them. Eight people did not declare which clinic they had visited.

There were a number of people who just indicated 'dentist', 'dental service' or 'dental clinic' without a location. However, these were inputted at Healthwatch Gloucestershire after the clinic visit by a volunteer, so we know in these cases they had visited Gloucester Dental Clinic.



Some indicated 'Glos Dental Access Centre', 'Southgate Moorings' or 'Gloucester docks surgery'. Again, these were inputted by a Healthwatch volunteer and are all referring to the Gloucester Dental Clinic, which is known locally by these names. In total, 26 people had visited Gloucester Dental Clinic.

There were eight people who had visited Stroud Dental Clinic, again, it was referred to as 'Redwood House' and 'Stroud NHS dentist'. These were inputted by the volunteer after the clinic visit and were people spoken to in the clinic.

One person had used both Gloucester and Stroud clinics and one person indicated they had used BUPA in Tewkesbury.

### **3. Please confirm if you (or the person you are answering on behalf of) have used special care dental services in the last year.**

There were 40 responses to this question, with seven people skipping it. 14 people indicated that they were patients that had used the special care dental service, 16 people were carers for people who had used the services, and 10 people were not sure re. dental services in the last year. One person was not sure.

### **4. Which of the following special care dental services have, or the person you represent, used in the last year?**

There were 46 responses to this question, with one person skipping this. 24 people had used the service for routine check ups and 24 had used the service for treatment. 10 had used the service for urgent care and 10 people had not used the services for any of these.

### **5. Who referred you (or the person you took) to the special care dental service?**

45 people answered the question, and two skipped the question.

23 people indicated that a dentist had referred them, five people were referred through a GP and one through another health care professional. Five people had referred themselves, with five people not knowing who had referred them. Five indicated 'other', such as a friend or a Parkinson's nurse.

### **6. Special care dental services provide treatment to people with the following conditions/backgrounds. [Tick all that apply to you, or the person you represent]**

46 people answered this question, with one person skipping it. The top 5 conditions or backgrounds declared (in order of number of people ticking them) were:

- Learning disability (28%)
- Physical disabilities (20%)
- Mental health issues (15%)
- Wheelchair user (13%)
- Dental phobia (13%)

21 % of respondents indicated that none of the conditions or backgrounds applied to them, and indicated conditions such as motor neurone disease and chronic fatigue syndrome.

## HOW DID YOU GET TO YOUR APPOINTMENT

### **7. How did you travel to your most recent special care dental service appointment? [Please select your main form of transport only]**

Out of 46 people that answered the question, 33 had accessed the appointment by using a car. Three by taxi, three by public transport and one by patient transport. Three travelled on foot, and four people had indicated 'other' with cycling and care home bus being specified.

### **8. a) At what time of day was your appointment?**

The majority of people (33 out of 45 who answered the question), had an appointment between 10:00 and 15:00. Six people had had appointments between 07:00 and 10:00 and six between 15:00 to 18:00.

### **8. b) Was this convenient?**

42 people answered the question, with 37 people agreeing that the time was convenient for them. Five people answered that it was not convenient.

### **9. If you came by car, was it possible to find a convenient place to park in the hospital or clinic car park?**

32 people answered this question, with 20 answering that it was possible to find a convenient place to park, eight people saying that it was not, and four that were not sure.

### **10. If you are a blue badge holder, were you able to park in one of the marked bays?**

16 people answered this question, seven people agreed that they were able to park in the marked bay, four people were not able to and five were not sure.

### **11. Once you arrived at the clinic, was the special care dental service easy to find?**

45 people answered this question, with 37 agreeing that it was very easy to find the clinic. Seven people found it fairly easy, and one person was not sure.

### **12. Was it easy to get through the main entrance and move around in the clinic?**

43 out of the 45 people who answered the question agreed that it was easy; two people were not sure.

## YOUR MOST RECENT APPOINTMENT

### **13. Thinking about your most-recent treatment, or the treatment you are having today, how long did you have to wait for your appointment to see a dentist?**

44 people answered this question. 23 people had waited up to one month, 14 had waited up to three months, five people had waited more than three months but less than six months, and two had waited more than six months.

### **14. a) Thinking about your last or current appointment, how satisfied were/are you that the clinic where you received your dental treatment had the right equipment or adaptations for your physical or medical needs?**

42 people answered this question, and 24 of those respondents were very satisfied with adaptations or equipment provided. 12 were satisfied, and six were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

**14. b) If you were not satisfied, please could you let us know what equipment or adaptations you needed which weren't provided or what else led to you not being satisfied?**

Six people answered this question. One person stated that it was not applicable, one saying that all was great and one discussed the length of time to check-in meant they were late for their appointment. One person discussed communication breakdown in explaining what the treatment would be. There were two responses to equipment, one talking about the space being cramped with four people needing to be in the room with him, and being unsure of what would help him more. One person talked about problems with operation of the wheelchair accessible dental chair, and that repairs are due.

**15. Were any of the following available for you if you needed them? [Please tick all that apply to you]**

There were 11 respondents to this question. The wheelchair access was applicable to eight people, the wheelchair recliner to two, the headrest to three people, sedation to one person and the bariatric dental chair to one person.

**16. a) Was a home visit offered to you?**

A home visit was offered to two people, 21 people answered no, and 13 were unsure. 36 people answered the question.

**16. b) Would you have preferred a home visit? If so, please explain why.**

There were 23 people that answered this question, with six people stating that they would prefer a home visit. Two people talked about it being easier for their children being in their home environment. One person stated that it would be easier to have a dentist visit him in his care home. Two people thought that the travelling was difficult, and one respondent stated that it would be less exhausting for her daughter to be seen at home.

“My husband lives with dementia and isn't able to have teeth out with his normal dentist and is easier to visit him in his care home.”

“My son might be more cooperative - it might be worth a try.”

“Children have learning difficulties and a home environment would be easier for examination.”

“Long way to travel.”

“Travelling exhausts my daughter who suffers from severe fatigue.”

**17. What information did you receive before, during and after your appointment, whether written or verbal?**

25 people answered this question, and 22 skipped it. Most people had received written and verbal information. Including information on appointment reminders, information on service, information on treatment and care plans and information on teeth brushing. Text message and phone call reminders about appointments were also mentioned.

## OVERALL EXPERIENCE

### 18. What would have improved your experience of using this service?

22 people completed this question. The top five topic areas were:

1. Having a later or more convenient appointment time.
2. More blue badge parking spaces and more convenient spaces available.
3. Shorter waiting times for appointments, and increasing the number of wheelchair accessible chairs so that more clinics are available.
4. A better understanding of learning and physical disabilities and mental capacity by practitioners.
5. Being able to get an initial appointment quicker

“Shorter waiting times for appointments. Continuity is key and the length of time between visits makes this difficult.”

“Facilities only available at Redwood much as own original dentist preferred. (That not possible any more as no wheelchair access.) Totally happy with Redwood and their kindness and understanding of needs.”

“Not having two appointments cancelled on the day of appointment and having to wait months for a new one when my daughter is still in pain.”

“Experience in learning disabilities and mental capacity, and understanding why they can't brush properly.”

### 19. Would you have preferred to receive your care at your high street dentist?

There were 36 responses to this question. 27 responded that they would not prefer to go to a high street dentist. With nine people saying that they would.

The reasons that people would prefer to see their high street dentist were:

- Shorter waiting times, and would have initially been seen quicker.
- Closer to home or less far to travel
- Continuity of having the previous dentist for a high number of years.

“Our dentist had managed my daughter's dental health for years before her physical mobility deteriorated and prevented her from accessing the surgery. He knew her history and her medical conditions and is very kind and gentle. Appointment waiting times are shorter and we could get there much more quickly than the 30-minute travel time to the Stroud clinic, which adds to my daughter's fatigue and adversely affects her health.”

“We have to travel for nearly an hour each way.”

“Only initially having continuity after 50 years with local dentist. Under the circumstances only Redwood possible.”

**20. Thinking about your most recent treatment, how satisfied were you, or the person you represent, with the information provided before, during and after your appointment?**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Before your appointment	51.2% (22)	37.2% (16)	0	0	2.3% (1)	9.3% (4)
During your appointment	50.0% (21)	23.8% (10)	0	4.8% (2)	0	21.4% (9)
After your appointment	43.9% (18)	29.3% (12)	0	0	2.4% (1)	24.4% (10)

**21. Overall, how would you rate the following aspects of your experience of Special Care Dental Service services?**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Cleanliness of facilities	35.1% (28)	20.9% (9)	0	0	0	14.0% (6)
Friendliness of staff	62.8% (27)	18.6% (8)	2.3% (1)	0	0	16.3% (7)
Reception facilities	58.1% (25)	25.6% (11)	0	2.3% (1)	0	14.0% (6)

**ABOUT YOU**

**22. What is your postcode**

Postcode	District	Number of respondents
GL1	Gloucester	8
GL2	Gloucester	12
GL3	Gloucester	2
GL4	Gloucester	5
GL5	Stroud	4
GL6	Stroud	1
GL7	Cotswold	1
GL10	Stroud	1
GL12	Stroud	1
GL14	Forest of Dean	2
GL16	Forest of Dean	2
GL17	Forest of Dean	1
GL20	Tewksbury	1
GL50	Cheltenham	1

GL51	Cheltenham	1
GL53	Cheltenham	1
Unspecified postcode	Gloucester	1
Unspecified postcode	Stroud	1

### 23. Which of these best describes how you think of yourself? (gender)

There were 46 responses, 33 people described themselves as female, 12 as male and one as transgender.

### 24. How old are you?

Age bracket	Total responses
Under 16	8
16 to 17	12
28 to 24	2
25 to 34	5
35 to 44	4
45 to 54	1
55 to 64	1
65 to 74	1
85 and over	1
Would rather not say	2

### 25. What is your ethnic group?

There were 46 responses, 43 people described themselves as British, one person as any other white background, one as Pakistani and one as African.

### 26. Which of these best describes what you are doing at the moment?

There were 42 responses to this question.

	Total responses
Full-time paid work (30 hours or more each week)	7
Part-time paid work (under 30 hours each week)	8
Full-time education at school, college or university	3
Unemployed	2
Unable to work due to sickness or disability	11
Full or part-time carer	4
Retired	2
Looking after the family or home	2
Doing something else	2
Would rather not say	1

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## Why not get involved?



[healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk](http://healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk)



[info@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk)



01452 504989



13 Wheatstone Court, Davy Way, Waterwells Business Park,  
Quedgeley, Gloucester, GL2 2AQ



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@HealthwatchGlos



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