



in Lancashire

Wave 19 Dentistry in Lancashire

Fieldwork 18 July – 17 August 2007

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Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
1.1	Key findings.....	3
1.2	Conclusions.....	4
2	Introduction	5
3	Methodology	6
3.1	Limitations	6
4	Main Research Findings	7
4.1	Dentistry in Lancashire	7
5	Appendix	13
5.1	Socio-Economic-Group Definitions.....	13

Table of Figures

Chart 1 - Are you currently registered with a dentist?	7
Chart 2 - Why aren't you registered with a dentist?	8
Chart 3 - Why did you decide to register privately?	8
Chart 4 - Approximately how long have you been with your current dentist?	9
Chart 5 - How many times have you visited your dentist in the last 12 months?	9
Chart 6 - And approximately how far do you have to travel to reach the practice?	10
Chart 7 - When did you last try to register as an <u>NHS dental patient</u> ?	10
Chart 8 - What problems, if any, did you experience when you tried to register with an NHS dentist?	11
Chart 9 - Time since last attempt to register as an NHS patient vs % answering they had the problem of no local NHS places available	11
Chart 10 -How easy or difficult do you think it is to register with an NHS dentist?	12
Chart 11 -And overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the availability of local dental services? <u>NHS Services</u>	12
Chart 12 -And overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the availability of local dental services? <u>Private services</u>	12

1 Executive Summary

This wave of the Life in Lancashire panel dealt with the dentistry in Lancashire, road safety and Lancashire in Europe. All 1827 members of the panel were sent two mailings of the survey. In total 1467 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 80%. The responses to the survey are weighted to reflect the population of Lancashire.

1.1 Key findings

- **More than three-quarters of all respondents say that they think it is difficult to register with an NHS dentist (78%)** – the majority saying it's very difficult (58%). Nine in ten of those who have tried to register with a dentist in the last year, (since the introduction of new NHS contracts for dentistry), answered that it was difficult (90%, with 74% answering very difficult).
- Nearly half of respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of NHS dental services (47%) – more so for private patients and those who are unregistered, and those in the east of the county, (particularly Rossendale). Almost half of panel members are satisfied with the availability of private dental services (45%), with private patients more likely to be satisfied than NHS patients.
- Only **half of respondents are registered as NHS dental patients (52%)** – people living in the west of Lancashire were more likely to have an NHS dentist (57%) compared to the east (42%).
- One in three people are private patients – people in the wealthiest socio-economic groups AB were most likely to be registered as private patients. The majority of people who are registered privately said it was **because their dentist stopped providing NHS cover (72%)**.
- One in five people don't have a dentist at all. One in twelve respondents has tried to register with an NHS dentist in the last year, going up to 21% for those without a dentist. It appears that not all of those without a dentist do so out of choice as:
 - **half of respondents who have tried to register with an NHS dentist in the last year are still unregistered with a dentist (48%)** – the problems they experienced were because there were no NHS places available locally (70%); and
 - half of those who are unregistered say it's because they couldn't get an NHS dentist.

- Almost half of panel members have been with their dentist for more than ten years. Private patients have been with their dentist for longer than NHS patients, but this could be because they changed to private practice and their patients stayed with them.
- Respondents are most likely to have visited their dentist twice in the last year (48%) – private patients are more likely to visit more often.
- NHS patients have to travel slightly shorter distances to their dentist on average, a third live within a mile, compared to a quarter of private patients. Half of those from socio-economic group DE live within a mile of their practice.

1.2 Conclusions

The aim of this research project was to investigate into satisfaction with and provision of NHS dentistry, particularly since the introduction of the new NHS contracts for dentistry in the last year. Satisfaction with the availability of the NHS service is low, with the vast majority also considering it difficult to register. The figure of nine in ten of those who have tried to register in the last year finding it difficult and most very difficult implies that the new system is not working yet. The problem appears to be a lack of dentists providing NHS cover. While a good proportion of residents have taken private cover, this is usually because of the dentist turning private, or the lack of NHS places than a preference for the service.

There are also differences in provision across the county, with west Lancashire residents more likely to be NHS registered than those of east Lancashire, and this may warrant further investigation in the future. The perceived difficulty with registering is high in all areas however.

2 Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Life in Lancashire regularly since August 2001. A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each Life in Lancashire wave is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning, ie the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be unrepresentative of the population as a whole.

3 Methodology

This wave of Life in Lancashire was sent to 1827 members of the panel on 18 July 2007. A reminder was sent on 8 August 2007. The fieldwork ended on 17 August 2007.

No incentive was given for respondents to complete the questionnaire. In total 1467 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 80%.

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled down to match the effective response of 1267, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

3.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1000 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

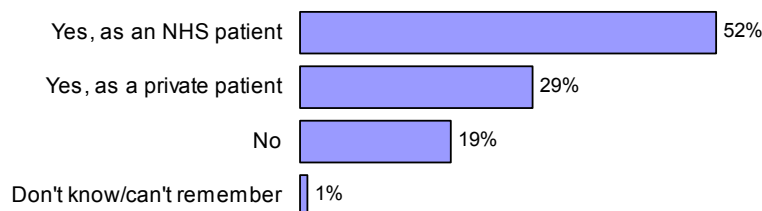
4 Main Research Findings

4.1 Dentistry in Lancashire

The aim of this section of the Life in Lancashire survey is to investigate into dental services in Lancashire, and particularly to compare the availability of NHS provision since the introduction of streamlined charging in the last year.

The first question asked panel members to answer whether they are registered with any dentist.

Chart 1 - Are you currently registered with a dentist?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1467, Weighted 1267)

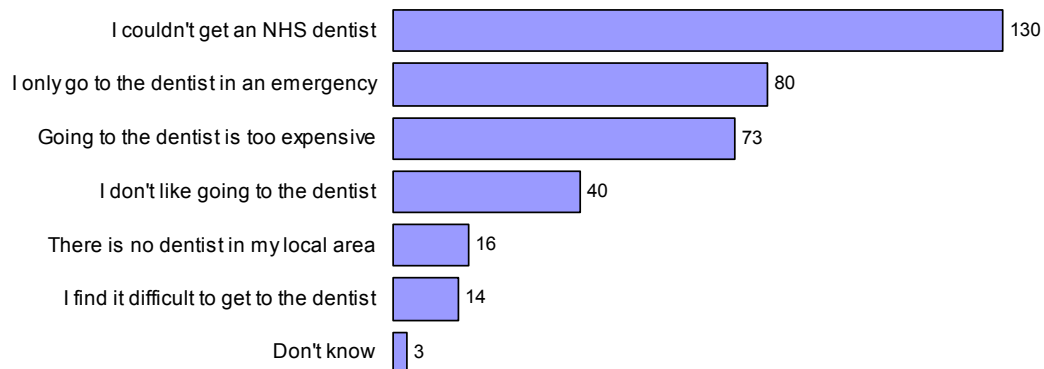
Only half of respondents are **registered as NHS patients** (52%). Residents of the west Lancashire districts are more likely to be NHS patients (57%) than those in east Lancashire (42%). Panel members in east Lancashire were **more likely to be both private dental patients** (33% against 27% in west Lancashire) and **to not be registered** (24% against 16%). Members of the wealthiest socio-economic groups AB¹ are the most likely to be private patients, those from the non-manual group C1 are most likely to be NHS patients (57%). Those belonging to the skilled manual C2 grouping are most likely to not be registered (25%).

In addition, **half of respondents who have tried to register with an NHS dentist in the last year are still unregistered with a dentist** (48%). Two in five are now registered with an NHS dentist (or perhaps did not move) and one in seven is now private (38% and 14% respectively). This implies that not all those without a dentist do so out of choice.

This is confirmed below, with about half of those who are unregistered say it is because they couldn't get an NHS dentist. (In addition to the answers below, another 60 respondents spontaneously commented their reason for not having a dentist is because they have no teeth!)

¹ See appendix 5.1 for definitions

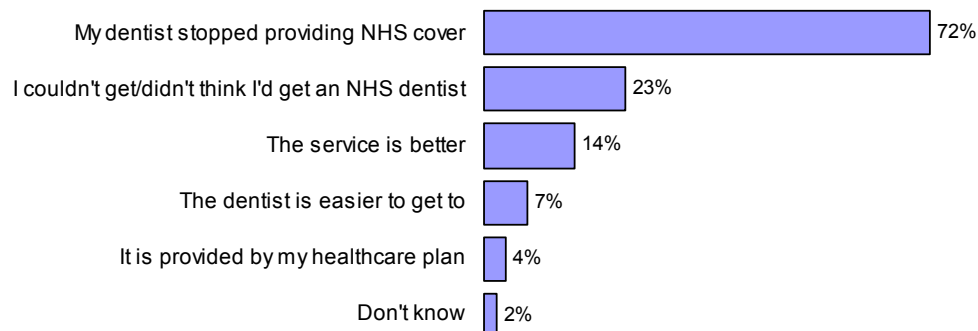
Chart 2 - Why aren't you registered with a dentist?



Base: All respondents not registered with a dentist (Unweighted 225)

The next question asked private patients why they were not registered as NHS patients. While a minority said it was because the **service was better** (14%) or it was **easier to get to** (7%), the vast majority were private because their **dentist had stopped their NHS services** (72%).

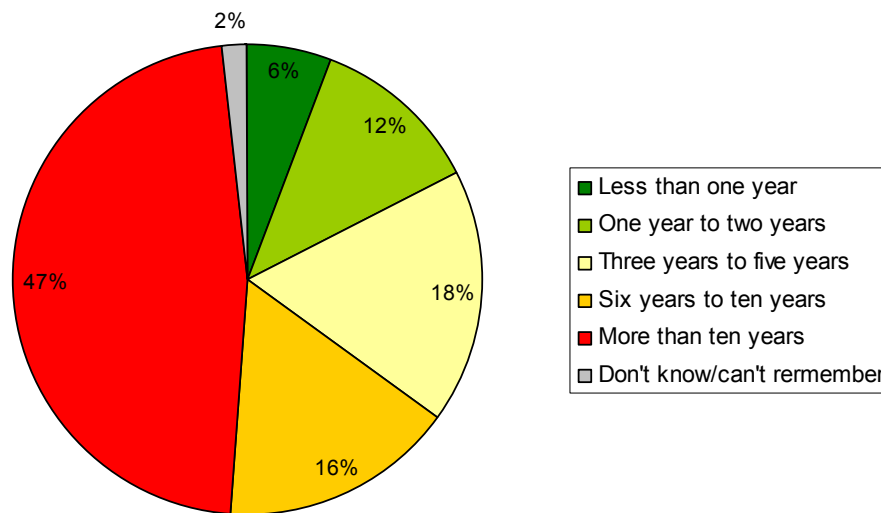
Chart 3 - Why did you decide to register privately?



Base: All respondents registered privately (Unweighted 450)

Half of panel members have been with their dentist for **more than 10 years** (47%). Private patients are actually more likely to have stayed with their dentists for longer than NHS patients (50% versus 42% have been with their dentist for more than ten years, though bearing in mind the previous question, most private patients started as NHS patients).

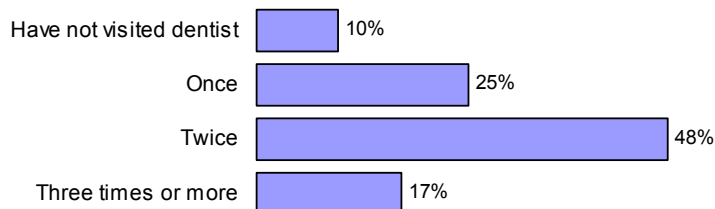
Chart 4 - Approximately how long have you been with your current dentist?



Base: All respondents registered with a dentist (Unweighted 1226, Weighted 1037)

Respondents are most likely to have visited their dentist twice in the last year (48%). Private patients are more likely have visited more often, with one in five visiting three times or more (21%), compared to only about one in seven of NHS patients (15%).

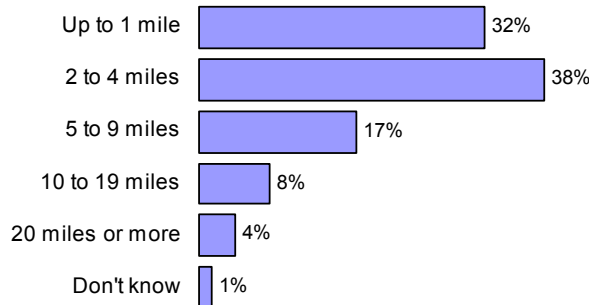
Chart 5 - How many times have you visited your dentist in the last 12 months?



Base: All respondents registered with a dentist (Unweighted 1226, Weighted 1037)

Panel members were next asked how far they have to travel to reach their dentist. NHS patients have to travel slightly shorter distances on average, with a third living within a mile of the practice (34%), compared to only a quarter of private patients (26%). Half of those from socio-economic group DE live within a mile of their practice (48%).

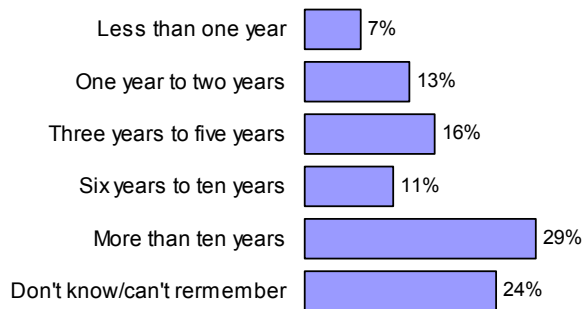
Chart 6 - And approximately how far do you have to travel to reach the practice?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1231, Weighted 986)

About one in twelve panel members have tried to register as an NHS dental patient in the last year (7%). Not surprisingly, those without a dentist are most likely to have tried to have tried to register in the last year (21%). As mentioned previously, half of those who have tried to register with the NHS in the last year are still unregistered as either NHS or private patients (48%).

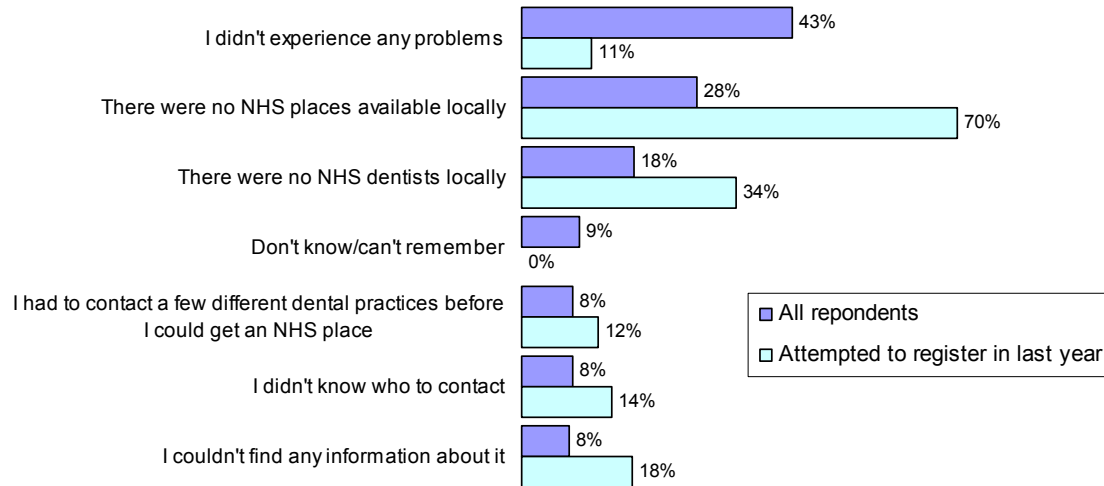
Chart 7 - When did you last try to register as an NHS dental patient?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted 1467, Weighted 1267)

All respondents were then asked if they had any problems registering as an NHS patient. The chart below compares all respondents with those who have tried in the last year.

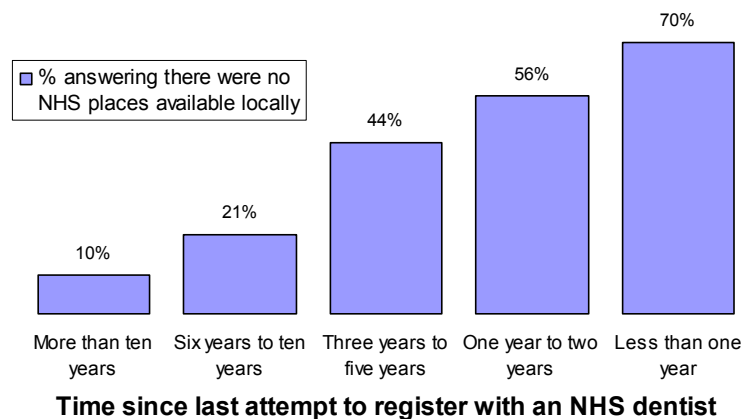
Chart 8 - What problems, if any, did you experience when you tried to register with an NHS dentist?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted (All 1194, all attempting to register in last year 90)

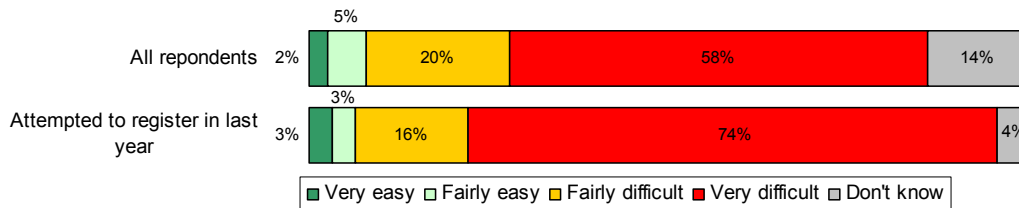
Seven in ten of those who have tried to register in the last 12 months said there were **no NHS places available locally** (70%). This is strongly related to the time since the last attempt to register, as shown in the chart below. **The more recent the attempt to register, the greater the chance of there being no local places**, meaning the number of NHS places is shrinking. It is especially significant that **this trend has continued in the last year**, since the introduction of the new NHS contracts, and now potential patients have even less chance of finding an NHS place.

Chart 9 - Time since last attempt to register as an NHS patient vs % answering they had the problem of no local NHS places available



More than three-quarters of respondents answer that they think it is difficult to register with an NHS dentist (78%), with the majority saying it is very difficult. This is particularly true for those who have attempted to register in the last 12 months, with three quarters saying it is very difficult (74%) and nine in ten having found it difficult overall (90%).

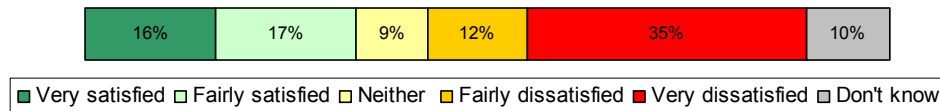
Chart 10 - How easy or difficult do you think it is to register with an NHS dentist?



Base: All respondents (Unweighted (All 1467, all attempting to register in last year 95)

Overall, almost half of respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of NHS dental services (47%). Residents of east Lancashire are more likely to be very dissatisfied (45%) than those in west Lancashire (33%), especially Rossendale residents (54% very dissatisfied). Private patients and those unregistered (55% and 59% very dissatisfied respectively) are more likely to be very dissatisfied than NHS patients (21%).

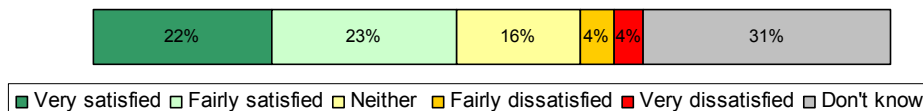
Chart 11 - And overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the availability of local dental services? NHS Services
Please give an answer whether you are registered or not.



Base: All respondents (Unweighted (All 1467, all attempting to register in last year 95)

Just less than half of respondents are satisfied with the availability of private dental services, with only 8% of respondents dissatisfied (although a third doesn't have an opinion). Private patients are more likely to be satisfied than NHS patients (73% and 27% satisfied respectively).

Chart 12 - And overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the availability of local dental services? Private services
Please give an answer whether you are registered or not.



Base: All respondents (Unweighted (All 1467, all attempting to register in last year 95)

5 Appendix

5.1 Socio-Economic-Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants.
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principal officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people previously grade B, and their widows

Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers for responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group E

- All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income