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Denplan responds to Healthcare England

Recent reports from consumer watchdog Healthcare England have highlighted the difficulty that some patients face in finding NHS dental appointments, as well as uncertainty over what they are entitled to.

Interestingly, Healthcare England's findings conflict with the latest NHS survey which stated that 95% of GP patients in England who had tried were successful in getting an appointment.

"There is a lot of conflicting information in the media over the current NHS system, which must be very confusing for patients," says Roger Matthews, Chief Dental Officer at Denplan, the UK's leading dental payment plan specialist. "Patients need clarity of their options as well as how to quickly and easily find the right dental care for them."

To help patients understand the current NHS system and their options, Roger explains the background behind NHS registration.

"In 1948, the arrival of the National Health Service meant that every UK resident was entitled to be registered with a GP," he says. "The same did not happen for dentists, and it was not until 1990 that an NHS registration process was introduced.

"A new NHS dental contract in 2006 ended this formal registration and, since then, no one in England or Wales is actually 'registered' on the NHS with a dental practice, although many patients still regard their dentist in this light. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, NHS registration still exists and in Scotland such registration is now lifelong unless the patient attends another practice.

"In England, the Department of Health and NHS England have consistently reported that the overwhelming majority of patients have not had difficulty in securing an NHS

dentist, however comments on the NHS Choices website – now seemingly supported by Healthwatch England - suggests that in some areas this is not so easy.”

Roger further explains how dentists are able to provide NHS treatment in England and Wales.

“Nowadays, dentists in England and Wales who provide NHS dental care will have been granted a contract with the NHS to provide an agreed amount of treatment,” he says. “This means that all UK high street dentists are essentially independent practitioners who own their own practices and pay all the expenses related to them, and there is effectively no such identity as an ‘NHS dentist’.

“The ever-rising costs of managing and operating a dental practice, particularly in the age of increasing regulation and compliance, coupled with the stretched resources of the NHS, mean that many dentists struggle to sustain a purely NHS dental practice.”

Roger says that patients wishing to have predictable costs and access to regular dental care do have other options.

“Private dental payment plans, such as Denplan, offer the possibility for patients to have quality care at an affordable and predictable cost, while ensuring that the dentist is able to maintain the quality of care, materials and staffing required by modern-day standards.”

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About Denplan

Denplan Limited is the UK's leading dental payment plan specialist; with more than 6,500 member dentists nationwide caring for approximately 1.7 million Denplan registered patients. Established in 1986 by two dentists who pioneered the concept of dental payment plans, Denplan has been at the heart of dental care for over 25 years and today the company is owned by Simplyhealth. Denplan has a wide range of dental plans for adults and children, enabling patients to spread the cost of their private dental care through a fixed monthly fee. Denplan supports regular attendance and preventive care, reducing the need for clinical intervention and helping patients to maintain healthy teeth and gums for life. For further information visit www.denplan.co.uk

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About Simplyhealth

- Simplyhealth became its own brand in 2009 after bringing together HSA, BCWA, LHF, HealthSure, Totally Active, its family of health companies
- Simplyhealth has been providing healthcare solutions for 140 years, and is dedicated to serving its customers and patients through a variety of cash plans, dental plans, private medical insurance, self funded health plans and mobility and living aids
- Simplyhealth is a trading name of Simplyhealth Access, which is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority
- Simplyhealth as it stands today, now covers nearly four million people with health plans (more than any other company) and helps 20,000 companies with their employees' health
- Simplyhealth is committed to making a positive impact on its communities. Each year, it donates over £1 million to health related charities and causes

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