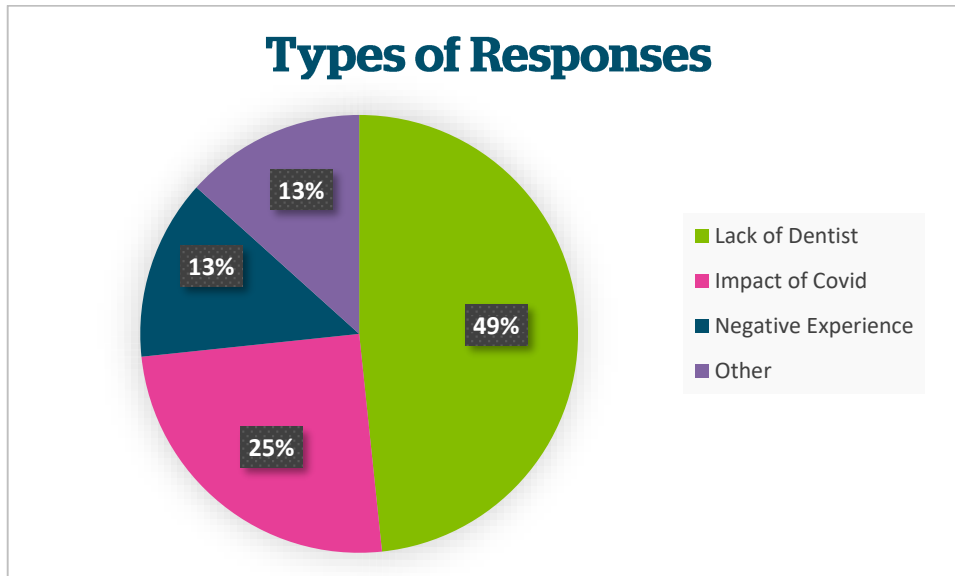


Overview of dentistry feedback - 13th October

In the past 12 months, Healthwatch North Yorkshire has received 59 pieces of feedback regarding dentistry. Of these, nearly half (49%) regard the lack of availability of an NHS dentist, a quarter (25%) regarding the impact of COVID-19, with just over an eighth (13%) regarding specific negative experience of dentistry, the remaining eighth 'other' includes a mix of positive, mixed, and unclear feedback.



The lack of a dentist has been a long-running problem. In our feedback we have heard of individuals who have been waiting 2, 6, and in one case even 10 years and still unable to get an NHS dentist in their local area. In other cases, we have individuals who are travelling hundreds of miles to see a dentist as they are unable to access a closer one;

'[I] have been living in Reeth 5 years and am still having to travel to Sheffield [a 2-hour drive away] to go to dentist as there are no NHS dentists.'

A significant proportion of our calls regarding lack of available dentists come from people seeking help in finding a dentist. The NHS site is not kept up-to-date and calling dentist practices seems to have limited results. The recently closure in Helmsley is of note; patients were informed they would be receiving information regarding how to find a replacement dentist. Unfortunately, they have been given a "generic" letter directing them to the NHS site (which as noted above, is not kept up to date).

The other area of concern is the impact that COVID-19 has had on services, which has reduced the availability of appointments. The feedback on this has been mixed, with some members of the public being understanding, whilst others are frustrated. We are also hearing of cases where the increased challenges due to COVID have put people's treatment plans on hold, including on-going cases;

'...They say that the dentist tried to perform root canal treatment but could not continue due to the amount of blood and pain it was causing. They then received a course of antibiotics. ... They say that due to Covid-19 they have had to pause their treatment plan...' (6th July)

'I am still waiting to take my tooth out, in hospital. I have had an infection now since after Christmas. The dentist can only check me, and make sure that I am alright. In so much pain...' (7th September)