

1. What is special care dentistry?

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.

Some of the people using the services include:

- People suffering from anxiety and/or extreme phobia of dental treatment
- People with learning difficulties and/or autism
- People with physical disabilities
- Some homeless people.

2. Why are you asking for views on special care dental services?

We know that our special care dental services provide an invaluable service to some of our most vulnerable people. We also know that the current range of services is very variable across the South West, having developed in different ways over the years. Our ambition is to ensure that all services are as good and as accessible as possible. We want the views of the people who currently use the services, or who could be using them, to assist with future service developments.

3. How are you collecting feedback on special care dental services?

We aim to reach as many people as we can across the region who already use or who could be eligible to use these services. We are doing this by getting the views of people in different localities and with different reasons for using the service to gain a representative sample of views.

We will be using online engagement and surveys. As well as working with Healthwatches to run focus groups for people who use special care dental services or are eligible to do so, and 'speak up' groups for people with learning difficulties (who may also have mental health challenges and/or physical disabilities) to find out their views.

4. Will my responses be identifiable?

All responses provided within the survey and consultation groups will be anonymised to ensure that respondents cannot be identified. People do have the option of asking for an email receipt if they fill in the survey online, but that is not captured for the analysis of results or used in any other way.

Anonymised information is data where the details which can identify an individual person have been removed.

5. How will my responses be used?

Responses provided within the survey and consultation groups will be grouped together, and the information gathered will be used to provide a report on our existing special care dental services. This report will then be used to inform future service developments.

6. Will the findings be used to make cuts to special care dental services across the South West?

There are no plans to make any cuts to special dental care services across the South West. The information gathered through this consultation will be used to help improve special care dental services in the future.

7. Can I complete the survey if I do not use the services or am not eligible for special care dental services?

If you are eligible to use special care dental services we would like to capture your views even if you do not use the services currently.

If you are not eligible to use special care dental services but are responding on behalf of someone who uses special care dental services or is eligible to do so, then please complete the survey.

Please do not complete the survey if you are not eligible for special care dental services and are not responding on behalf of someone who uses the services or is eligible for the services.

8. Why do I have to wait so long for special care dental services?

Waiting times vary from place to place and we know some waits are long, but the way that different services have been set up over the years means we can't monitor the position comprehensively. That's something we want to change.

That's also why we ask about waiting times in the survey, to give us as good an insight as possible and see where any current difficulties might lie.

9. Why is finding an NHS dentist so difficult?

There is a shortage of NHS dentists of nearly all types, in most parts of the country.

10. Where can I view the findings of the review of special care dental services across the South West?

The findings and next steps will be published on www.england.nhs.uk/south/publications/

- date to be confirmed following review of information.