



The barriers a deaf person faces when trying to access dental treatment in Wokingham Borough



Mystery Shop of 10 Dental Surgeries

In partnership with



September 2016

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Executive Summary

Deaf people are more likely to suffer ill health than the rest of the population, largely because they face problems accessing primary care services. Basic interactions, like filling in a form, making an appointment or asking about treatment is harder for those with hearing loss.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough mystery shopped 10 dental surgeries in March 2016, looking for appropriate signage, asking the receptionist for a registration form, requesting a British Sign Language interpreter, asking for help filling out the exemption form & the process of booking an appointment.

The welcome that the receptionist gave really set the tone for the whole conversation. Many receptionists were confused in how to communicate with a deaf patient and their uncertainty or anxiety escalated the anxiety in the deaf patient.

A number of recommendations have been made that would transform the experience of the deaf patient & ensure that Dental Surgeries are fulfilling their legal expectations from the Equalities Act 2010 and Accessible Information Standard 2016, in making reasonable adjustments.

What is Healthwatch Wokingham Borough?

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is the independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are here to understand the experiences of people who use health and social care services in the borough, and to make sure their voices are heard and responded to.

Background

It is a shocking fact that deaf people are more likely to suffer ill health than other people, simply because it is harder for them to use the health services that many of us take for granted. Those with disabilities face major access problems such as deaf people being expected to make appointment by phone.

An unfortunate number of patients have a fear of the dentist. But imagine going to the dentist and having no warning when treatment is about to begin, not getting full explanations of what to expect during treatment and being more sensitive than most to the vibration of a handpiece. This is a reality for many deaf and hard-of-hearing patients.

We at Healthwatch Wokingham Borough have made a commitment to better understand the experience of those with disabilities and sensory needs in accessing health and social care locally. We commissioned Deaf Positives Action (DPA) to mystery shop 10 NHS dentist surgeries

in the Wokingham Borough in March 2016 on our behalf to measure the quality of services and compliance with regulations in providing a service to the Deaf community.

Purpose of this report

We randomly choose 10 NHS Dentist surgeries in the Wokingham Borough to visit. The Mystery Shopping was carried out on different days in March 2016.

We chose to use the same Deaf person to visit the Dentists. It was decided that the results would be better to quantify at the end. Our reason for doing so was that we believe people have different perceptions of how they are treated and varying emotional states. Deciding to have the same person, would ensure that the temperament was the same for each Dentist.

The Mystery Shopper who will be referred to as MS for the rest of the document is profoundly Deaf. MS has hearing aids, which are visible. MS cannot hear words with the hearing aids, MS can only hear sirens and loud noises which is vital in emergencies. MS has not been taught how to communicate verbally, so the use of speech is not understood clearly. If MS does speak, it is because the vocal chords are being used whilst the words are being mouthed in tune with the signing. This is not uncommon. Sometimes MS is not aware of the verbalising, because of being Deaf.

Our Mystery Shopper's role was to carry out the following tasks:

1. Walk into the Dentist and look for appropriate signage and information for Deaf people.
2. When asking the receptionist for a registration form; the response was:
3. Ask to register as a new patient and register and request for a BSL interpreter.
4. Does the surgery supply an interpreter?
 - a. If they won't give you interpreter, ask why.
5. Fill out the new customer form. Do MS understand it? Was any help offered to fill in from the receptionist?
6. If deaf person is having trouble filling it in they will specifically ask for help and note whether that help was given empathically and was help or not.
7. Specifically ask about the exemption options on the form and note whether they were given correct or understandable advice and ask them to translate legal statement regarding payment and/ or cost exemptions
8. Processes available to book an appointment, cancel an appointment, and speak to a dentist.
9. Translate the legal statement on the form.
10. Ask about the booking process for an appointment, how to cancel an appointment and how to speak to a dentist.

HEALTHWATCH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DENTAL SURGERIES

- Dental Surgeries display a sign or visual indicator for deaf patients such as the hearing loop T in the reception and/or waiting area.
- Ensure the reception area is well lit and staff understand their face must be visible if the patient's primary form of communication involves lip reading.
- A friendly, warm and welcoming smile from receptionist can set the tone for the interaction.
- Dental receptionists to avail of Deaf Awareness training.
- All receptionists familiarise themselves with the Accessible Information Standard which from July 2016 legally requires health providers to provide information to those with communication difficulties in a format of their choice
- Receptionists to know how to obtain a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter for any Deaf Person that needs one
- Dental Surgeries to explore the use of Webcam or Skype service to a live interpretation system
- Explore the possibility of easy read registration forms, new customer forms and exemption forms. The formal language and technical terminology creates anxiety for people who do not have a fluent comprehension of English
- Graphic communications such as photos can help explain treatment and procedure and make sure the patient is an active part of his or her dental care
- Utilising the professionalism and skill of the receptionists at Bean Oak Road or Puresmile in Earley to act as peer mentors and advisors to the other receptionists.

The Survey

Walking into the surgery our Mystery Shopper looked for visual indicators for Deaf people and information specifically for Deaf people. The MS wore hearing aids which were visible.

1. Walk into the Dentist and look for appropriate signage and information for Deaf people.

<u>Dental surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Shinfield Dental Centre	Nothing, just blank face from the receptionist. Nothing relating any information for Deaf people in the reception.
Loddon Vale Dental Practice	The receptionist did not engage with me. Nothing relating Deaf information in the reception.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	Very friendly and warm faces from receptionist. Nothing relating information for Deaf people in the reception.
Berkshire Dental Care	It was not a welcoming atmosphere. Nothing relating to Deaf people in the reception.
Bean Oak Road	Good rapport with staff, however, nothing relating to Deaf information in the reception.
Puresmile, Earley	No rapport with the staff. Nothing relating information for Deaf people in the reception.
Tooth Booth, Finchampstead	Nothing in the reception relating Deaf information. The reception was not welcoming and avoided eye contact.
Winnersh Dental Practice	The receptionist was not welcoming. Nothing in the reception relating Deaf information.
Crowthorne	Receptionist told me to sit in the waiting room. There was minimal information about for Deaf people.
Peach Dental Care	Nothing in the reception relating Deaf information.

The MS could not noticeably see any visual signage for a hearing loop or a 'T'. There was not any information or pictures explaining what to do if they require a BSL interpreter or any other facilities.

The MS could not easily recognise any visual identifiers for Deaf information. When the MS had been in the reception for approximately ten or more seconds looking at the noticeboards for information, some receptionists seemed agitated that they couldn't get the MS attention.

RECOMMENDATION: Dental Surgeries display a sign or visual indicator for deaf patients such as the hearing loop T in the reception and/or waiting area.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure the reception area is well lit and staff understand their face must be visible if the patient's primary form of communication involves lip reading

2. When asking the receptionist for a registration form; the response was:

<u>Dentist Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Shinfield Dental Centre	Flapped about, didn't understand the request.
Loddon Vale Dental Practice	Not friendly, and not patient. Didn't acknowledge.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	Friendly
Berkshire Dental Care	Not friendly, felt very rushed and didn't acknowledge.
Bean Oak Road	Friendly, it seemed calm and accepted my question.
PureSmile, Earley	It was okay, patient, easy flow with it and no one judged me.
Tooth Booth, Finchampstead	Not good start, not helpful and made many excuses.
Winnersh Dental Practice	Ignored me at first, I signalled for pen and paper.
Crowthorne	I asked the receptionist a question. She told me to sit in the waiting room. She then talked to another patient whilst she responded to my questions on the paper.
Peach Dental Care	Not friendly and not helpful.

The response from the receptionists was mixed. Some were welcoming with a warm smile and although not totally understanding, tried to assist. Whilst other receptionists were seen to have a 'cold' aura surrounding them which made the MS feel unwelcome, in ordinary circumstances would have walked out the surgery.

The first impression created by the receptionist can really set the tone of the whole experience. Receptionist confusion or uncertainty around communication can create anxiety in the patient, which then adds to the difficulty of the interaction.

RECOMMENDATION: Dental receptionists to avail of Deaf Awareness training. The training would have to be specific to their role. Including topics on 'what to say' and 'how not to offend a Deaf person,' along with a few simple signs to welcome people when they arrive at the reception.

3. Ask to register as a new patient and register and request for a BSL interpreter. Note the receptionists welcome towards MS.

<u>Dental surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Shinfield Dental Centre	The response was cold. Refused an interpreter.
Loddon Vale Dental Practice	Not impressed and but tried to be friendly. Didn't know how Deaf people communicated. She went to check if they provided an interpreter.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	Yes, easy going and flexible. However, they didn't know what MS meant by an interpreter.
Berkshire Dental Care	Not a warm welcome, not ever friendly. Refused to provide BSL Interpreter.
Bean Oak Road	Brilliant, reception happy to booking interpreter and know NHS will fund for that.
Puresmile, Earley	No problems, they happy to provide interpreter. Reception very patient and no one judged.
Tooth Booth, Finchampstead	Not helpful and off the point to make me feel difficult. Refused to provide interpreter.
Winnersh Dental Practice	Yes, they encourage me to decide the date and time and they will arrange for me.
Crowthorne	A little rude, she said ' <i>I'll write down, and seat by waiting room</i> '. Receptionist then talks to another patient who was waiting on the queue. Told could provide an interpreter, but asked which language I use.
Peach Dental Care	Not comfortable to talk to reception. Refused to provide me interpreter, not helpful.

Unfortunately, the MS found requesting a registration form a huge ordeal. Communication was difficult. Some receptionist mistook request for an interpreter as foreign language interpreter. In several occasions the MS was told to bring in his family or friends to interpret. Bearing in mind there are other people in the reception, it was very difficult for the MS to explain what was going on. The MS cannot verbally communicate; he would not have been able to speak with an accent.

RECOMMENDATION: Receptionists to familiarise themselves with the Accessible Information Standard which from July 2016 legally requires health providers to provide information to those with communication difficulties in a format of their choice

RECOMMENDATION: Dental Surgeries to explore the use of Webcam or Skype service to a live interpretation system

4. Does the surgery supply an interpreter? If not, why not?

Dental surgery

Response

Shinfield Dental Centre	No. No comment, just say we not provide interpreter.
Loddon Vale Dental Practice	No. Nope, didn't understand what they said.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	Yes, no problems
Berkshire Dental Care	No/ Refused
Bean Oak Road	Yes, no problems
Puresmile, Earley	Yes, no problems
Tooth Booth, Finchampstead	No/ Refused
Winnersh Dental Practice	Yes, but I don't know the process
Crowthorne	Yes, but I don't know how to book it. Reception very helpful, want me back when they find interpreter and email me to arrange date and time.
Peach Dental Care	No, Reception said they don't provide interpreter. But they can find out from Reading borough council to help.

Crowthorne Surgery, didn't know what to do, however, they said they would email in due course. We sent two emails asking for an update, however, they did not respond with the details an interpreter for the MS.

Peach Dental Care wrote *'we can't provide an interpreter.'*

Winnersh wrote on the piece of paper, *'You can decide the date and time and will arrange for you.'*

ToothBooth refused an interpreter and said that all communication would have to be written down. When the MS explained that English was his second language, they asked what Nationality the MS was. Then suggested to bring someone who can sign.

Loddon Vale said they would have to print an estimate for an interpreter. Then asked if the MS was Spanish.

Shinfield Dental Centre said that they wouldn't provide an interpreter. They emailed the MS in March 2016 explaining she is waiting for replies from people she had contacted. MS has not heard anything since.

RECOMMENDATION: Receptionists to familiarise themselves with the process of booking a British Sign Language Interpreter

5. Fill out the new customer form. Does MS understand it? Was any help offered to fill in from the receptionist.

<u>Dental surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Shinfield Dental Centre	Not helpful, make me use pen and paper which I tried tell them I don't understand. They ignore me. I didn't understand the form.
Loddon Vale Dental Practice them.	Not helpful at all. Not comfortable to stay and talk to them.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	Very supportive, help me to fill form
Berkshire Dental Care myself.	No help make me use pen and paper, make me do myself.
Bean Oak Road	It brilliant helpful and good patience skills to help me.
Puresmile, Earley	Support and everything smooth
Tooth Booth	They don't know how help me and silly question they asked me which not acceptable.
Winnersh Dental Practice	Not eye contact or rapport. Little rushed because many people in waiting room. Not comfortable being around with reception help.
Crowthorne	No problems, able to help me.
Peach Dental Care	Terrible and no encouraging support.

MS did not understand the form. Help was needed in filling in the form, the questions seemed too formal and the standard of English was very high. It was a very difficult form to fill in.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore the possibility of easy read registration forms, new customer forms and exemption forms. The formal language and technical terminology creates anxiety for people who do not have a fluent comprehension of English

6 If deaf person is having trouble filling it in they will specifically ask for help and note whether that help was given empathically and was help or not.

Dental surgery

Response

Shinfield Dental Centre

Not helpful and they seem no empathy at all. Not happy with their behaviour

Loddon Vale Dental Practice

Not helpful and they seem no empathy at all. Not happy with their behaviour. They really need Deaf Awareness training

Wokingham Dental Clinic

Brilliant and very patient

Berkshire Dental Care room.

No help was offered. Felt as though I was not in the room.

Bean Oak Road

No problems and good empathy with patience

Puresmile

No problems and good empathy with patience

Tooth Booth

They didn't care. They ignored my requests and when the manager came out, both the receptionist and the manager ignored me. I was humiliated.

Winnersh Dental Practice

It was not helpful. I could not understand the form, and it was not explained to me.

Crowthorne

Can't see any empathy, but still happy to provide me interpreter to help me

Peach Dental Care

Not impressed and no help at all.

The experience of asking for support to complete the form was quite challenging. Some mixed responses from the receptionists. It really highlights the importance of a friendly attitude and the power created by a positive first impression.

RECOMMENDATION: A friendly, warm and welcoming smile from receptionist can set the tone for the interaction.

7. Specifically ask about the exemption options on the form and note whether they were given correct or understandable advice and ask them to translate legal statement regarding payment and/ or cost exemptions

Dental surgery

Response

Shinfield Dental Centre

They refused to provide an interpreter and wouldn't help with legal statement.

Loddon Vale Dental Practice

They were saying to use print estimate? I didn't understand what they were saying.

Wokingham Dental Clinic

Their response: *'we have few patients who also hard of hearing and you can possibly write on paper and like'*. Saying to me to read legal statement to make me look as though I can understand. (I didn't')

Berkshire Dental Care

They avoided providing support and make excuses. Refused to provide interpreter.

Bean Oak Road

Good. Receptionist explained she could provide an interpreter & that NHS will pay for the interpreter. Gave me a leaflet, I've informed her that I could not read it. She said she happy to arrange interpreter for me.

Puresmile

They were simple to communicate with, happy to provide interpreter.

Tooth Booth

Refused to provide interpreter and expected me to bring someone with me.

Winnersh Dental Practice

Reception not sure about interpreter. But can provide a printed receipt. - I didn't understand

Crowthorne

No problems, they happy to provide interpreter.

Peach Dental Care

No comment and refused to provide interpreter.

This was also a very difficult obstacle to tackle. The MS tried to understand the jargon and formal English. However, as it was written in technical terminology, it was hard to grasp and could not be understood clearly. The MS did not know what needed to be ticked or signed. The pressure was already mounting up, and the anxiety of being 'awkward' really didn't help the situation in some practices.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore the possibility of easy read registration forms, new customer forms and exemption forms. The formal language and technical terminology creates anxiety for people who do not have a fluent comprehension of English

8. Processes available to book an appointment, cancel an appointment, and speak to a dentist.

<u>Dental surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Shinfield Dental Centre	Email or letter
Loddon Vale Dental Practice	They don't understand my question, it seemed as though they gestured that they wanted me to phone in or come in to book it face to face.
Wokingham Dental Clinic	They didn't understand my question.
Berkshire Dental Care	They accept emails & gave me card with all contact details.
Bean Oak	Email
Puresmile	Email or letter
Tooth Booth	Refused to allow me to talk to them
Winnersh Dental Practice	Email, call or come to the practice to cancel a make appointment
Crowthorne	Email or visit reception to inform
Peach Dental Care	Email

RECOMMENDATION: Graphic communications such as photos can help explain treatment and procedure and make sure the patient is an active part of his or her dental care

Mystery Shopper Comments

This study has shown that Deaf people in Wokingham Borough are disadvantaged when trying to access primary care. Even with the Equality Act 2010, which should protect deaf people from discrimination and require service providers to make reasonable, proactive adjustments, has not made a significant difference to the experience of deaf people.

Issues of access for Deaf patients are entirely avoidable by ensuring communication. Good two way communication is vital for both a successful conversation and patient safety. Body language is a vital part of communication for Deaf people. Deaf people who use sign language are quicker at recognizing signs and other gestures than hearing people.

Deaf people show us that language can be expressed by the hands and be perceived through the visual system. Deaf signers get the added benefit of being able to recognize non-language actions better than hearing people who do not know a sign language. An implication is that deaf person may be quite adept at picking up on subtle visual traits in the actions of others.

The receptionists' first impression is vital, but for a Deaf person it is a key source of communication. There was exemplary practice identified at a couple of the surgeries, perhaps utilising the professionalism and skill of the receptionists at Bean Oak Road or Puresmile in Earley to act as peer mentors and advisors to the other receptionists.

Any easy and cost effective way of transforming communication with a deaf patient would be to set up a quick response unit at the reception desk. This could be a webcam or Skype system on a computer, linking to a live interpretation service. The Deaf patient would be able to communicate with an interpreter via the webcam system to explain their issues, book an appointment, change their appointment, ask questions about their treatment or bill or any other concerns they may have. Computer programmes that convert speech to text on a monitor overhead can ensure patients are involved during procedures.

The receptionist should have details of an interpreting agency including how to book and how it is processed. Some Deaf people prefer certain interpreters as they have worked with them before and already have a relationship with and would rather have a postponed appointment than have a different interpreter.

NHS England launched a pilot service at the end of 2015, InterpreterNow. Through the NHS England Customer Contact Centre, a one stop shop for information on NHS Primary care services such as GPs, opticians, dentists and pharmacists. Using the Interpreter Now Video Relay Service, Deaf people are able to use their smart phone tablet or PC to communicate with the NHS Customer Contact Centre in British Sign Language, via a fully qualified interpreter. NHS111, health advice line, are also piloting using Interpreter Now

Dental Providers Response

Dental Providers Response

The following 5 dental practices responded;

Toothbooth Finchampstead * Puresmile Early *

Smile 20 Dental Practice * Loddon Vale Dental Practice

All of whom were really positive about the findings;

“This report has highlighted the fact that there is a lot more we can do to improve our service to meet the needs of deaf people. I have requested the installation of a hearing loop and found an online interpreter service. Some of the team have started attending sign language lessons”

Toothbooth Practice Manager

“Very helpful to gain insight from the patients’ perspective. Useful information and recommendations that we can use in reception training as well as information we can display to make patients feel more comfortable and informed.

We have displayed an interpreter information poster for deaf and other languages. A request has been put to management regarding a hearing loop”

Puresmile Early

“The report highlights important issues that we often neglect in our day to day business. In our practice we have several patients with hearing impairments. It was most informative reading about issues from the patient’s point of view.

We have itemised this issue as a discussion point at our next practice meeting. We are going to arrange a training session for our team with RNID”

Smile 20 Dental Practice

Addresses of Dental Surgeries that the Mystery Shopping was carried out were:

Shinfield Dental Centre
School Green
Shinfield RG2 9EH

Loddon Vale Dental Practice
Flat E Shopping Piazza
Hurricane Way
Woodley
Reading RG5 4UL

Wokingham Dental Clinic
56 Easthampstead Rd
Wokingham RG40 2EE

Berkshire Dental Care
8-10 High Street
Twyford
RG10 9AE

Bean Oak Dental Care
95 Bean Oak Road
Wokingham RG40 1RJ

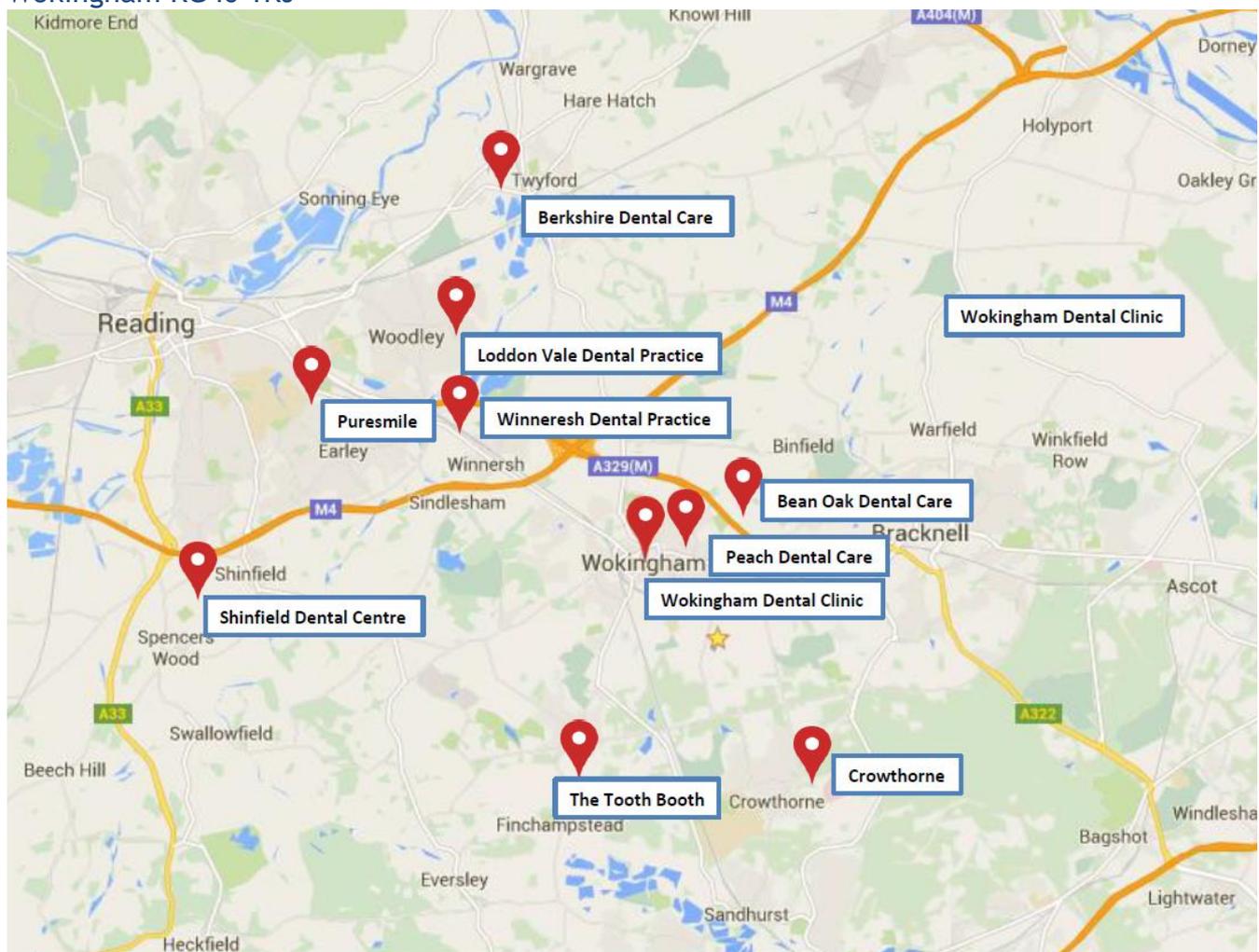
Puresmile
370 Wokingham Road
Earley
Reading RG6 7HT

Toothbooth
422B Finchampstead Road
Wokingham RG40 3RB

Winnersh Dental Practice
410 Reading Road
Wokingham RG41 5EP

Crowthorne
1 Kings Rd
Crowthorne RG45 7BF

Peach Dental Care
38 Market Place
Wokingham RG40 1AT



Your feedback



Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is keen to find out how useful this report has been to you, and/or your organisation in further developing your service. Please provide feedback below or via email.

Name of your organisation

We found the report to be: Useful / Not useful

Why do you think this?

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We have made the following changes since reading this report:

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Please mail to:

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