# Dentistry crisis highlighted by Dundee student’s life-threatening ordeal



Nick Whelan, a 22-year-old student from Dundee, has shared a harrowing account of his experience with NHS dentistry, culminating in a life-threatening health crisis due to systemic access issues. Whelan's ordeal began when he was unable to secure a dentist appointment despite suffering from severe toothache and was forced to rely on painkillers for six months. Ultimately, his condition deteriorated into a severe infection that led to blood poisoning, placing him in a coma in 2021. Speaking to the Mirror, he stated, “Dentistry is not an optional extra. It is a vital part of our lives. Nobody should have to go through what I did, but I know until dentistry is taken seriously, they will.”

Whelan's situation highlights a growing crisis within NHS dental care, which has been exacerbated by lengthy wait times for appointments. A recent survey conducted by Ipsos found that a quarter of British adults who sought NHS dental care in the past two years resorted to treating themselves at home. The poll, which involved 1,091 participants, revealed that 18% of respondents could not secure an NHS appointment altogether, while 69% were ultimately forced to pay for private care due to lack of access. Among those who secured an appointment, 36% reported waiting longer than desired, and 13% travelled outside their local area for treatment.

Eddie Crouch, chairman of the British Dental Association, pointed out the dire state of NHS dentistry, remarking, “Desperate people are reaching for pliers or cheap flights because for many NHS dentistry has effectively ceased to exist." He called for greater governmental action to address the crisis.

The ongoing situation is exacerbated by the recent announcement of an NHS dental charge increase set to take effect on April 1. For many patients, the cost for Band 1 treatments, which include check-ups and X-rays, will rise to £27.40, while Band 2 treatments, including fillings and tooth extractions, will increase to £75.30. Band 3 fees, which cover more complex procedures like dentures and crowns, will escalate to £326.70. Critics have noted that NHS dental charges have increased significantly over the last decade, outpacing inflation and making care less accessible for those in need. A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care attributed the ongoing problems to years of neglect and acknowledged that “NHS dentistry is broken,” while stressing plans for reform and an increase in dental service provision.

Concerns about access to dental care are widespread. The poll indicated that 74% of respondents expressed varying degrees of concern about current dental care availability. Moreover, half of the participants were not confident they could secure a routine appointment with an NHS dentist, while over half were uncertain about affording treatment, whether through NHS or private routes.

As health advocates and dental organisations raise alarms about this escalating crisis, the plight of individuals like Nick Whelan underscores the urgent need for effective solutions to improve access and care standards within NHS dentistry.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.scotsman.com/health/dentist-waiting-times-scotland-the-health-boards-with-the-biggest-dental-waiting-times-in-scotland-4391308> - This article corroborates the growing crisis in NHS dental care, highlighting lengthy wait times and systemic access issues across Scotland. It also mentions the significant drop in NHS dental claims and the increase in calls related to oral health.
* <https://hellorayo.co.uk/clyde/local/news/dental-surgery-wait-times-on-the-rise-across-scotland/> - This article supports the claim of rising wait times for dental surgery across Scotland, with specific examples from NHS Lanarkshire and other health boards. It also highlights the political response to these issues.
* <https://news.stv.tv/politics/patients-waiting-up-to-a-year-for-nhs-dental-treatment-in-grampian-reports-scottish-labour-foi> - This article provides evidence of the severe wait times for NHS dental appointments in Scotland, particularly in NHS Grampian, and discusses the political implications of these delays.
* <https://www.bda.org/> - The British Dental Association's website would likely contain statements and reports from Eddie Crouch and other officials regarding the state of NHS dentistry and the need for governmental action.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care> - The Department of Health and Social Care's website may provide information on NHS dental charge increases and plans for reform in the dental service provision.
* <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk> - Ipsos' website could provide details on surveys related to NHS dental care access and patient experiences, supporting the claims about self-treatment and private care usage.
* <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/i-couldnt-nhs-dentist-appointment-34900252> - Please view link - unable to able to access data