

## Healthwatch England respond to government report on how to clear the backlog of treatment caused by the Covid pandemic

The report, **Clearing the backlog caused by the pandemic**, was published by the cross-party Health and Social Care Committee calling for the plan to include mental health, primary care, community care, and social care as well as emergency care.

It finds better short and long-term workforce planning to be a central factor in recovery. It also recommends better communication and engagement with the patients who are facing an extended wait for treatment.

**Responding to the report, Jacob Lant, head of policy, research and partnerships at Healthwatch England said:**

“The scale of the care backlog is immense, and in the face of such a challenge MPs are right to raise the risk of a return to a target driven approach that concentrates on addressing media headlines.

“What we need now is to reinforce a culture right across health and care services that will focus on delivering what patients and the public are crying out for.

That’s a system that is easier to navigate and prioritises communicating with patients regularly to make sure they never feel forgotten, and that provides interim support, such as physiotherapy and mental health support, for people who are facing an extended wait for treatment.”

**To read or download a copy of the report, please visit; <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk>**

## The Bridge has relocated to:

**GREENBANKS, STRANTON  
HARTLEPOOL, TS24 7QT**

A Dementia Advisor will be at the Central Hub each Wednesday offering advice and support.

We are still taking appointments if anyone wishes to come to The bridge for advice.

**Please call 01429 - 868587**

## Unhappy with your NHS treatment or care?

NHS Advocacy is now provided by North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA), supporting individuals complaining about the NHS.

Freephone: 0808 802 3000. For further information please visit;

**[www.carersfederation.co.uk](http://www.carersfederation.co.uk)**

**Email: [ica@carersfederation.co.uk](mailto:ica@carersfederation.co.uk)**

Deaf Clients can contact us by text **07789088284** or BSL Whats app video on

**For guidance and support on anything related to Covid - 19, please visit the links below:**

**<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>**

**<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>**

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## **NEWS UPDATE**

**January 2022**

### Hundreds of thousands of teens to get boosted on NHS

Around 40,000 teens will be eligible for their top-up dose now that national booking service opens to them, with more able to get boosted in the coming weeks as they reach three months since their second jab. Invites will be sent out encouraging people in this group to book their appointment through the online booking service, calling 119, or by finding their nearest walk-in site as soon as they can. Since the vaccination programme rolled out to this age group in August, more than 889,700 teens – seven in 10 people aged 16 and 17 – have had their first dose.

More than 600,000 in this age group have had their second jab. Previously, boosters were only recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) for clinically vulnerable 16 and 17-year-olds who are most at risk from COVID-19. Recent data from the UK Health Security Agency showed that two doses of the vaccine are not enough to stop people becoming unwell from Omicron, but a booster significantly increases protection against the variant.

**Dr Nikki Kanani, GP and Deputy Lead for the NHS Vaccination Programme, said:** “The NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme is expanding once again to offer eligible young people aged 16 and 17 the chance to book their boosters through the online booking service from tomorrow, with walk-in sites also available across the country, as the biggest and fastest vaccine drive in health service history continues at pace. COVID has caused so much disruption for so many families over the past two years, affecting young people’s lives and education, and getting vaccinated protects them, their family and their friends, letting them stay at school and continue socialising. We know that the best protection against coronavirus is to get vaccinated and I’d urge everyone, whatever your age, to come forward and get that vital top-up as soon as it is possible. **Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:** “Thanks to the tireless dedication of the NHS, our booster programme has been a phenomenal success and allowed us to enjoy the festive season safely with loved ones. Omicron has spread rapidly across the UK and we’re doing everything we can to keep schools, sixth forms and colleges open as face-to-face teaching is so important. I encourage every young person who is eligible to Get Boosted Now to protect yourself, your friends and family.” Hardworking NHS staff and volunteers have delivered more than 114 million doses since the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme started in England in December 2020, including more than 30 million top-up doses. Since the NHS in England made history by delivering the first COVID-19 vaccination outside of clinical trials, jabs have been given at football stadiums, music festivals, places of worship, and even a curry house, as the health service aims to reach as many people as possible. In line with JCVI guidance, the NHS cannot vaccinate 16 and 17-year-olds within 12 weeks (84 days) of a positive COVID-19 test.

Those aged 16 and 17 and considered at high risk from COVID-19 must wait four weeks (28 days) from the date of a positive COVID-19 test before getting any dose of the vaccine.

### **Top GP urges families to protect children with NHS COVID jab**

**The country's top family doctor has urged families to get their children protected against coronavirus, as the NHS vaccination programme makes hundreds of thousands of appointments available.**

Dr Nikki Kanani said around half a million vaccination appointments for 12 to 15-year-olds are up for grabs across the country during January.

Families can book in at up to 300 centres through the online booking system.

The slots are in addition to those available at around 500 walk-in sites, including shopping centres, libraries and football stadiums, and the schools vaccination programme. As pupils return from the Christmas break, hundreds of schools will be visited over the next fortnight as part of the NHS COVID Vaccination Programme, the biggest and fastest in health service history.

**Dr Nikki Kanani, GP and deputy lead for the NHS vaccination programme, said:** "I know how much disruption COVID has caused for so many families over the past two years, affecting young people's lives and education.

"Getting vaccinated protects them, their family and their friends, letting them stay at school and continue socialising. "The vaccine is safe and effective – my 13-year-old son had his first vaccination when I had my booster at our local pharmacy and it gave us both reassurance that he was protected as well, and he has recently topped up his protection with a second dose. "Young people can get their life-saving protection at a walk-in site or wait to get vaccinated at school, but the best way to make sure it happens quickly and conveniently is to book online now".

More than 1.4 million young people aged 12 to 15 have already had their first dose since the vaccine was rolled out to this age group in September, with thousands still getting jabbed each day. However, there are still over one million young people who are yet to get their first dose of protection. All children aged 12 to 15 are also eligible for a second dose of vaccine if it has been more than 12 weeks since their first jab, and more than 50,000 will be invited for their second dose as they become eligible this week. In total, more than 5,500 schools have been visited since the rollout began in September. Outside of school, parents and families can book their children in for their first and second doses at a vaccine centre via the national booking service, call 119, or head to the grab-a-jab walk in finder for their nearest walk in vaccination centre. Children cannot be vaccinated within three months of having COVID-19.

Following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on 22nd December, the NHS will also shortly be contacting those aged 12 to 15 in a clinical risk group or who live with someone who is immunosuppressed to invite them for their booster, which they can have three months after their second dose.

In line with national guidance, consent letters are sent out to parents and guardians prior to the school clinics with information on the COVID-19 vaccination.

Parents and guardians are asked to attend vaccination sites with their children if they are getting jabbed outside of school, and consent will be sought on the day.

Parents and young people are being asked to read the patient information in advance of arriving for their appointment. More than 113 million vaccinations, including more than 29 million boosters, have been delivered since the NHS in England made history when Margaret Keenan received the first jab outside of a clinical trial, in Coventry in December 2020.

Anyone yet to have a first, second or third dose can book in online through the National Booking Service if it has been three months since your last dose and, if relevant, 28 days since testing positive for COVID if you are aged 18 and over.

### **Recovery of NHS dental care too slow to help thousands left in pain**

Access to NHS dentistry has been one of the most significant issues people have raised with Healthwatch over the last 18 months. Not only have we seen a large increase in the volume of feedback and a huge increase in the amount of negative sentiment in our evidence, but, more strikingly, we have noted a continuation of this trend over time. These issues are not occurring in isolated pockets. People in every corner of England are struggling to get the dental treatment they need when they need it. Public feedback on NHS dental care has risen five-fold over the last 18 months, compared to pre-pandemic levels. It now accounts for nearly 25% of all the feedback we receive.

#### **Digging into the data**

The analysis of 8,019 people's experiences of NHS dentistry between April 2020 and September 2021 shows that:

- Four in five people report struggling to access NHS dental care, including emergency treatment.
- Positive sentiment, which was around 30% before the COVID-19 pandemic, is down to its lowest ever level – at just two per cent.
- Some dental practices have either shut down or have gone fully private. Some dentists have used up their total NHS capacity and are asking people for private fees instead.
- Many people find it hard to get up-to-date information about which practices are taking on new patients because NHS and dentists' websites aren't updated regularly. As a result, more people are contacting their local Healthwatch hoping that they'd provide them with accurate information.
- It is often the most vulnerable people in our society, including children, disabled people and those living in care homes, who are suffering the most.

As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on NHS dental services continue, our data is starting to show that children and young people are increasingly the ones to suffer. An analysis of the experiences people have shared with us highlights several issues:

- Parents are struggling to find a practice that would take on children as NHS patients. As a result, children as young as five years old are putting up with painful symptoms and cannot eat as a result.
- Parents are worried about their child's oral health as they cannot get check-ups or preventative treatment. Some parents reported that dentists are willing to take on a child as an NHS patient as long as the parent registers as a private patient (though NHS.UK says dentists shouldn't do so).

Commenting on the findings, Chair of Healthwatch England, Sir Robert Francis QC, said: "The big worry about the shortage of NHS appointments leading people to private care is that it further deepens the health inequalities that COVID-19 has starkly highlighted. Today, dentistry remains the only part of the NHS that receives a lower budget in cash terms than in 2010. The ongoing neglect of NHS dentistry will have repercussions for the life-long health of current and future generations. Lack of access to dental care, particularly for children, is a hugely worrying issue that the NHS must tackle immediately. Communities all over the country have made it clear that we need to fix NHS dentistry – we urgently need to make it accessible and affordable for everyone. And that is why we're once again calling on the Government and NHSE to take people's struggles seriously, speed up dental reform and provide meaningful, sustained funding."