



# Enter & View

Bond Street Dental Practice

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Details of visit

Service provider	Bond Street Dental Practice
Service Address	12 Bond Street, Redruth, TR15 2QB
Date and time	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2024 9am-12pm
Authorised representatives	Abi Harding-White

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Cornwall would like to thank patients and staff for their positive contribution to this Enter and View visit and the subsequent report.

## 1.3 Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date above and is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time of the visit.

# 2 What is Enter and View?

As a local Healthwatch we are authorised to “Enter and View” health and social care services through the following legislation;

- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Local Authorities Regulations 2013 (part 4)

These services can include hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies.

The goal of Enter and View is to see services in action and understand the experiences of individuals who use them. It is an opportunity for us to observe service delivery, listen to the views of the people using health and social care services and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

Enter and View visits are organised based on feedback received about individual services, in response to themes identified in our research, or when services have a good reputation enabling us to share examples of best practice from the perspective of people who experience the service first-hand.

Healthwatch Cornwall Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer, they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

## 2.1 Purpose of visit

- To observe the nature and quality of service facilities
- To observe how people experience the service

- To gather views from patients and staff on the service

## 2.2 Strategic drivers

Over the past year, the most consistent feedback Healthwatch Cornwall have received has been related to dentistry and access to dental care. In response to these concerns, we are undertaking a dentistry research project and conducting Enter and View visits to dental practices across the region. We selected practices based on their provision of NHS care and their location, ensuring that we cover a broad geographic area within Cornwall. This approach helps us understand the accessibility and quality of dental services across different communities. Healthwatch Cornwall can use this evidence to make recommendations and inform changes for both individual services as well as system wide.

## 2.3 Methodology

This was an announced visit, and we worked with the practice to organise the date and time of the visit. An initial email was sent explaining the role of Healthwatch Cornwall, what Enter and View is, the purpose of the visit, and a proposed date and time for the visit to take place. A further email was sent confirming the agreed details of the visit and included a formal letter, Enter and View notice and a general Healthwatch Cornwall poster.

The authorised representative (Enter and View officer) conducted the visit between 9am and 12pm in the main waiting areas in reception and upstairs.

Patients were approached and asked if they would be willing to discuss their experiences. Additionally, they were asked if they felt they had time to do so before their appointment so as not to cause stress or disrupt service delivery. A reflective conversational approach was used to gather feedback on what they felt the practice did well and what could be improved.

In addition, we were able to speak with the practice manager to gather their perspective. Observations were also made regarding the quality of the facilities and patient experience of the service, including their interactions with staff.

At the end of the visit, the authorised representative was able to give initial feedback to the practice manager and explained the next steps regarding reporting.



# 3 Findings

## 3.1 Overview

Bond Street Dental provides 99% NHS care, serving 13126 patients, with around 14 patients on a dental plan. The practice employs two nurses, one of whom is preparing for maternity leave, alongside two receptionists, two dentists, and a practice manager.

The practice is clearly signed, facilitating easy navigation for patients; however, it does not have a designated car park. There is local street parking available, including 30 minutes of free parking directly outside the practice, as well as a pay-and-display car park located a short walk away. Additionally, the practice is situated a two-minute walk from the nearest train station.

The building is not specifically designed for accessibility, yet it does offer step-free access. There are two practice rooms located on the ground floor that can accommodate patients with mobility issues. The practice is equipped with a hearing loop to assist patients with hearing impairments. While there is a toilet located downstairs, it is not accessible due to its size and does not feature baby-changing facilities. The practice includes two waiting rooms for patients, one located in the downstairs reception area and the other on the upper floor.

## Practice Observations

From the outside, it was not immediately clear that the practice was open, as the blinds were closed. However, once inside, it appeared that the blinds were drawn against the morning sun.

The interior of the practice was well maintained and clean. All signs within the practice were relevant and up to date, and feedback forms were available, encouraging both positive and constructive comments from patients.

The reception team greeted patients warmly before directing them upstairs to wait for their appointments. It was observed that the upstairs waiting room felt significantly warmer than the rest of the practice. Music was playing in the downstairs area, but there was no music in the upstairs waiting room, contributing to a quieter atmosphere.

During the visit, a receptionist was observed explaining to a patient over the phone that a routine appointment could not be booked at that time. The receptionist demonstrated understanding and maintained a quiet tone, ensuring that patients waiting upstairs did not overhear the conversation. Additionally, a patient arrived significantly late; the reception team acknowledged this and confirmed that the dentist would still be able to see them.

## 3.2 Summary of Feedback

All patients consulted reported a positive overall perception of their experience. They specifically highlighted the excellent quality of care provided. Opinions regarding the ease of accessing appointments were mixed; four patients reported that they were able to book appointments without difficulty, while two indicated that it was challenging. The only area identified for improvement was the upstairs waiting room, which has been taken into consideration for shaping recommendations.

The conversation with the practice manager indicated that, while there are challenges in recruiting dentists, there is a genuine commitment to and connection with the local community, as reflected in the patient feedback.

## 3.3 Patient Feedback

Feedback was gathered from six patients, all of whom were local to the Redruth and Camborne area, with one patient having been with the practice for many years.

One patient had been scheduled for treatment after attending two emergency appointments, while another had booked an emergency appointment on the morning of the visit. Additionally, one patient returned to discuss the next steps in their care after being referred elsewhere for treatment that could not be completed.



Positive Feedback

- Patients consistently reported having a positive relationship with the dentist.
- The dentist is noted for being particularly attentive to patients with medical conditions that affect their dental health.
- The overall quality of care provided by the practice is described as excellent.
- While there is a waiting list, the practice ensures that patients with urgent needs are seen when necessary.
- Minor treatments are often completed during routine appointments when possible.
- Patients receive reminders for their upcoming appointments, helping them stay on track with their dental care.



"I generally don't like the dentist, but they make me feel at ease"



#### Constructive Feedback

- The waiting room environment could benefit from being more engaging and comfortable for patients.
- Some patients expressed a preference for a more proactive approach to care, recognising that the current shortage of dentists presents challenges in achieving this consistently.
- One patient reported that their husband was unregistered from the practice a few years ago without any prior notification, however the patient had not attended the practice in twelve years.
- A patient with mobility issues was unaware of an available downstairs toilet, as the one upstairs was not in use. Although the downstairs facility was accessible, the patient had difficulty navigating stairs and could not go back downstairs



before their appointment.



“They’re very good here and they send reminders a few days before.”



### 3.5 Staff Feedback

We had the opportunity to speak with both the practice manager and one of the dentists. The conversation focused on the practice's strengths and challenges, as well as the broader issues facing NHS dentistry.

#### Practice Strengths

- The practice manager emphasises the strength of the reception and nursing teams, noting their efficiency and professionalism in managing patient interactions and supporting the clinical staff. This cohesive team dynamic contributes to the smooth day-to-day operations of the practice.
- The practice serves a large and loyal patient base, with some patients willing to travel significant distances, such as from Somerset, to receive care. This indicates the high level of trust and quality of services provided, making the practice a preferred choice even for those outside the immediate locality.
- Patients benefit from the practice's excellent local transport connections, which enhance accessibility and ensure that the practice remains convenient for a broad demographic of patients.
- The team has built and maintained positive relationships with their patients, which is reflected in patient loyalty and satisfaction. While occasional frustrations arise, particularly around booking appointments, patients often recognise the situation and exhibit understanding, even following up with apologies. This suggests the team's ability to foster empathy and maintain goodwill, even during challenges.

- The practice has seen a noticeable reduction in calls from potential new patients, down to just one or two inquiries per week. This change may reflect a stable patient base or broader trends in the availability of dental services. It also offers the opportunity for the practice to focus more on the quality of care for existing patients.

### Practice Challenges

- Faced a significant reduction in the dental team, decreasing from five full-time dentists to two part-time practitioners.
- The team have been unable to fill the vacancies created by departing dentists, which has directly impacted its ability to see patients. Currently, the practice is focusing on booking treatment and emergency appointments, with any remaining gaps filled by routine appointments. A substantial internal waiting list exists for registered patients seeking routine care, and the practice is not accepting new NHS patients due to capacity constraints.
- Despite offering competitive recruitment incentives, including relocation incentives and attractive UDA rates, the practice has not received any applications for open dentist positions. They believe the lack of interest could be attributed to the remote location and the broader impact of COVID-19, during which many dentists left the profession.
- The team have expressed concerns about the viability of introducing private dental care in the Redruth and Camborne areas, which are economically deprived and have high dental care needs. Many patients require extensive treatments but are unable to afford private care. Introducing payment plans could place additional financial strain on patients without providing enough revenue to sustain the practice or adequately compensate the dentists. This situation further complicates the practice's ability to explore alternative models of care delivery.

## 3.6 Feedback on NHS Dentistry

The practice has not achieved its NHS targets for the past two to three years, and the team feels they have not received sufficient support from the NHS to make these targets more manageable, particularly regarding staffing issues. They recently submitted a request for recruitment assistance from the NHS, but no progress has been made thus far.

The team has observed that recruitment challenges were less pronounced in the past. They previously employed a team member from mainland Europe who contributed significantly to the practice, working diligently and establishing strong relationships with patients. However, due to changes in regulations, the staff member was unable to continue their employment as they could not obtain the necessary insurance or work permit.

It has been suggested that enhancements to facilities and modifications to the funding system could help attract more dentists to the practice. Additionally, there is a proposal for dental students to complete a mandatory period of NHS service following their qualification. However, concerns have been raised regarding whether such a requirement might discourage individuals from pursuing a career in dentistry.

# Recommendations

The visit was largely positive, and Healthwatch Cornwall has provided several recommendations derived from observations and patient feedback.

- Consider whether an open sign might be beneficial as an addition to the opening hours for when the blinds are closed to ensure patients understand the practice is open.
- Informing patients about the location of the toilet could be beneficial, especially for those with mobility issues who might need to access facilities before going upstairs.
- Establishing a system for communicating patients' registration status could improve overall patient experience.
- Regarding the upstairs waiting room, playing music in this area, in addition to the downstairs waiting room, could create a more inviting atmosphere.
- Expanding the selection of reading material on the bookshelf may enrich the waiting experience for patients.
- Considering the patient demographic might highlight the benefits of introducing a designated children's corner for reading or creative activities, enhancing the environment for families.

# Provider Response

The visit from Healthwatch Cornwall was a positive experience.

While the practice has faced continued recruitment challenges, we remain committed to improving patient access and our team continues to provide excellent patient care.

We feel the feedback in the report is fair and we will certainly be taking on board the recommendations to improve our patients' experience.

**Contact us:**

**Healthwatch Cornwall, Suite 1, Calenick House, Heron Way, Newham, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2XN**

☎ 0800 038 1281

✉ [enquires@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk](mailto:enquires@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk)

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