



**Dentaid
The Dental
Charity**

Registered Charity N° 1075826

Welcome to Dentaid The Dental Charity

This leaflet explains our unique approach to providing under-served communities with the best possible chance of accessing dental care.



What we do

Dentaid The Dental Charity provides oral healthcare for people experiencing homelessness, abuse, poverty and harm. We offer dental screening, oral cancer checks, pain relieving and emergency treatments, preventative and restorative dentistry and oral health advice. Our goal is to breakdown the barriers our patients face in accessing dental treatment, relieving pain and increasing confidence in their oral health.

How we work

We design care pathways that specifically suit the people we work with. We use a fleet of mobile dental units that visit locations where our patients feel safe and comfortable. This includes soup kitchens, night shelters, hostels, community centres and projects that support the most vulnerable people in our communities. We establish funding to visit each location on a regular basis so we can offer sustainable and ongoing care for each community. We understand our patients often live chaotic lives therefore we usually don't have fixed patient lists or appointment times – each venue provides a list of 10-12 patients who would like to see us and we see them in the order they arrive. If someone is unable to attend that day we'll offer them care next time and we can also adjust our days to see additional urgent cases.

Our approach

We know that hard-to-reach patients face many emotional, practical, systemic and physical barriers to accessing care and we do all we can to make our clinics as accessible as possible. We tailor each clinic around the needs of each group we support, listening to patients and their advocates to design a bespoke model of dental care.

This includes the timings, length and locations of each clinical day. We know that many of our patients feel disconnected from traditional healthcare environments and are more likely to access an outreach mobile service on their own terms. We take face-to-face medical histories to help establish a rapport with our patients and see this as an opportunity to start a conversation about their oral health and general wellbeing. If patients are intoxicated this doesn't prevent them having a conversation with our volunteer dentists in the hope they will present to us at a future clinic in a condition to safely consent to treatment.

How much does it cost?

Dentaid The Dental Charity has to fundraise a minimum of £1,750 for each clinic we run. This amount differs depending on the location and length of clinic to cover travel costs and any overnight accommodation costs required for our teams.



Is there a cheaper option?

Possibly, but we believe that our approach gives the hardest-to-reach communities the best possible chance of accessing quality dental care. By taking our mobile dental service to locations where our patients are supported by trusted keyworkers, we are breaking down as many barriers as possible and there is evidence that shows taking provision to these patients, instead of expecting them to go to a clinic, increases their engagement with healthcare services. Our approach means that patients with the highest needs – who are most at risk of self medicating to mask dental pain, or being encouraged to attempt DIY dentistry – are able to get the care they need. This ultimately will reduce costs overall within the NHS, by reducing unscheduled dental care or attendance at general medical practitioners or even A&E. Very few of our patients have access to transport which would add additional costs and barriers to accessing care elsewhere. We are also able to maximise the clinical time available by operating as a drop in so we can fill the day with patients who want to be seen, compared to having fixed appointments where there is a high risk of failed attendance, and wasted clinical time, due to our patients' chaotic lives.

How are you staffed?

Two members of our staff attend every clinic as mobile dental unit officer and clinical supervisor. They work alongside a volunteer dentist and dental nurse who offer their time to help the most vulnerable people in their communities to access care. Dentaid The Dental Charity is fortunate to have a network of clinicians across the UK who are willing to donate their time and skill to help us reach people who would otherwise find it very challenging to access care.

Why is a charity doing this work?

Charities work to support healthcare provision across the NHS and beyond. The huge increase in demand for our services since the Covid pandemic illustrates the need for our charity dental clinics. Our aim is to help the hardest to reach groups to re-engage with NHS dentistry in the future but many of our patients require more support, which our mobile clinics are uniquely positioned to provide. Many NHS dental services across the UK are operating with long-waiting lists and access to NHS dental care is becoming increasingly challenging. We are able to work together with the NHS and government bodies to act quickly and fill the gaps in dental care provision, which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable. Because we operate outside of the NHS dental contract, we are able to treat people with high needs who might not be as suited to a general practice model and we can focus on addressing the expressed oral health needs of our patients.

What people say

"Dentaid is needed at the moment to fill the gap to help people in hard-to-reach groups. The work is outside the NHS patient charge framework and as volunteer, you give your time simply to help those who need your skills. The need is great, and the disease levels seem to be from a bygone time, yet they are with us now".

Agi

Volunteer dentist



"I am able to brush my teeth once a week, but this can be difficult where I am currently homeless. I really need a check up today. I last saw a dentist a year ago, but I was let go because I missed one appointment.

I really did not want to lose this opportunity, but I think people underestimate the value of having a home and safe space. Since losing my home it has been hard to do most things for my health.

I could not believe the service on the unit. It was brilliant. The dentist gave me a check-up and cancer screening and was able to provide me with a filling on my top front right tooth. A hole had been there for so long, there is no way you would not notice it when I smiled.

The staff made me very comfortable – a word I did not think I would use to describe a dentist appointment. Even after having a numbing injection, they made me laugh whilst having the filling – who knew. You have brought my smile back. Thank you."

Joshua

Patient in Folkestone

Further reading

- *Models of Dental Care for People Experiencing Homelessness in the United Kingdom. A Systematic Review of the Literature.* Natalie Bradley BDS DSCD MFDS RCSE 2021
- *Groundswell Healthy Mouths Report 2018*
- *Integrating health and social care for people experiencing homelessness. A step-by-step resource for implementing the joint guideline.* Centre for Homelessness Impact and NICE National Institute for Health and Care Excellence 2022
- *Identifying the barriers and facilitators for homeless people to achieve good oral health.* J. Csikar, K. Vinall-Collier J.M. Richemond J. Talbot , S. T. Serban and G.V.A. Douglas 2019.



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