Introduction

NHS Digital regularly publish information on NHS dentistry in England at a national and local level. These publications include facts and figures on the number of people who see an NHS dentist, the volume and type of treatment they receive and the number of NHS dentists. These reports are used by national policy makers to help develop future dental policy and by local NHS managers to help design local dental services.

Relevance

This publication allows commissioners and policy makers to monitor levels of service delivery to target groups, highlighting changes over time. It provides information to the Department of Health and local NHS managers, allowing for monitoring of the provision of dental services and dental expenditure, as set out below, and helping to inform planning.

The quarterly publications include information on activity and patients seen. The activity data monitors levels of activity across treatment bands, highlighting changes in practice over time. The key use of the patients seen data is to monitor the effectiveness of the current dental contract.

The annual publication includes the data above along with summary orthodontic data, clinical treatment data and information on patient charges. It also includes dental workforce statistics.

Accuracy and reliability

Provisional activity data are published in the first three quarterly publications. This is adjusted to provide the estimated final position for national data. Adjustment methodology and factors are published in the guide to dental publications that accompanies this report.

- The final activity data are published in the annual report.
- The patients seen data are all final data and are published in the quarterly and annual reports.
- The final data on orthodontics, clinical treatment and patient charges are published in the annual report.
- For patient charges, the figures may be slightly lower than expected as information is not collected from closed contracts, although the volume of these is limited.
Timeliness and punctuality

This publication is classed as Official Statistics and the publication date was pre-announced. There was no gap between the planned and actual publication date.

- The activity data are published four and a half months after the end of the relevant period.
- The patients seen data are published one and a half months after the end of the relevant period.
- The patient charges, orthodontics and clinical data are published four and a half months after the end of the year.

Accessibility and clarity

This publication combines data in table format, summary report and supporting information. The data are freely available via the NHS Digital website.

Additional information is provided in Excel format at sub-national level, including flat files which are suitable for further analysis.

Coherence and comparability

The activity, patients seen and patient charges data covers the period of the current dental contract (introduced in 2006 and revised in 2012) and are not comparable with other previous contracts. The methodologies are consistent with those used by the Welsh Assembly Government. Information was first published in 2008-09 on orthodontic activity. Orthodontic patients are included in the patients seen measure.

The clinical data are a national time series which began in 2008-09. These data are not comparable with clinical data from the previous contract. Prior to 2011-12, the dental statistics were published as ‘Experimental Statistics’.

Trade-offs between output quality components

The data are published as soon after year end as possible. Time is allowed for analysing and producing the report without impacting on the timeliness of the data.

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

During each publication cycle data quality is assessed by the collection team and the publications team and, where queries arise, data suppliers are contacted to validate and confirm data submissions.

Comments can be received through various media modes:

- enquires@nhsdigital.nhs.net
- 0300 303 5678
Performance, cost and respondent burden

These data are collected by NHS Dental Services. The majority of the information is collected electronically and data are made available to us for publication as a by-product of these processes. The current contract is designed to simplify data collection requirements.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

The data contained in this publication are Official Statistics. The code of practice is adhered to from collecting the data to publishing:

All publications are subject to a standard NHS Digital risk assessment prior to issue. Disclosure control is implemented where judged necessary.

For more detailed descriptions of datasets used in the NHS Digital dental publications see the beginners guide to dental data at: http://digital.nhs.uk/pubs/dental1617

Please see links below to the relevant NHS Digital policies.

Statistical Governance Policy:

Freedom of Information:
https://digital.nhs.uk/article/253/Freedom-of-Information