

# Reviewing patient experience of dental services in Redbridge

Supplementary findings:  
online patient feedback

July - December 2021



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## Introduction

This is our supplementary report which provides details of our online patient review.

## Online Patient Feedback

We reviewed online feedback left between 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 (when dental practices reopened and late September 2021) on the following websites: The NHS Website, Google reviews, Yell and Best Care Compare. Google reviews were only loosely dated, with each review stating “one month ago” etc so we estimated some dates to ensure they were within our timeframe.

Each of the comments used were analysed for individual themes such as care, staffing or support. Most people shared feedback relating to several different themes within their comments. We reviewed comments left on **34** dental practices (the remaining five practices either did not have any comments or the comments were outside of our time frame). In total we analysed **1,883** comments from **876** people.

## Excluded Online Patient Feedback

We did not include all the patient feedback we read. When we looked at patient feedback left on individual dental practice websites, we found that some was left undated. Because of this, we made the decision to not include this feedback.

Some comments on other websites were posted within our timeframe, however, they related to treatment which had occurred prior to Covid. If it became obvious that a patient had posted a review on more than one site, we used the first review we found. We did not include comments on cosmetic treatment as these are offered outside of NHS treatments.

## Disclaimer

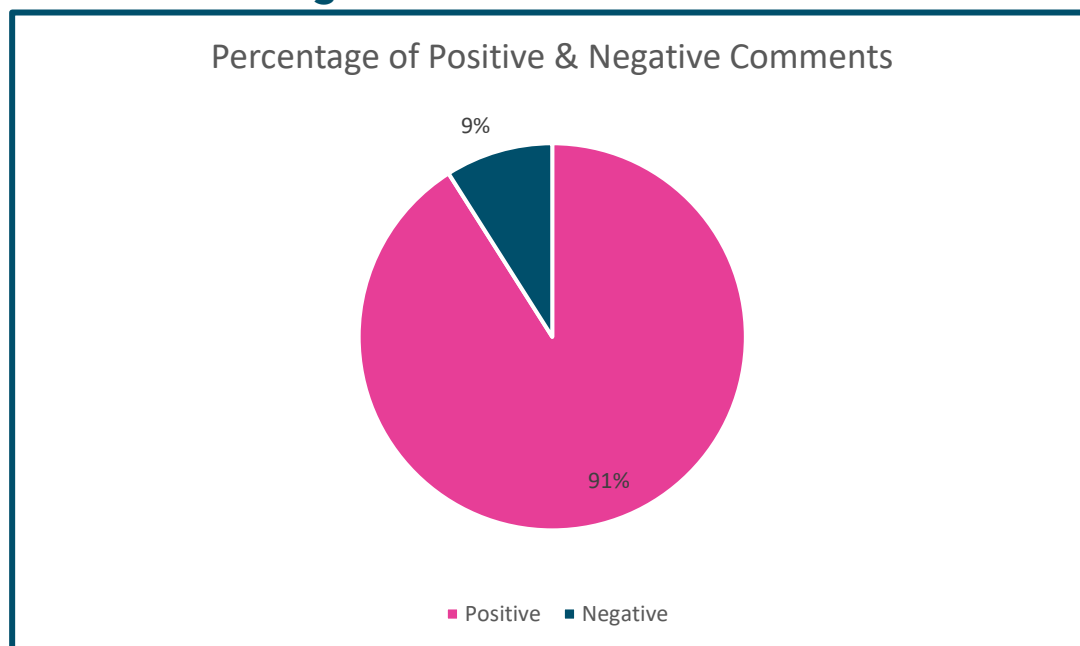
Please note that this supplementary report relates to our review of online patient feedback reviewed from after 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 (when practices reopened after the first lockdown) and the end of September 2021.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this project including our HWR volunteers who undertook the online research.

# Online Patient Feedback: Findings

## Positive and negative comments



**Pie Chart 12**

Our review of the **1,883** remarks left through online review sites showed **91% (1,717)**, with only **9% (161)** being negative comments.

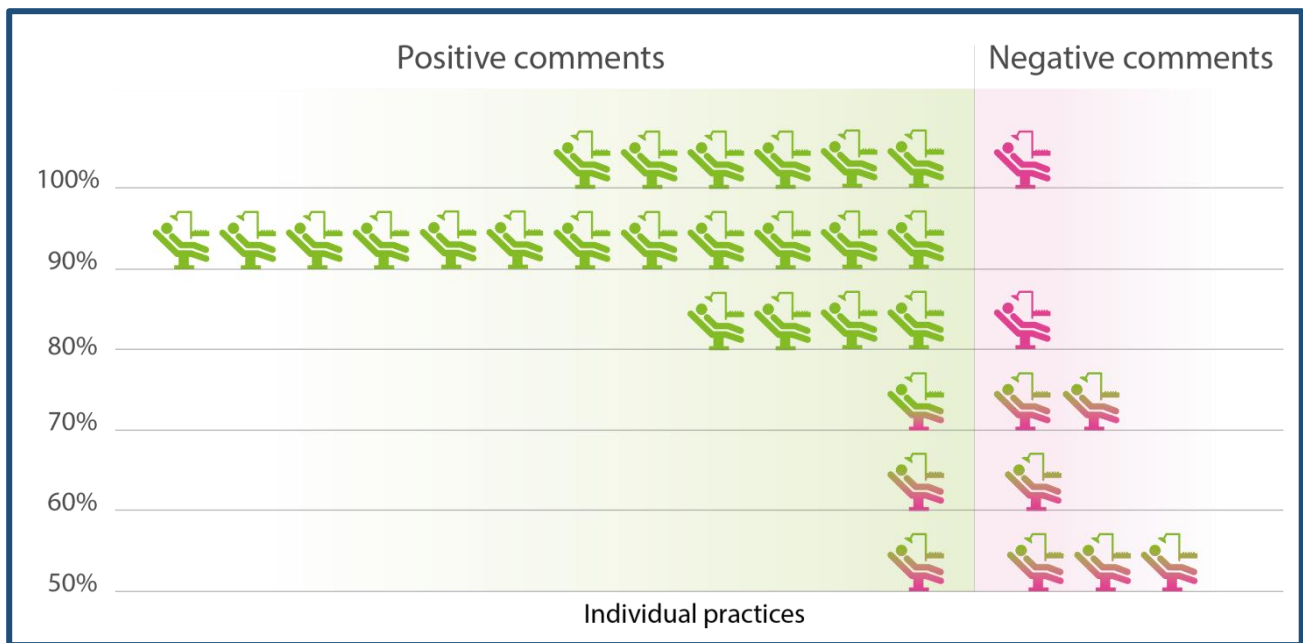
When we reviewed individual practices, we found:

### Positive comments

- Six practices had 100% positive comments
- 12 practices had 90% or more positive comments
- Four practices had 80 -90% positive comments
- One practice had 70 - 80% positive comments
- One practice had 60 -70% positive comments
- One practice had 50 - 60% positive comments

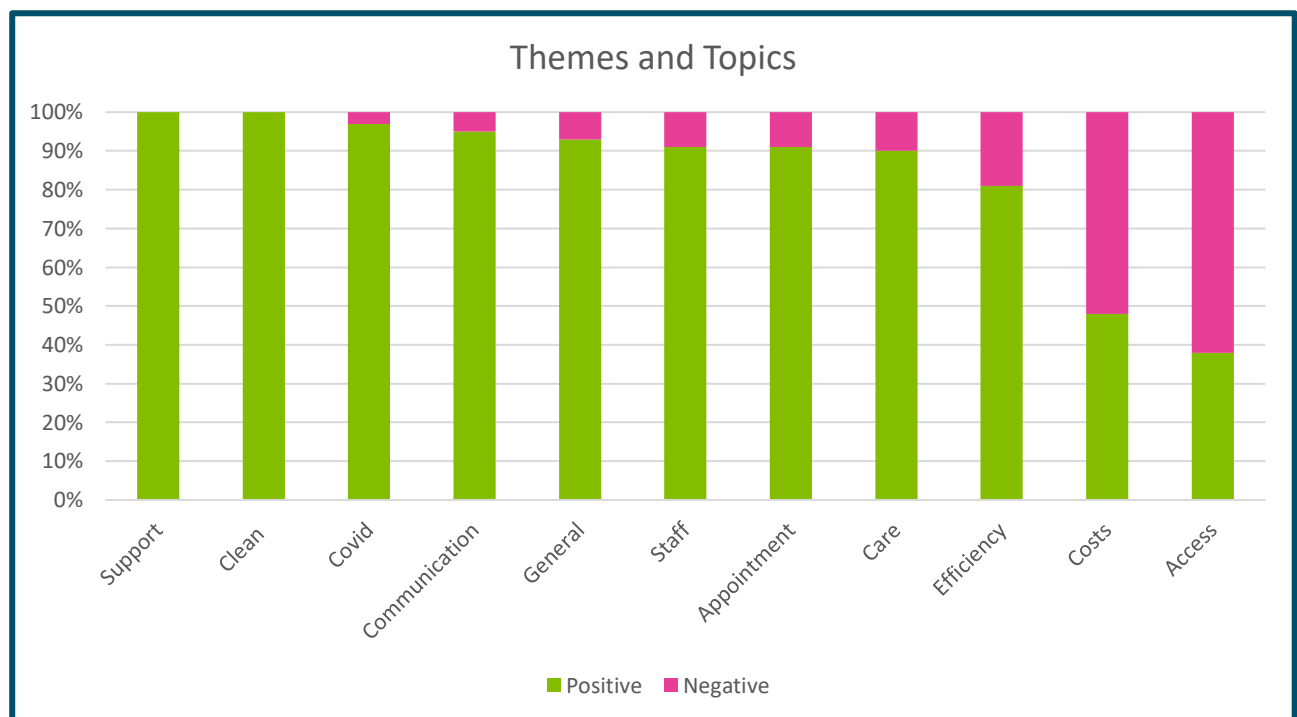
### Negative comments

- One practice received 100% negative comments
- One practice had 80 - 90% negative comments
- Two practices had 70 - 80% negative comments
- One practice had 60 - 70% negative comments
- Three practices had 50 - 60% negative comments



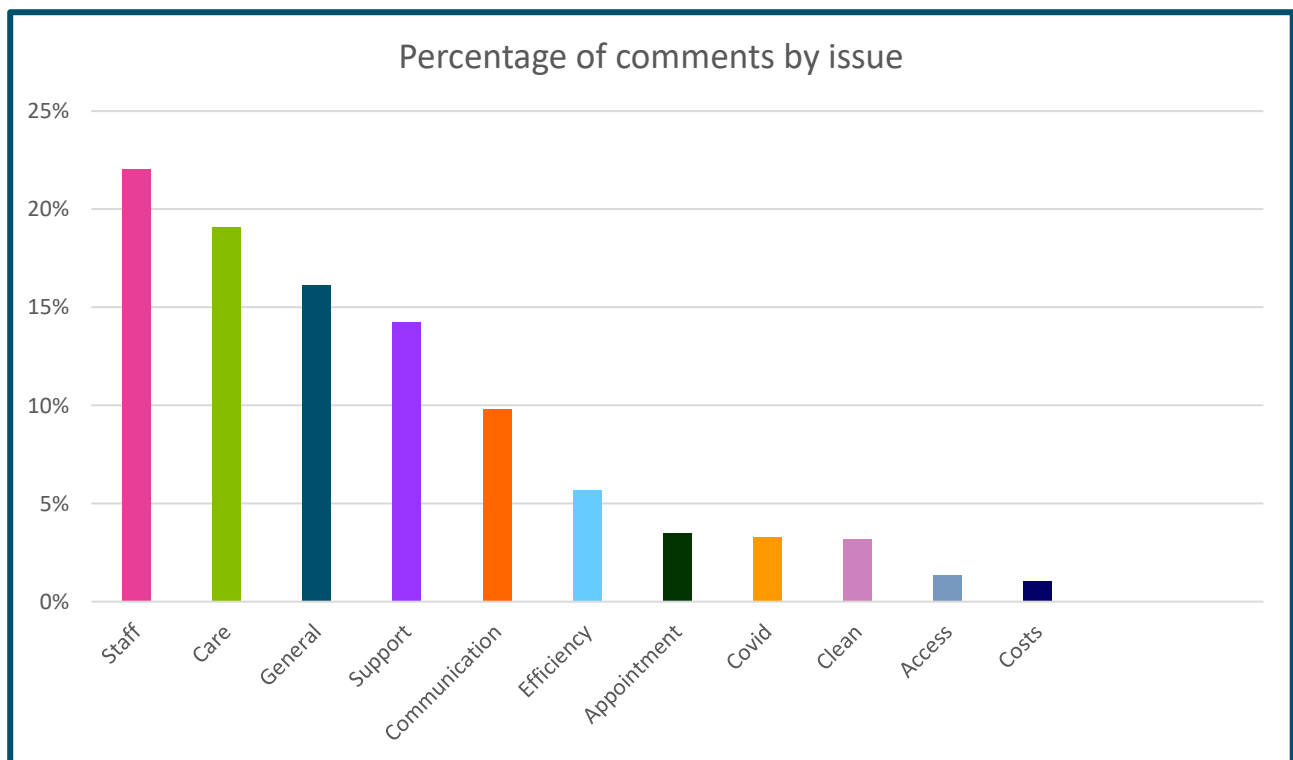
## Positive and negative themes and topics

We identified different topics mentioned throughout the comments left on the different review sites. Twelve distinct topic areas were identified and are shown in the bar graph below.



**Graph 7**

The graph shows that (10/12) themes received mostly positive comments with two themes (Costs and Access), receiving more negative comments.

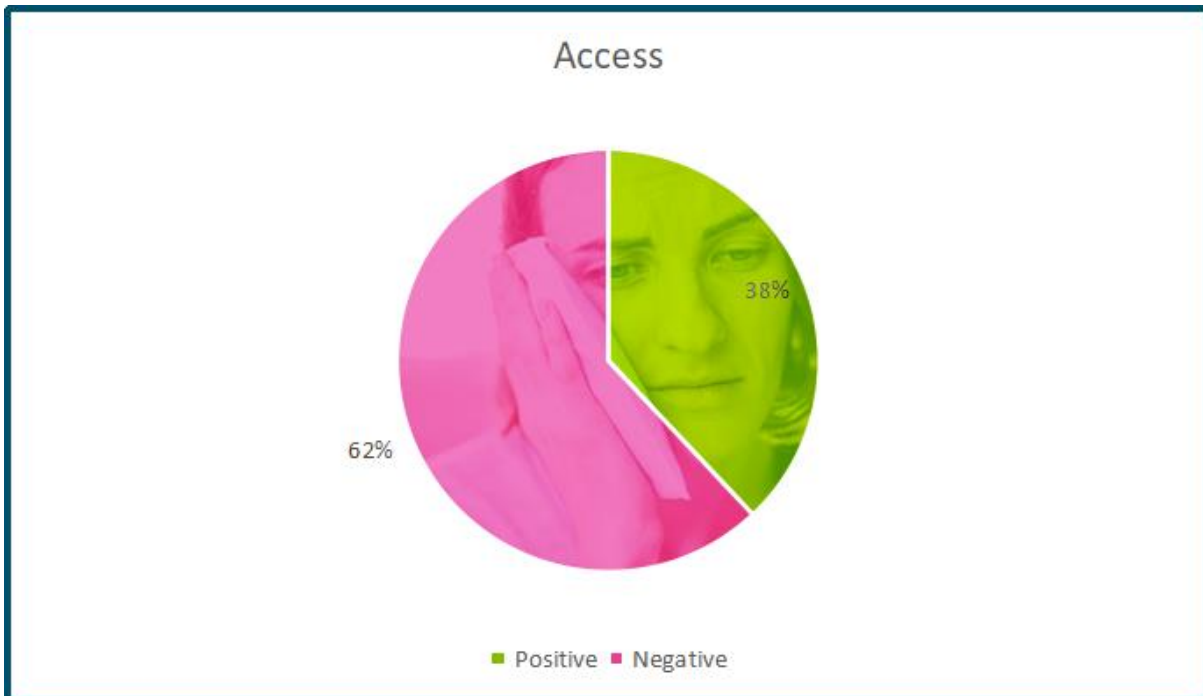


**Graph 8**

Comments regarding staff received the most remarks overall (this includes positive and negative comments), with care issues following. The graph above shows the percentage of comments received by topic. Further analysis is shown below.

We have started our more detailed analysis by focusing on the issues of Access and Costs. Although receiving the least overall comments, these issues had the largest percentage of negative comments as the pie charts below show.

## Access



Pie Chart 13

A total of **26** comments identified the theme of access.

A variety of positive remarks (**10 comments - 38%**) were shown:



*“Open early & close late.” (July 2021)*

*“Needed an urgent appointment, this was the only dentist to ring me back and offer me one.” (September 2020)*

Just under two thirds (**16 comments - 62%**) of the responses were negative. The majority focused on people not being able to access an NHS appointment or being offered a private appointment instead as there were no NHS appointments available.



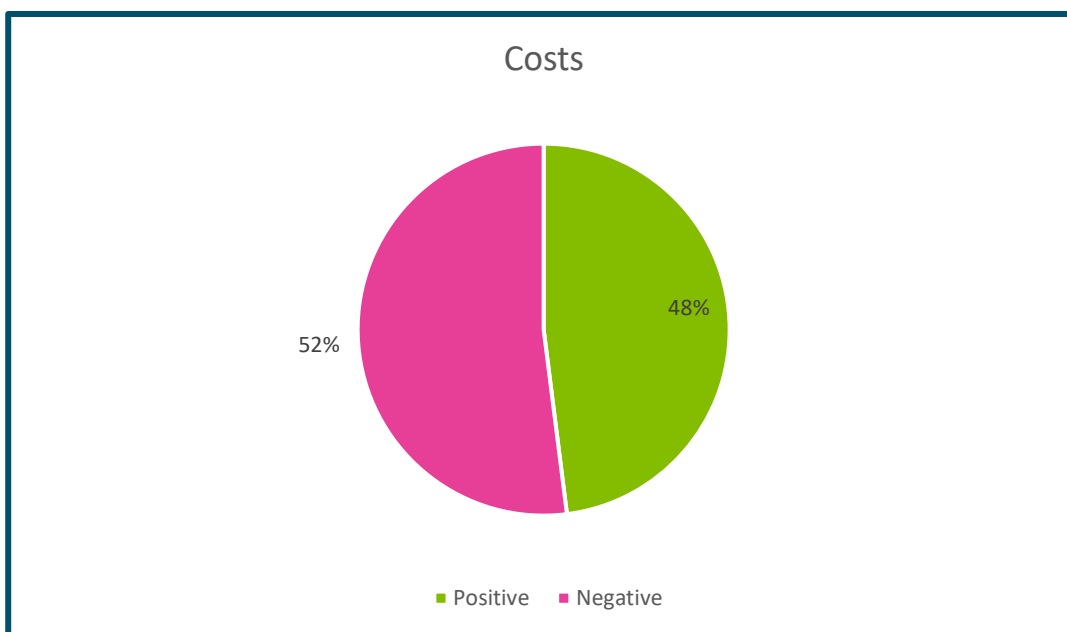
*‘Tried to register, told practice only taking private patients and to ring 111 (July 2021)’*

*‘In pain, but told 3 months wait for NHS appointment, could be seen privately in a few weeks (August 2021)’*



*'I feel that this is a practice which more and more favours those wealthy clients who are able to pay and have deep pockets rather than the working class. NHS appointments are available but when you try to book them, it's just impossible! For instance, I had a 2.30 pm appointment which got cancelled as the dentist was not available. I try to rebook, and I am told I have to pay to book an appointment at the same time unless I want a morning one in three months' time. (February 2021')*

## Costs



Pie Chart 14

It was almost an even split between positive (**10 Comments - 48%**) and negative (**11 comments - 52%**) comments regarding the cost of dental treatment.

Some patients felt the treatment provided was good value for money;



*"Very reasonable price for treatment" (April 2021)*

*"Harley Street experience. But not Harley Street prices!" (September 2020)*



Some patients felt that dental practices had “ripped them off”. Some patients were concerned they thought they were having NHS treatment only to find they had to pay more than they expected.



*‘Thought I was booking NHS appointment, they charged me £45, rip off (August 2020)’*

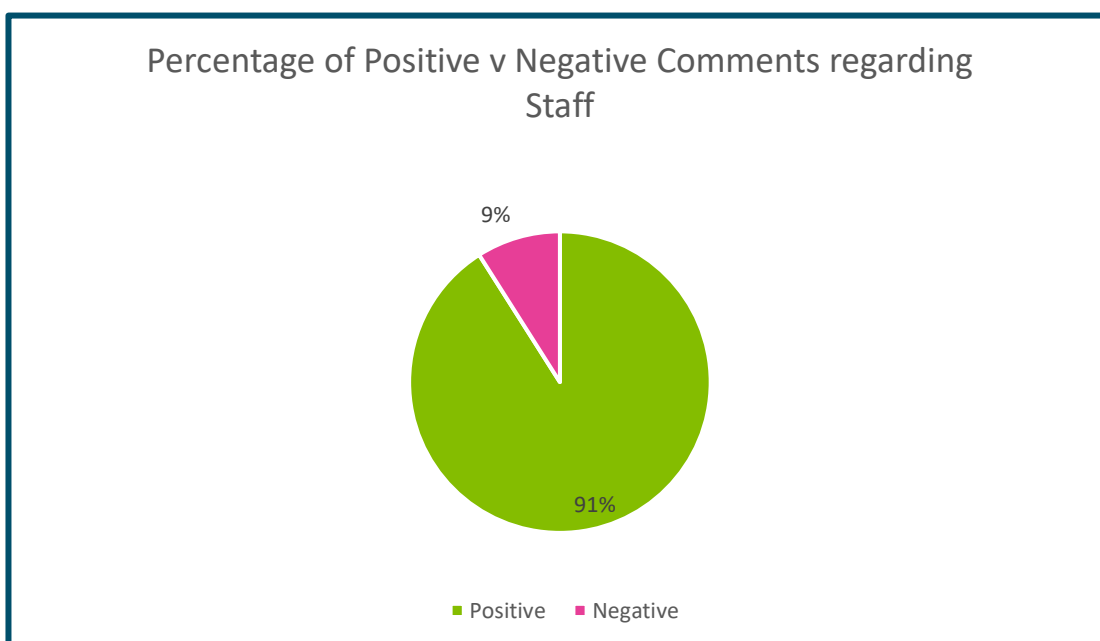
*‘Charged £75 for polish & scale, when entitled to free treatment. Asked for a refund. Dentist insisted not one of free treatments & told me not to come back. (October 2020)’*

*‘Went to book routine appointment but was told that regardless of being NHS patient I would be treated as a private paying patient. I do not have a money tree..... Constantly being badgered to have private treatment done makes me feel very uncomfortable. (August 2021)’*

## Comment

Without knowing more about individual appointments, it is difficult to understand whether this is down to a lack of communication by the dentist or a misunderstanding by the patient. However, similar concerns relating to costs were raised through our online survey.

## Staff



Pie Chart 15



Most of the comments regarding staff were positive (**374 comments - 91%**). Many patients used similar words to convey that staff were 'polite, professional, and friendly'.



*“Receptionist polite & friendly.  
Dentist professional.” (August 2020)*

*“Reception lovely, professional,  
polite, well-mannered.”  
(February 2021)*

*“Dentist is always professional,  
courteous, friendly and  
knowledgeable.” (March 2021)*



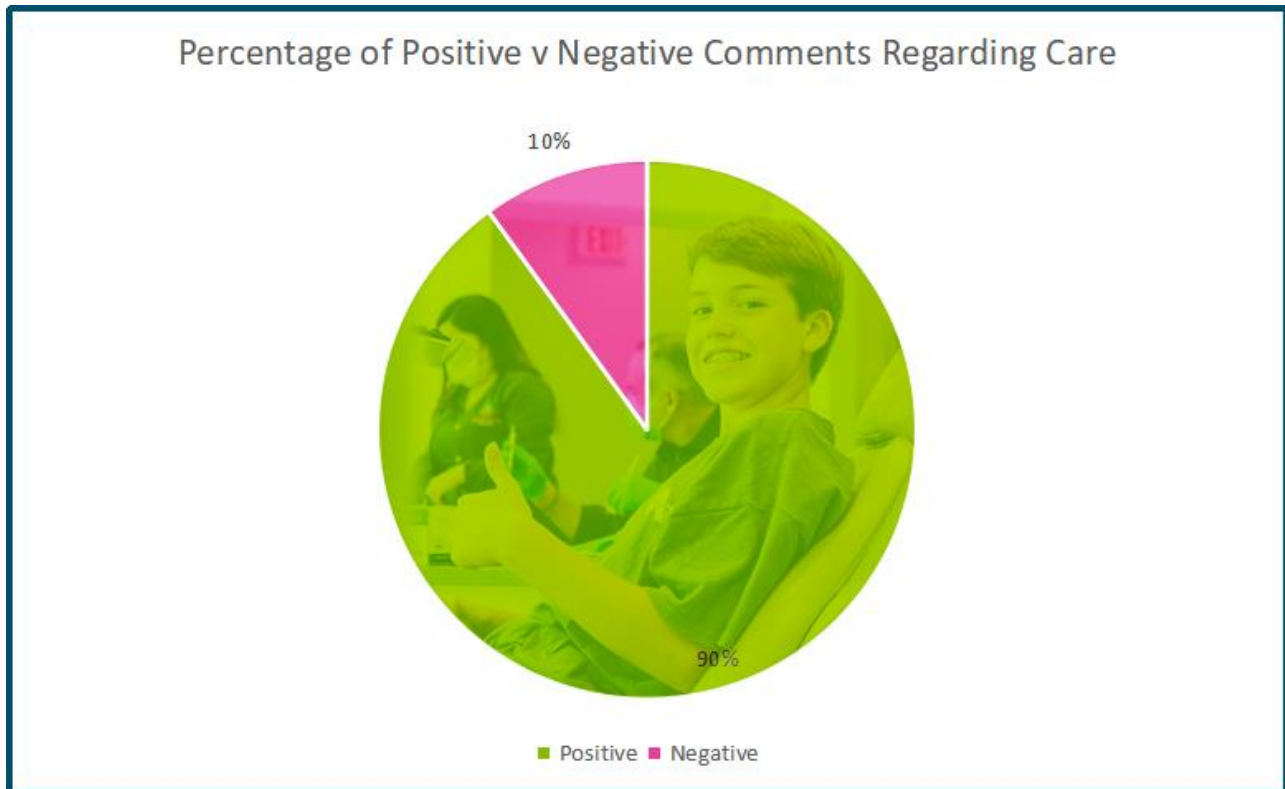
Negative comments (**40 - 9%**) mentioned rude staff, in particular reception staff.



*“The receptionist was rude and unhelpful.” (September 2021)*

Other negative comments that were raised were: staff arguing, behaving unprofessionally and unhelpfully.

## Care



**Pie Chart 16**

Care was the issue that also had a high number of comments overall, **(359)**.

Again, the majority **(323 comments - 90%)** were positive.

Patients mentioned:

- treatments being pain free
- the dentist being gentle
- staff having a caring approach
- the dentist being skilled
- good after care
- a high standard of treatment



*‘Treatment was as painless as possible. Care shown by dentists outstanding. (April 2021)’*

*‘I was quite scared (not been to dentist in over 4 years). Dentist was lovely & gentle. (June 2021)’*

*‘Treatment was of a high standard. (January 2021)’*

Although there were far fewer negative remarks (**36 comments - 10%**), the issues raised were quite concerning. The main issues patients raised were:

- being in pain following dental treatment
- the dentist not treating the issue properly
- being told that the practice would not treat the patient
- having a broken or lost tooth following treatment



*‘Attended the dentist about a month ago and both the service and treatment was awful for the dental work. I had to visit them twice because the initial work was not done properly and was still experiencing tooth pain..... (May 2021)’*

*‘Temporary filling not done properly and had to go to a different dentist to be rectified. (July 2021)’*

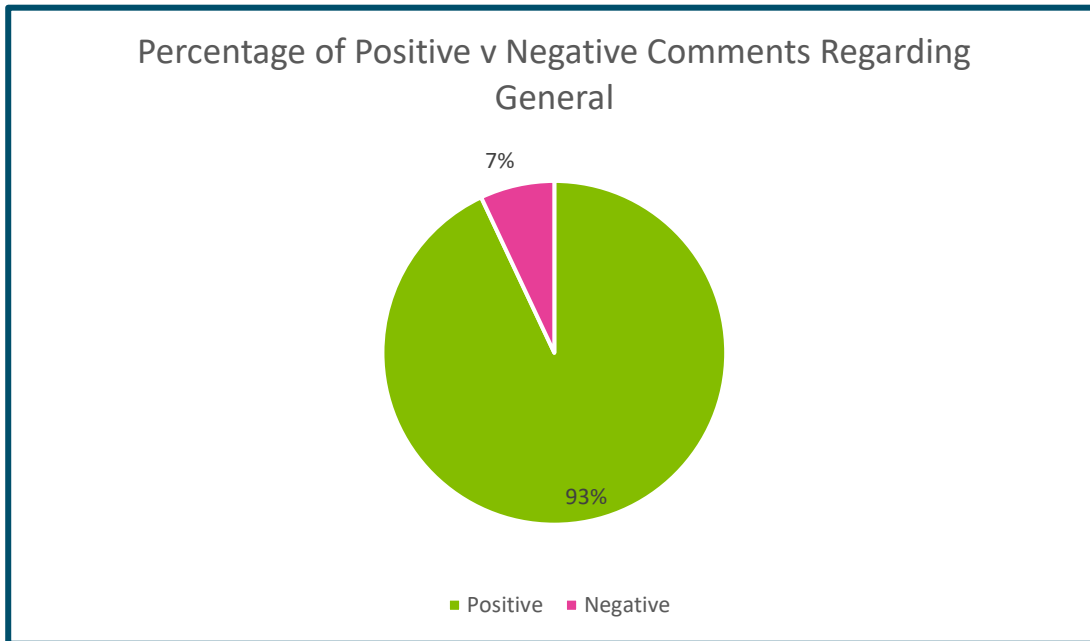
*‘Two different dentists at practice worked on teeth. I ended up losing two teeth and having a big gap. (September 2020)’*

## Comment

Whilst most of the comments (90%) from online platforms regarding care were positive, we were aware that our own feedback and survey responses appear to show a slightly different picture, with nearly three quarters (74%) responding positively to our question regarding care in our survey.

One possible suggestion for this is that online feedback is more likely to be posted recently after treatment by people who are used to using online devices and less likely to experience access related issues.

## General



Pie Chart 17

We created a general category in order to capture comments that were non-specific.

Most of the comments were positive (**282 comments - 93%**) mostly related to an “excellent” or “good” service or experience.



*High quality service from everyone. (June 2021)*

The negative comments (**21 - 7%**) mentioned a perceived lack or decline in customer service.

## Support

The issue of support received only positive remarks (**267 comments - 100%**). There were similar phrases that came up repeatedly when patients discussed the support they received; “...makes you feel at ease”, “kind and helpful”, “made me feel comfortable” and “reassuring and calm.”



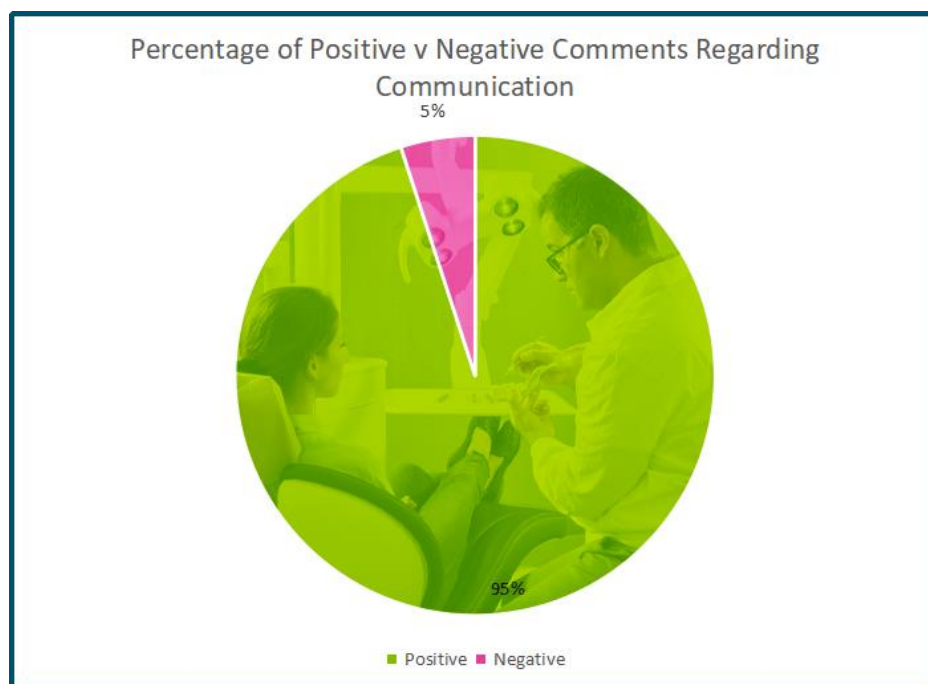
*‘The dentist has a relaxing manner which makes the patient feel comfortable and at ease at all times. (March 2021)’*

*‘As a nervous patient I was greatly relieved by the calming nature of the dentist. (June 2021)’*

*‘Staff helpful, supportive, very good, relaxing experience for my treatment, reassurance from the staff that everything be OK. (June 2021)’*



## Communication



Pie Chart 18

Most of the **184** comments regarding communication were positive (**175 comments - 95%**).

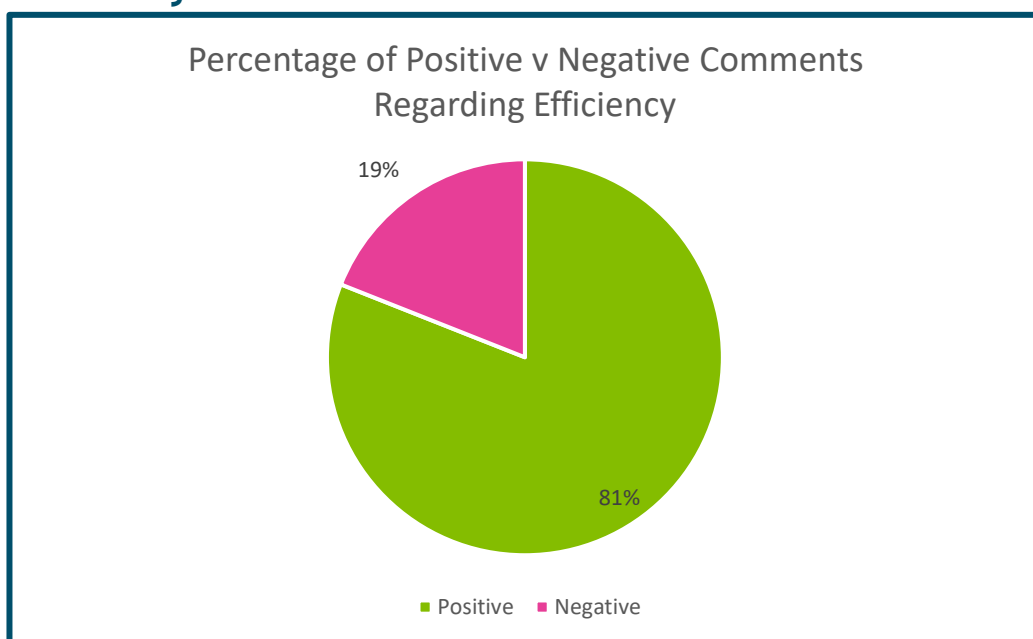
Patients reported the dentist explained everything regarding their treatment. Others felt they had been listened to and their questions had been answered.



*‘Everything is explained carefully with every opportunity to ask questions. (August 2021)’*

There were very few negative comments (**9 - 5%**) where patients mainly felt they had not had the cost for treatment explained to them.

## Efficiency



Pie Chart 19

A total of **107** comments regarding efficiency, many were positive (**87 comments - 81%**), including remarks about the efficacy of the service and timely appointments.

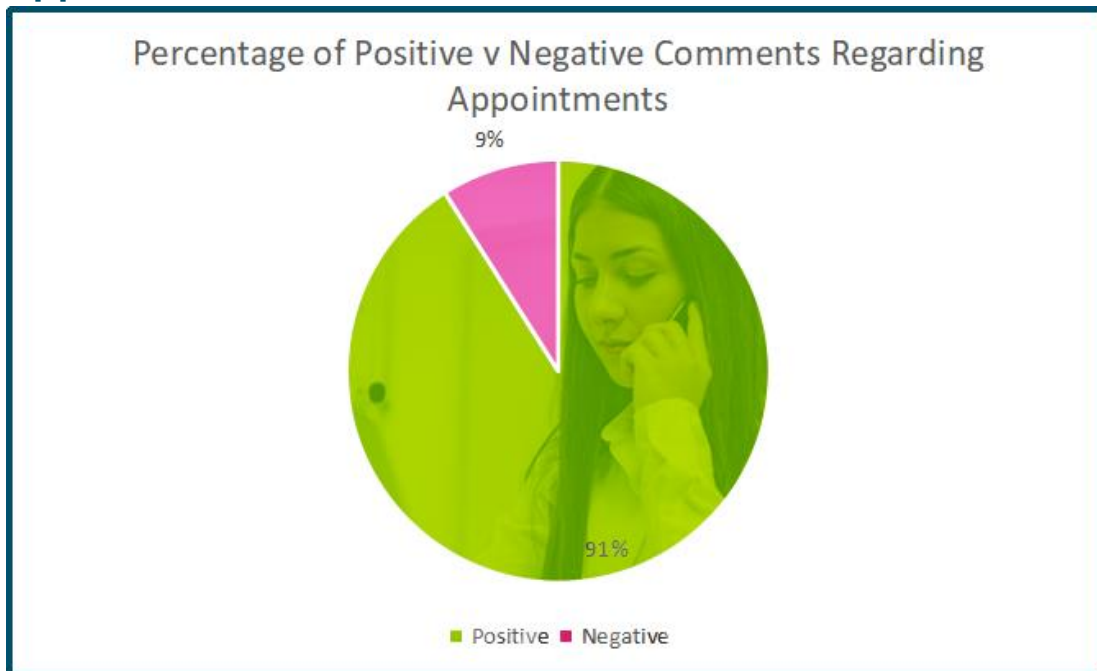
A number of patients commented on practical aspects such as receiving timely reminders of their appointments.



*‘The practice is well run & punctual. (February 2021)’*

Negative comments (20 - 19%) included patients having long waits before they were seen, practices not providing the follow up referral to an external service or information they said that would result in patients having to do lots of chasing to get the support they needed.

## Appointments



**Pie Chart 20**

Most of the **65** comments regarding appointments were positive, (**59 comments - 91%**).

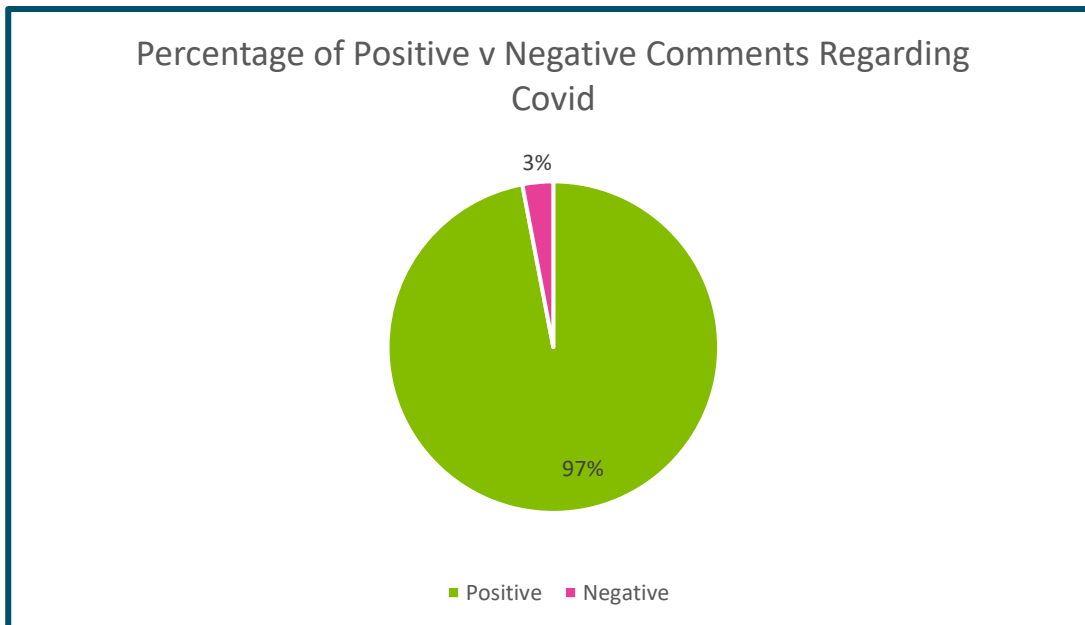
Over half of patients said they had been able to book an emergency appointment either with their practice, with an alternative dentist or through NHS 111.



*‘I’ve had to book emergency appointments, always manage to get seen same or day after. (March 2021)’*

The six negative comments (9%) were regarding the waiting times for appointments: “waiting times are unusually long” or that appointments were repeatedly rearranged: “had five appointments cancelled in last year, including two urgent appointments when they didn't have a dentist.”

## Covid



### Pie Chart 21

The majority of patient remarked that they were happy with the way dental practices responded to the pandemic (**62 comments - 97%**).



*‘Very good following the COVID-19 rules. (Nov 2020)’*

The 3% negative comments relate to two individual comments where patients noted that staff were not wearing PPE.

## Clean

The issue of cleanliness received 60 comments, all of which were positive.



*‘Practice is always very clean. (March 2021)’*





## Digital Service

Whilst the issue of digital service only received five comments in total, it is worth noting that every comment was positive.

Some patients shared how they were able to email photos to the dentist prior to treatment, whilst others commented that they had received online consultations (*Note: as some patients post comments a while after their appointment, these potentially occurred during the first lockdown when dental practices were closed for face-to-face appointments*).

## The impact on an individual's experience

Analysing patient experience by issue, as above, ensures that we give a thorough overview of the current situation regarding access to and subsequent provision of NHS dentistry in Redbridge.

However, in order to provide a clearer picture of the impact on individuals, we present some first-hand narratives.



*'TERRIBLE PLACE. Charged me even when they didn't do anything!*

*When I was making an emergency appointment over the phone the receptionist was very rude and unprofessional. I asked if the treatment I needed would be available as I have already had a check-up a week ago, so I knew what I needed, I didn't want to pay again for a check-up and then no treatment. The receptionist told me yes it was available.*

*When I went in another receptionist let me in who was also very moody and also didn't explain anything properly. I went in to see the dentist and she looked at my teeth for about 3 seconds. Told me that she can't treat it and that I should go private. (April 2021)'*

The quote above shows the patient felt the lack of communication between dental professionals, led to a lack of patient-centred care and courtesy, which ultimately provided the resulting negative experience.

However, the quote below shows how dental practices can support patients to feel safe during Covid.

Clear, supportive and welcoming communication can enable a patients' experiences to improve despite previous bad experiences, and a potentially challenging clinical intervention.



*'I cannot rate this practice enough. I am very scared of the dentist as I had a bad experience when I was younger. From the minute I walked through the door I was welcomed; they did the full Covid checks, and all staff were lovely.*

*I felt so looked after and I end up relaxing and I had a tooth pulled which I can honestly say wasn't that bad. They talked me through everything they was going to do. I can't thank the team enough for helping me. I would highly recommend this practice. (February 2021)'*

These remarks both illustrate the value and impact of clear and transparent communication. This is vital for ensuring the patient is at the centre of their care experience. It leads to positive encounters, which facilitate better clinical outcomes for patients.

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