

Reference:	FOI.13252.23
Subject:	South Ceredigion dental waiting list
Date of Request:	28 November 2023

Requested:

Could you please supply me with the following information, all relating to the South Ceredigion dental waiting list?

1. How the waiting list works.
2. The extent of the geographic spread of dentists which patients may be offered a place with. In particular, what is the furthest distance a South Ceredigion patient may have to travel when offered a dental place for routine care.
3. How many patients are currently on the waiting list.
4. How many patients were offered places with an NHS dentist in the past year. (Either the last calendar year or financial year for which you hold data).

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) confirms that the current NHS dental waiting list held by the UHB results from a historic arrangement whereby it was agreed with participating dental practices within South Ceredigion, Llandeilo and Llanelli, that the UHB would hold a central waiting list on their behalf. In all other areas of the UHB, individual dental practices hold their own waiting lists.
2. Patients who wished to be added to the waiting list for NHS dentists in the specified areas could contact the UHB, provide their contact details and when an NHS dental practice had the capacity to accept new patients, they would contact the UHB and ask for a patient list. Patients were allocated in chronological order.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant backlogs in NHS dentistry and this, coupled with the issues of recruiting and retaining NHS dentists, across the whole of Wales, but more specifically in rural areas, had a significant impact on the capacity with NHS dental practices. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult for the UHB to allocate patients from the central waiting list, and the UHB made the difficult decision to suspend the list. At present, the UHB is still actively allocating patients whenever possible; however, it is unable to add new patients to its waiting list.

The UHB is currently waiting for guidance from Welsh Government (WG) in line with Recommendation 3 of the Health and Social Care Committee Dentistry Report, published in February 2023, regarding the establishment of centralised waiting lists for NHS dentists.

The UHB confirms that only dental practices in Cardigan are included in the South Ceredigion agreement. However, unlike GP Practices, there are no boundaries for dental practices and patients can travel as far as they are prepared to.

3. The UHB confirms that there were one thousand four hundred and ninety-one (1,491) patients on the South Ceredigion NHS dental waiting list, as at 8 December 2023.

Please note:- some patients may have already received NHS dental care elsewhere and their names may be on multiple waiting lists.

4. The UHB confirms that from its allocated list for the South Ceredigion area, two thousand one hundred and twenty-three patients (2,123) were offered places in NHS dentists, during the period 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023. This was largely due to the commissioning of new services in Cardigan and most of these patients have been allocated to one new dental practice.