

Executive Summary

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# Dentistry Impact Report

# Driving Systemic Change in NHS Dentistry (2024–2025) – Executive Summary

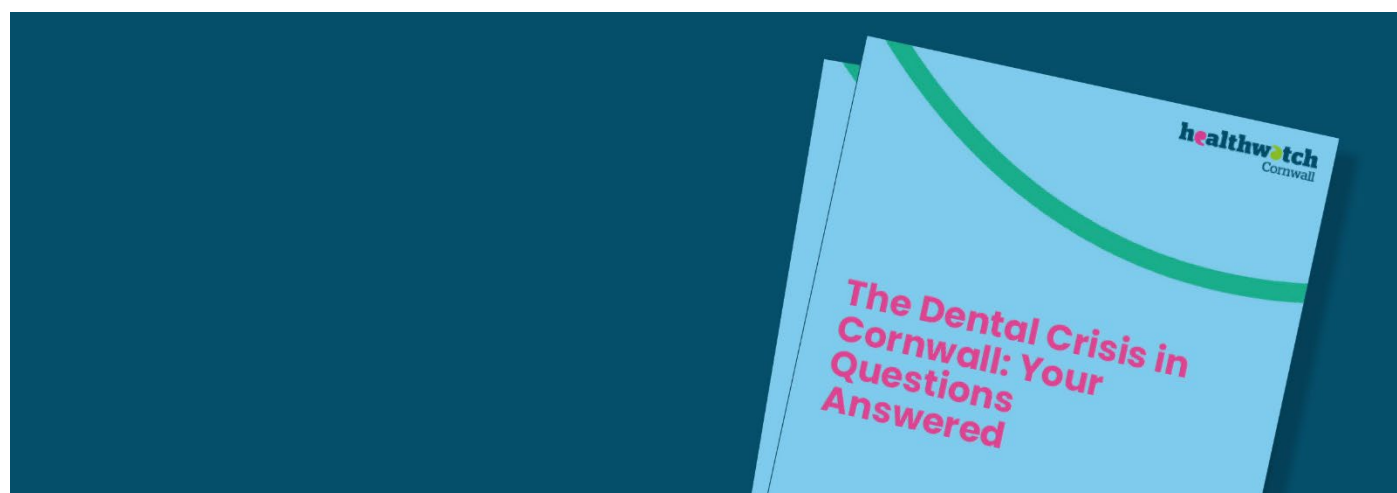
In 2024–2025, Healthwatch Cornwall fundamentally reshaped NHS dental services across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

At a time when access to dental care was collapsing, Healthwatch Cornwall turned public frustration into evidence, and evidence into action – leading to tangible, measurable improvements in services.



Through gathering over **1,185 real experiences** from residents – families, carers, young people, older adults, and rural communities – **Healthwatch Cornwall produced the landmark report: “The Dental Crisis in Cornwall: Your Questions Answered.”**

This report was formally cited as critical evidence by the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) and directly informed the 2024–2026 Dental Strategy.



# The Result: Public Voices Driving Real Change

## Major Service Expansion:

- Over **20,000 additional urgent NHS dental appointments commissioned annually** to meet unprecedented demand.

## System Reform Based on Public Need:

- **New Patient Prioritisation Framework introduced**, ensuring that vulnerable patients (children, carers, people with disabilities) receive faster access to care.
- **Waiting list filtering implemented** to prioritize those in pain or with urgent clinical need, based directly on issues raised by the public.

## Policy Change and Formal Adoption:

- **Healthwatch Cornwall's evidence was formally acknowledged in NHS Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Board minutes** as shaping decisions on service commissioning and investment priorities.

## Sustained Public and Political Pressure:

- **Following a national debate in Westminster**, led by Richard Foord MP, and widespread media coverage (ITV and others), **local health leaders committed publicly to accelerating action on NHS dentistry.**

## Stakeholder Endorsements Confirm Our Impact:



"We accept the recommendations of Healthwatch Cornwall's report. It has been instrumental in shaping our new direction."

**— ICB Board Minutes, November 2024**



“We are determined to serve our population better — with access to NHS dentistry shaped by Healthwatch Cornwall’s insight.”

— **Chris Reid, Chief Medical Officer, NHS Cornwall**

## Proving Tangible Outcomes:

- **Expansion of emergency dental appointments by over 30%.**
- **Introduction of a prioritisation system** for vulnerable patients.
- Embedding of **lived experience as a core driver** of service improvement.

## Why This Matters

### Without Healthwatch Cornwall’s leadership:

1. There would have been no evidence-led commissioning strategy focused on urgent and equitable access.
2. Vulnerable groups would have remained invisible in service planning.
3. The ICB’s Dental Strategy would have lacked the legitimacy and public backing needed to drive systemic reform.

We converted people’s experiences into system-level action, moving from public voice to policy change — and ultimately, service delivery.

## What Happens Next

### Healthwatch Cornwall will:

1. Monitor the rollout of new urgent care pathways and patient prioritisation processes.
2. Extend engagement with underrepresented communities — ensuring no voice is left unheard.
3. Deliver a follow-up Impact Review in Autumn 2025 to publicly assess progress and hold the system to account.

# Conclusion:

**From Community Voice to System Power. Healthwatch Cornwall didn't just document a crisis —we drove the solution.**

**Through clear evidence, strong partnerships, and public advocacy, Healthwatch Cornwall forced measurable, lasting change in NHS dentistry, putting the people of Cornwall at the heart of service transformation.**



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