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Element 1 - Dentistry services

Dentistry services

Balkumari Shrestha , Introduction to Health and Social Care

What are Dentistry Services?

NHS dentistry is an essential healthcare service that promotes and protects oral health throughout a person's life. Dental professionals aim to prevent disease, identify oral health problems at an early stage and provide appropriate treatment when required. Services commonly include routine examinations, oral health education, fillings, tooth extractions, root canal treatment, crowns and emergency dental care. Dentists also encourage healthy behaviours by advising patients on effective tooth brushing, reducing sugar intake and attending regular dental check-ups. Individuals with more complex oral health conditions may be referred to specialist or hospital dental services for advanced treatment. By preventing disease and treating problems early, NHS dentistry helps improve overall health, confidence and quality of life (NHS England, 2023).

Development of NHS Dentistry

NHS dentistry began in 1948 when the National Health Service was introduced across the United Kingdom. Before the NHS, many people could not afford dental treatment, so oral health problems were common. The new service allowed everyone to receive essential dental care regardless of their financial situation. During the early years, dentists mainly treated serious problems such as tooth decay and extractions because many patients had poor oral health. As people's dental health gradually improved, the focus of the service shifted towards prevention, regular check-ups and oral health education. Modern NHS dentistry now provides a wide range of services, including routine examinations, restorative treatments, emergency care and specialist referrals when needed. It also promotes healthy habits, such as brushing with fluoride toothpaste and reducing sugar intake, to prevent disease. Although the service has developed significantly over time, it continues to face challenges such as increasing demand, workforce shortages and difficulties accessing appointments (NHS England, 2023; British Dental Association, 2024).

How the Service Operates Today

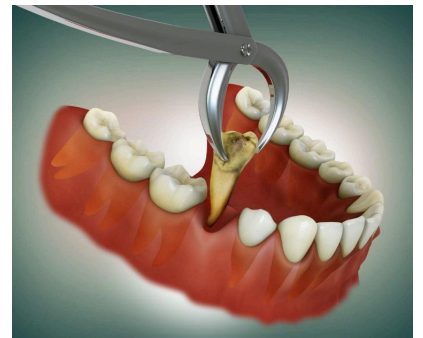
Modern NHS dental services are delivered through general dental practices, community dental clinics and hospital dental departments. General dental practitioners provide routine examinations, preventive advice and treatment for common dental conditions. Community dental services support patients who require additional assistance because of physical disabilities, learning disabilities or complex medical conditions. Hospital dental departments provide specialist care, including oral surgery and complex restorative procedures, following referral from general dentists. Alongside treatment, dental professionals promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging good oral hygiene, healthy eating habits and regular attendance for check-ups. Although NHS dentistry plays a major role in improving public health, many patients continue to experience long waiting times when trying to access appointments (NHS England, 2023).



Two Challenges Faced by NHS Dentistry Services

Access to NHS dental care remains one of the greatest difficulties facing patients in many parts of England. A shortage of NHS dentists means that routine appointments are often unavailable for long periods, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment. When dental problems remain untreated, they may become more severe, increasing the need for complex and costly procedures. This can negatively affect both oral health and overall wellbeing (British Dental Association, 2024).

Another important challenge is workforce recruitment and retention. Financial pressures, heavy workloads and increasing demand have contributed to many dentists reducing their NHS commitments or leaving NHS practice altogether. These staffing shortages place additional pressure on remaining dental professionals and reduce the number of appointments available. Continued investment in the dental workforce and improvements to NHS dental contracts are essential to improve access and maintain high-quality patient care (NHS England, 2023).



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Task 2 – Residential Care Homes: Origins, Current Practice and Importance

Introduction

Residential care homes are an important part of the adult social care system in the UK. They provide accommodation and personal support for people who are no longer able to manage safely at home because of ageing, disability or long-term illness. The aim of these services is to help residents maintain dignity, independence and wellbeing while receiving assistance with everyday living. Care homes also provide reassurance to families by ensuring that trained staff are available to meet residents' needs in a safe and supportive environment (Care Quality Commission (CQC), 2024).

Historical Development of Residential Care Homes

Residential care in Britain has changed considerably over time. During the nineteenth century, many older adults and people with disabilities were supported in workhouses established under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. These institutions mainly provided basic accommodation and food, while individual wellbeing and personal choice received little attention. Living conditions were frequently overcrowded, and care was often delivered within an institutional rather than supportive environment (Higgs and Gilleard, 2016).

Significant reforms followed the creation of the National Health Service in 1948 and the introduction of the National Assistance Act 1948. These changes transferred responsibility for many vulnerable people from workhouses to local authority care services, encouraging a more respectful and compassionate approach to long-term care (Legislation.gov.uk, 1948).

Further improvements occurred during the late twentieth century. The Community Care Act 1990 encouraged services that assessed individual needs and supported people within their communities whenever possible. More recently, the Care Act 2014 strengthened person-centred care by promoting wellbeing, safeguarding, dignity and independence as key principles of adult social care practice (Department of Health and Social Care, 2014).

Current Function of Residential Care Homes

Today, residential care homes support individuals who require daily assistance but do not need continuous nursing care. Staff assist residents with activities such as personal hygiene, dressing, mobility, nutrition, medication support and participation in social activities. The overall aim is to help individuals remain as independent as possible while ensuring their health and safety are maintained (NHS, 2023).

In England, residential care homes are regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Regular inspections assess whether services are safe, effective, caring, responsive and

well-led. These inspections help maintain high standards of care while protecting residents from neglect and poor practice (CQC, 2024).

Although residential care homes provide valuable support, they continue to experience several challenges. Workforce shortages remain a major concern, with many providers struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff. This can increase workloads, reduce the amount of personalised care available and affect continuity of support. Rising operating costs and increasing demand from an ageing population also place considerable financial pressure on care providers. Continued investment in staff training, recruitment and service development is therefore essential to maintain high-quality care (Skills for Care, 2024).

Importance in Improving Quality of Life

Residential care homes make an important contribution to improving residents' quality of life. By providing a secure and supportive environment, they enable individuals to receive personalised care while maintaining dignity, privacy and respect. Staff work closely with residents to encourage independence wherever possible and ensure that care reflects each person's preferences and individual needs.

Another significant benefit is the opportunity for social engagement. Organised activities, group events and recreational programmes help residents build relationships, reduce loneliness and improve emotional wellbeing. Care homes also support physical health by providing balanced meals, encouraging appropriate exercise, monitoring medication and ensuring residents have timely access to healthcare professionals when required (NHS, 2023).

Residential care homes also provide peace of mind for relatives by ensuring that trained professionals are available throughout the day and night. Safeguarding procedures, individual care planning and regular risk assessments help protect residents' rights while promoting safety and independence. Overall, residential care homes remain an essential service that supports vulnerable adults to live comfortably, safely and with the highest possible quality of life.

References

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