

Dentistry in London

Teethbrush with toothepaste

Key information

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Introduction

The Health Committee is investigating the barriers in accessing dentistry in London, with a decline in the number of people accessing NHS dentists.

Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

This investigation will examine:

- The barriers for both adults and children in accessing NHS dental care in London and the reasons behind the decrease in the number of Londoners accessing NHS dentistry
- A comparative view of access to services in London compared with the rest of the country
- The experiences of Londoners who have used or tried to access dental care in London
- The health inequalities that exist in accessing dental care in London
- Why Londoners who are entitled to free NHS dental care across London are not taking up appointments

- What preventative measures are being taken to support the oral health of adults and children, including the promotion of oral health in schools
- What action needs to be taken by the NHS and health partners in London to ensure all Londoners can access an NHS dentist and support good oral health

Key issues

- There has been a decline in the number of people in London and England accessing NHS dentistry. London is one of the worst performing regions in the country for accessing NHS dentistry. In 2022-23, the North East and Yorkshire had the highest percentage of patients seen (46.3 per cent) and London the third lowest (37.4 per cent) just behind the South East (36 per cent) and South West (37.1 per cent). For children, the North West had the highest rate of children seen (59.4 per cent), while London had the lowest (47 per cent).
- In 2022/23, the number of dentists carrying out NHS activity was higher than a decade earlier in 2012/12. However, this rise has not kept pace with population growth, and a 2023 survey by the British Dental Association found that over half of dentists said they had reduced the amount of NHS work they carry out since the pandemic.
- Tooth decay is the leading cause of NHS hospital admissions for children aged 5-17 in England. Between April 2022 and May 2023, 30,000 children and over 70,000 adults were admitted to A&E due to tooth decay.

Key questions

- What are the specific barriers that prevent adults and children in London from accessing NHS dental care?
- How do these barriers differ across various demographics, including age, income, and ethnicity, and what are the underlying causes of these disparities?
- What impact is the lack of availability of NHS dentistry in London having on the oral health of Londoners?
- What preventative measures are currently being taken to support oral health in London, and how effective are these measures?
- What specific actions need to be taken by the NHS and health partners in London to improve access to dental care and oral health outcomes?
- What action can the Mayor take to advocate and work with partners to improve the provision of dental care, including preventative measures, in London?

Call for Evidence

As part of this investigation, the Committee issued a Call for Evidence.

This Call for Evidence has now closed. All responses received will be used to shape the Committee's output for this investigation.

Dentistry Survey

As part of this investigation, the Committee issued a Survey.

This Survey has now closed. All responses received will be used to shape the Committee's output for this investigation.

Report

Following this investigation, the **London Assembly Health Committee** has now published the report 'Decay & Delay: The state of Dentistry and Oral Health in London'.

[Read the report in full](#)

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