



## Access for New Patients to NHS and Private Dentistry in Wales in 2019 - survey of all practices by BDA Wales

28 June 2019

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Research

In the summer of 2017 BDA Wales set out to determine the figures for new NHS patient access to all GDS practices in Wales. To gather this information, practices were contacted regarding whether they were accepting new patients, and whether they had a waiting list. The findings from that survey were part of the research paper published in the BDJ on 28 June 2019.

In April 2019, BDA Wales again set out to determine access to NHS general dentistry and this time as well as practices holding NHS contracts we also looked at wholly private GDS in Wales. Table 4 in the Appendix shows the number of practices from each Health Board that were accepting patients according to a variety of patient classifications.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, access for new patients to NHS dentistry in 2019 has not changed from the 2017 levels. In fact, the access levels are strikingly similar. While some Health Boards have seen some improvement in access, others have seen significant decreases in practices accepting NHS patients.

**On average only 15.5% of practices in Wales are accepting adult NHS patients and 27% are accepting new child NHS patients.** It is clear that this is insufficient provision based on the responses given by practices when asked when they last spoke to a would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist.

**Over 40% of practices asked stated that they speak to would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist every day.** It is clear that NHS dentistry in Wales is in a critical state, and that the current NHS services are unable to meet the needs of the population.

Our research showed that patients are turning to private care as they cannot access an NHS dentist. In Hywel Dda, where there are no NHS practices accepting adult NHS patients, patients are turning to schemes such as Access MyDentist. They are also turning to wholly private practices; one wholly private practice in Hywel Dda has a waiting list of private patients that is too long to estimate.

Analysis of the data by AM constituency and AM region shows that 13 AMs\* i.e. **one third of constituency AMs** - have constituencies where **no practices** are accepting new **adult NHS patients**

and 9 AMs - i.e. **one quarter of constituency AMs** - have constituencies where **no practices** are accepting new **child NHS patients**. When looking at the regions the picture for **Mid & West Wales** region is dire with the lowest access of just **3.1%** (2 practices) for **new adults** and **7.8%** (5 practices) for **new children**. This constituency and regional picture represents a postcode lottery for many would-be patients unable to access NHS care.

The Liberal Democratic Party research showed that in 2012 there were 37% of practices accepting new adult NHS patients. However, AM Kirsty Williams found even that level ‘astonishing’ and ‘woeful’. In five years since then, in 2017 access for new patients had more than halved. The figures two years on in 2019 shows that access has remained depressed - it has not worsened but neither has it improved, despite the fact that the new contract reform pilot has been running for the last two years. In fact, the number of practices with waiting lists has reduced noticeably.

## Looking for an NHS Dentist

After BDA Wales had spoken to all the practices in ABMU Health Board and Aneurin Bevan Health Board, they noticed that many of the staff they had spoken to had commented that they frequently received calls from members of the public looking for an NHS dentist. This led BDA Wales to ask all practices in Hywel Dda Health Board, Cardiff and Vale Health Board, Powys Teaching Health Board, Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and Cwm Taf Health Board when the last time they spoke to someone looking for an NHS dentist. The results show that there is not enough availability in practices to treat the population of Wales. Only one practice said the last call they had was a few weeks ago, with most practices receiving calls frequently. Across the Health Boards we spoke to, “Every day” was the most popular answer for all bar one Health Board. Over half of practices in Betsi stressed that several calls came in every day.

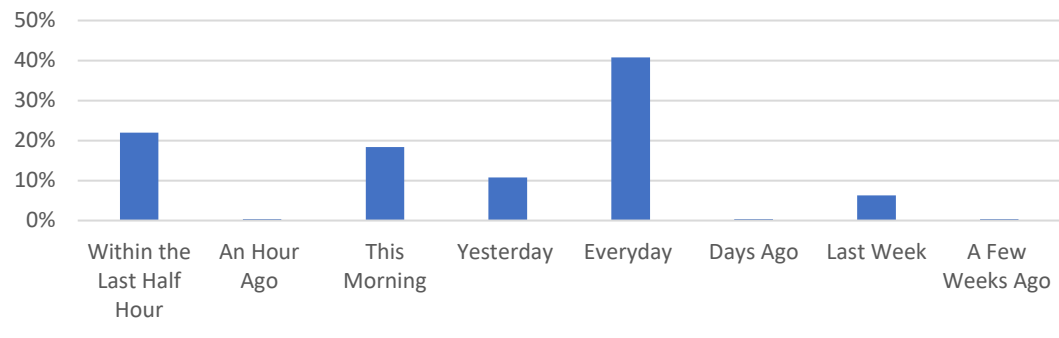
Table 1 and figure 1 show the answers given by the staff member to the question, “when was the last time you spoke to someone looking for an NHS dentist”. The data are shown as both a percentage and the number of practices.

**Table 1: Responses to when the staff member last spoke to a would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist**

When the Staff Member Last Spoke to a Would-be Patient Looking for an NHS Dentist	Health Board					
	Cwm Taf	Betsi Cadwaladr	Cardiff and Vale	Hywel Dda	Powys Teaching	All Practices
Within the Last Half Hour	32.1% (9)	14.1% (10)	31.7% (19)	11.1% (5)	31.6% (6)	22% (49)
An Hour Ago	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.2% (1)	0% (0)	0.40% (1)
This Morning	28.6% (8)	14.1% (10)	18.3% (11)	17.8% (8)	21.1% (4)	18.40% (41)
Yesterday	14.3% (4)	7% (5)	8.3% (5)	17.8% (8)	10.5% (2)	10.80% (24)
Everyday	25% (7)	53.5% (38)	33.3% (20)	44.4% (20)	31.6% (6)	40.80% (91)
Days Ago	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.2% (1)	0% (0)	0.40% (1)
Last Week	0% (0)	8.5% (6)	8.3% (5)	4.4% (2)	5.3% (1)	6.30% (14)
A Few Weeks Ago	0% (0)	1.4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.40% (1)
Total Number of Practices = N	28	71	60	45	19	223

**Figure 1: Responses to when the staff member last spoke to a would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist**

### When the Staff Member Last Spoke to a Would-be Patient Looking for an NHS Dentist



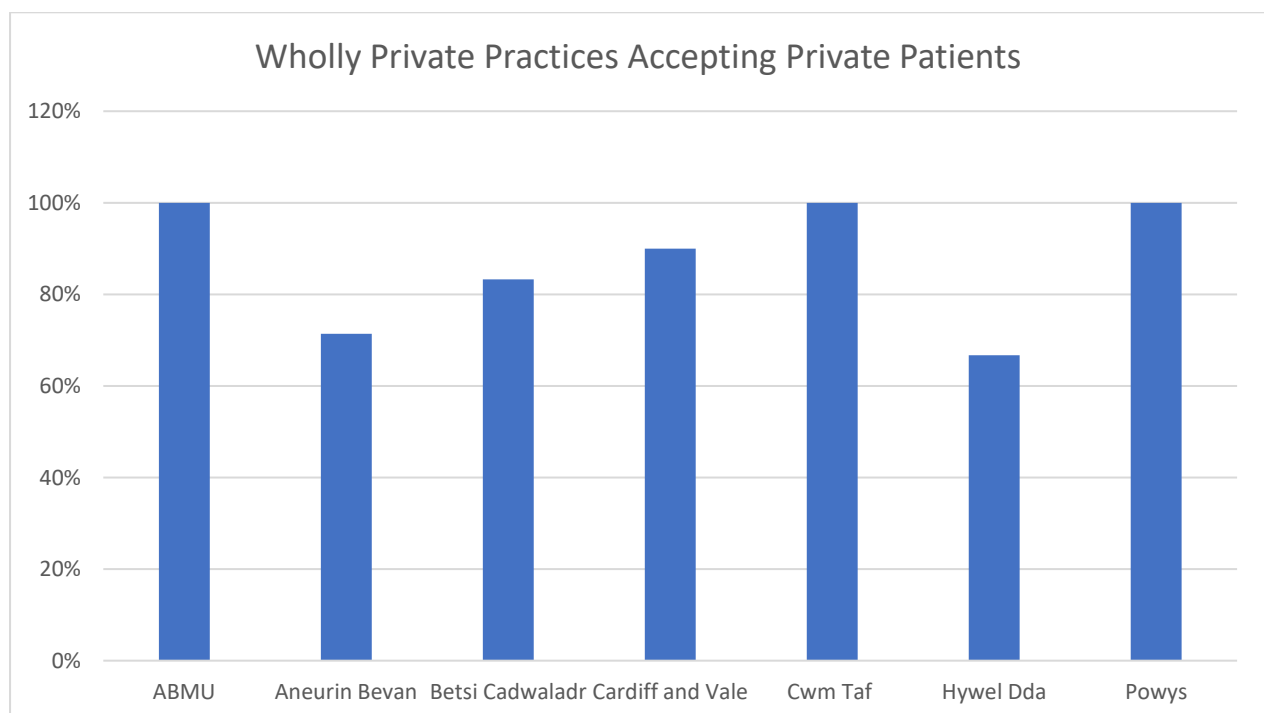
## New Patient Access to Wholly Private Practices

As well as looking at NHS contract-holding practices accepting new private patients, wholly private practices were also contacted. We found that 83.7% of wholly private practices are accepting patients, and 20.9% have a waiting list for patients. While there are 43 wholly private practices in Wales, their locations are not evenly distributed. While one health board has 12 wholly private practices, another has just 1. It is clear that private dentistry is being turned to where access to NHS dentistry is not available. In the area covered by Hywel Dda Health Board, which has no access to NHS dentistry for would-be adult patients, wholly private practices had the lowest level of accepting patients. In the Hywel Dda area 66.7% of wholly private practices were accepting patients.

**Table 2: Access to Private Dentistry in Wholly Private Practices**

Health Board	Accepting Private Patients	Waiting List for Private Patients
ABMU	100% (5)	20% (4)
Aneurin Bevan	71.4% (5)	0%
Betsi Cadwaladr	83.3% (10)	41.7% (7)
Cardiff and Vale	90% (9)	10% (1)
Cwm Taf	100% (2)	50% (1)
Hywel Dda	66.7% (4)	16.7% (5)
Powys	100% (1)	0%
All Wales	83.7% (36)	20.9% (9)

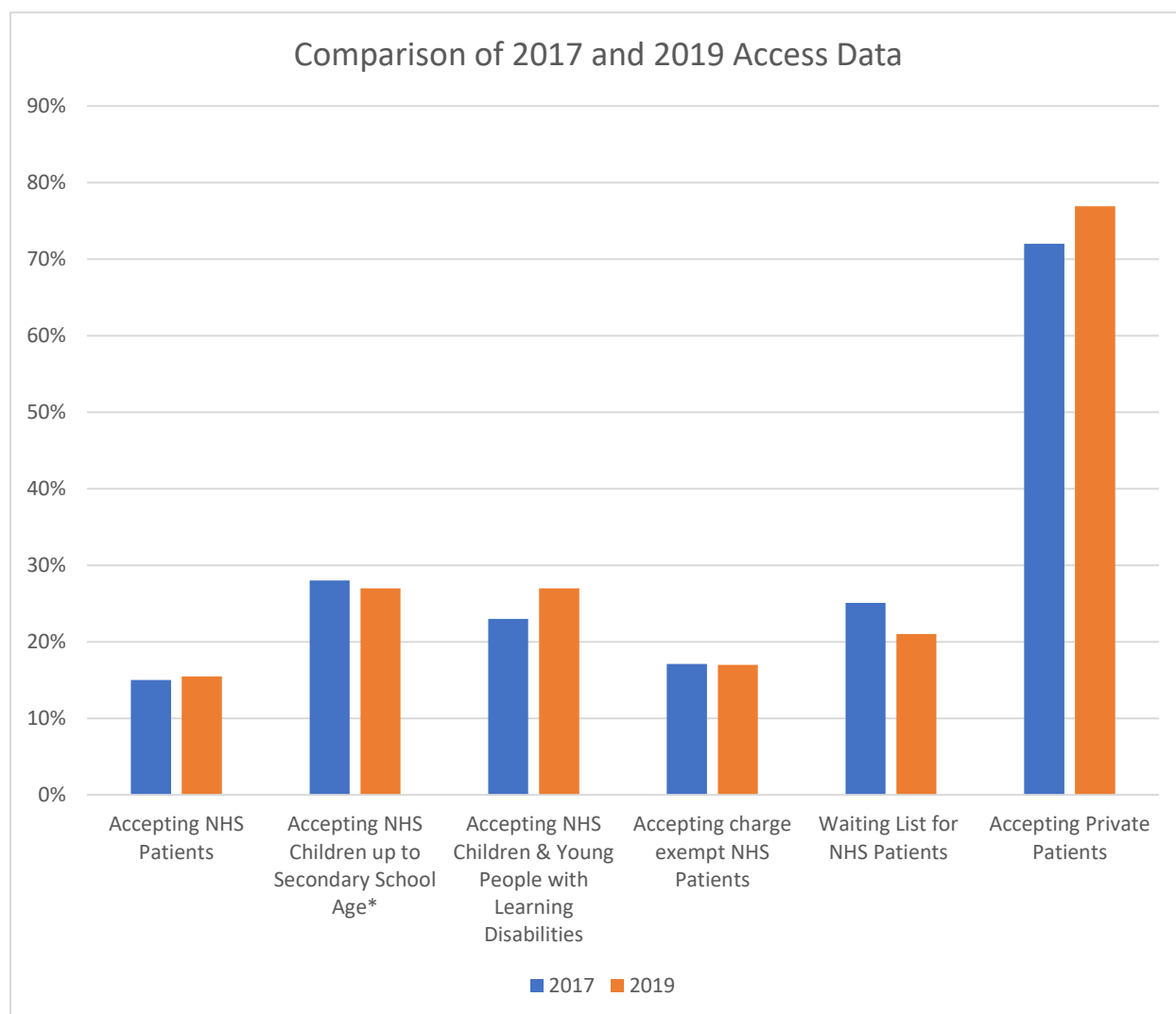
**Figure 2: Access to Private Dentistry in Wholly Private Practices by Health Board**



## Comparison of 2019 data with 2017 study

Figure 3 shows a comparison of practices accepting the various patient classifications in both 2017 and 2019. The comparison can be seen in detail in Appendix 1. While there are variations within Health Boards, with improvements in access in some, reductions in others, the general picture of access for new patients in Wales has not changed significantly. Trends that have emerged in clawback and handback data are now also emerging in access figures.

**Figure 3: Access to GDS for would-be patients -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Access to NHS Dentistry in 2017 and 2019 by Health Board

### Cwm Taf Health Board

In both 2017 and 2019 Cwm Taf Health Board had the highest NHS access figures, at 55% and 53.6% respectively. The access figures have hardly changed from 2017 to 2019 also, with the largest variation being a decrease in the number of practices with a waiting list for NHS patients falling from 38% to 4%.

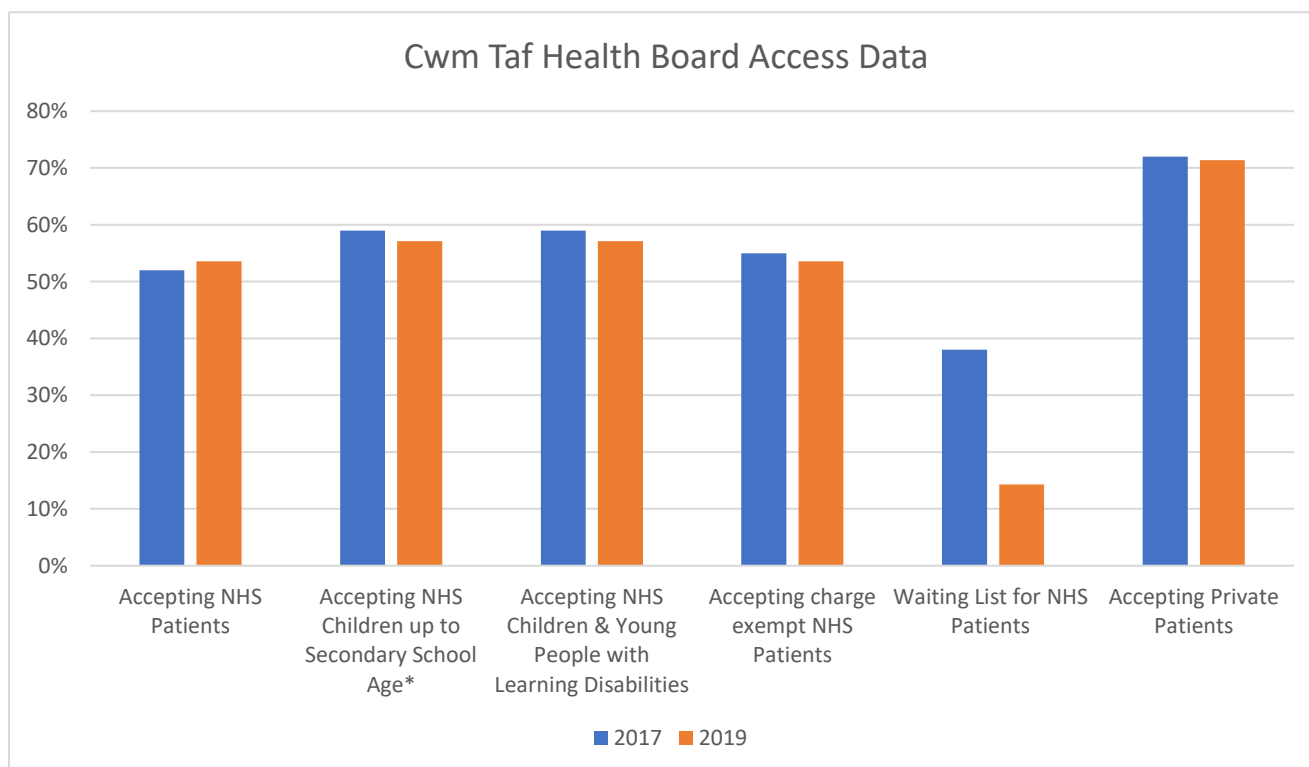
In 2019, access in various areas of Cwm Taf are in keeping with Cwm Taf as a Health Board. In both Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd half of the practices in the area were accepting all NHS patient classifications.

Despite access being the best in Wales, only 53.6% of practices are currently accepting NHS patients. All of the practices in Cwm Taf had spoken to a would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist either the day they were contacted by BDA Wales or the day before. Multiple practices also stated they were struggling with the level of calls they receive from would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist. It is important to remember that while Cwm Taf has the best access figures in Wales, this does not mean dental staff are not struggling.

One practice highlighted their concerns regarding the number of houses being built in the area when there were no dentists currently accepting patients in the area. Multiple practices said that while they are accepting private patients, they don't do much private work as there is not a call for it.

Figure 4 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Cwm Taf for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 4: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Cwm Taf Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Aneurin Bevan Health Board

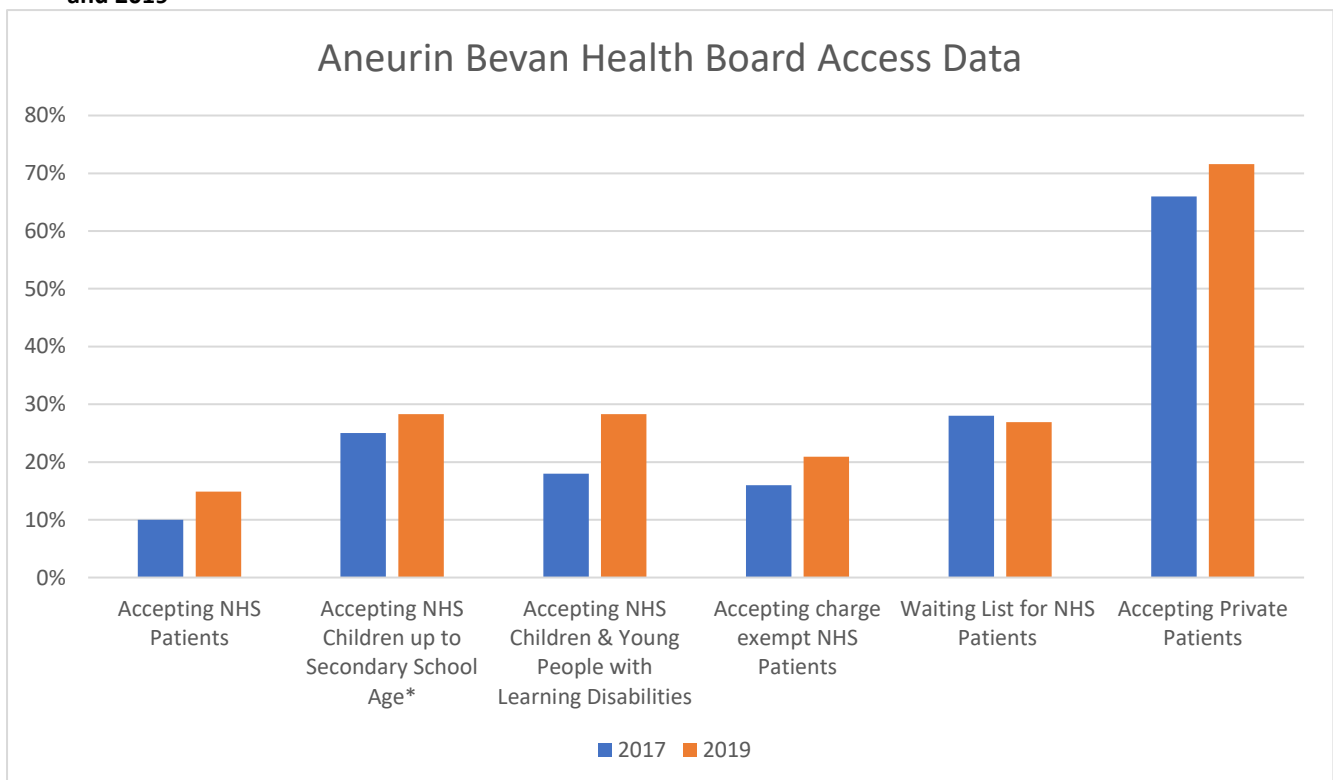
Access in Aneurin Bevan Health Board has improved slightly since 2017. There has been a 4.9% increase in the number of practices accepting NHS adults, and a 3.3% increase in those accepting NHS children up to secondary school age. The most significant change from 2017 to 2019 is a 10.3% increase in practices accepting NHS children and young people with learning disabilities.

There are certain areas of Aneurin Bevan where access to NHS dentistry is more difficult. In April 2019, no practices in Cwmbran were accepting any classification of new NHS patients. This was also the case for practices in Pontypool. In Newport, only 18% (3) of practices were accepting all classifications of new NHS patients.

Whilst calling practices to determine access, BDA Wales found that multiple practices in Aneurin Bevan Health Board had automated messages stating they have no NHS availability. Multiple practices in Aneurin Bevan Health Board only saw NHS patients on a Saturday.

Figure 5 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Aneurin Bevan for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 5: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Aneurin Bevan Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Cardiff and Vale Health Board

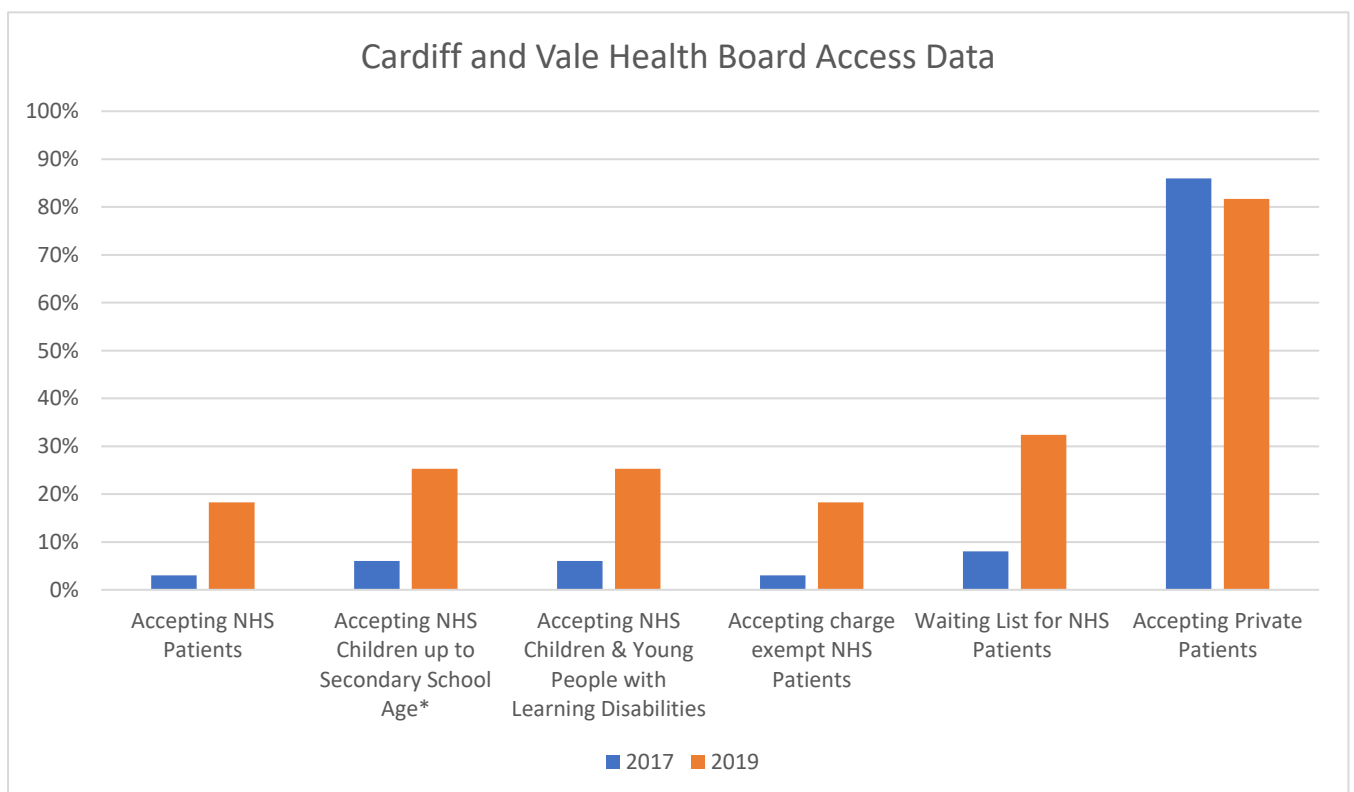
Access to NHS dentistry in Cardiff and Vale Health Board has improved noticeably from 2017 to 2019. Access for NHS children up to secondary school age and NHS children and young people with learning disabilities has improved by 10.7%. There has been some improvement in access for all NHS patient classifications. However, despite these changes, Cardiff and Vale still has one of the lowest percentages of NHS patient access out of all the health boards. They also have one of the highest percentages of accepting private patients, at 88.3%.

There are areas of Cardiff and Vale Health Board where dentists are not accepting any NHS patients of any classification. This includes Roath, Cowbridge and Pontcanna. In Cardiff City Centre, only one practice is accepting NHS children and zero practices are accepting NHS adults. There is also only one practice in Barry accepting NHS patients. As only 10% of practices are accepting NHS adults, many areas of Cardiff and Vale Health Board do not have access to an NHS dentist.

Many practices disclosed that they struggle to deal with the calls they receive from would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist. One practice stated they receive **30 calls daily**, another received **60 calls daily**. Over 60% of practices said that they spoke to would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist either daily or in the last half hour. One practice felt that they need a larger NHS contract as they are having to turn patients away due to their contract size.

Figure 6 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Cardiff and Vale for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 6: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Cardiff and Vale Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**





## Hywel Dda Health Board

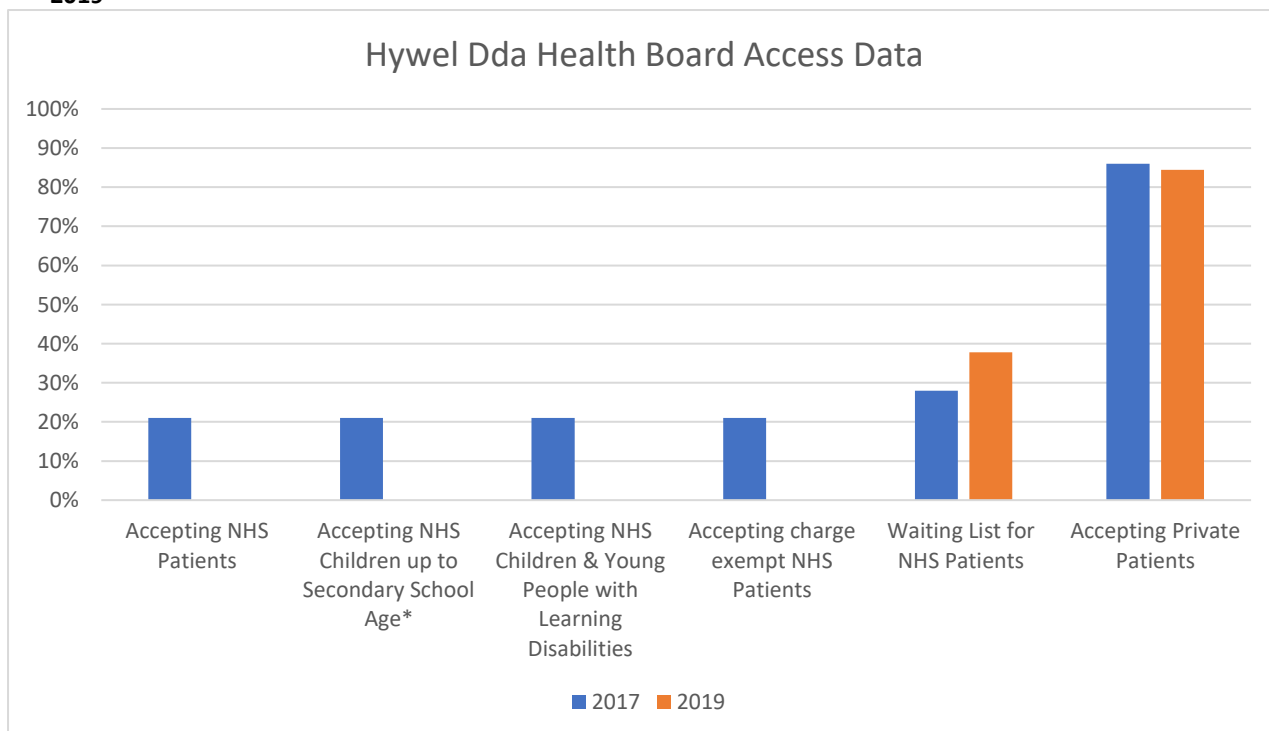
Hywel Dda Health Board has seen a significant drop in NHS access since 2017, with only one practice accepting NHS children up to secondary school age and NHS children and young people with learning disabilities. There are zero practices in Hywel Dda accepting new NHS adults. Hywel Dda Health Board also had the second highest percentage of practices accepting private patients.

The waiting list system in Hywel Dda is not uniform. Some practices take names from the Health Board held waiting list, though none has the capacity to do so in 2019. Other practices hold their own waiting lists. One practice disclosed that they had **over 1,000 people on their waiting list** and were aware of a practice in the area with **over 3,000 people on a waiting list**. It is clear there are real problems with accessing an NHS dentist in Hywel Dda. This lack of access is felt by the population of Hywel Dda; 44.4% of practices stated that they receive daily calls from would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist.

While Hywel Dda has no access for NHS adults and only one practice accepting NHS children, many Mydentist practices in Hywel Dda suggested that many patients turn to Access Mydentist where NHS treatment is not available. More information on Access Mydentist can be found in Appendix 3, but it is marketed by Mydentist as “a private alternative to NHS dental care”. One practice stated that every would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist that had called that day had booked an appointment with Mydentist.

Figure 7 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Hywel Dda for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 7: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Hywel Dda Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



\*2019 Access for adults and children stand at 0% and 2% respectively so are not visible in the above graph

## Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board

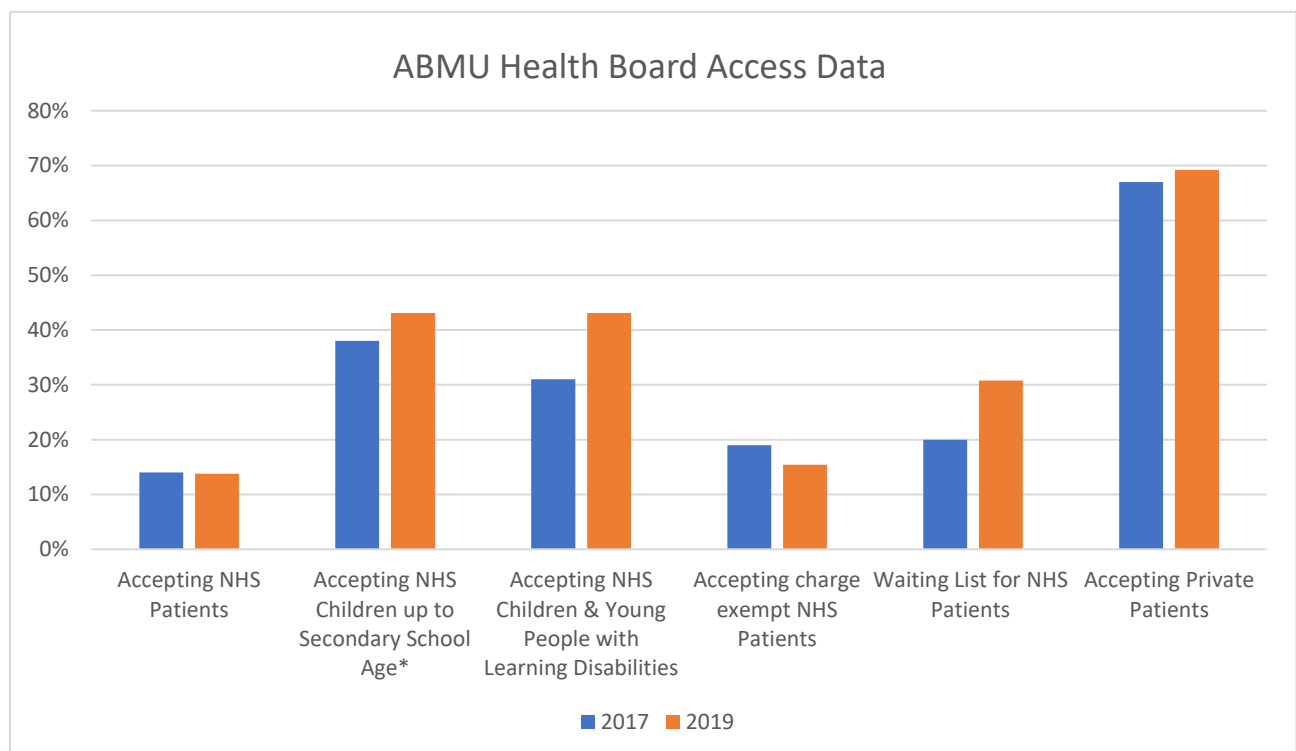
On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board became Swansea Bay Health Board, with all healthcare in Bridgend moving over to Cwm Taf Health Board. To compare the 2019 data to the 2017 data, this analysis does not factor in the change in boundaries of Cwm Taf Health Board and the newly formed Swansea Bay Health Board. Both Cwm Taf and ABMU have not seen significant changes in access since 2017.

There has been a slight increase in ABMU practices accepting NHS children up to secondary school age and NHS children and young people with learning disabilities, with an increase of 12.1% and 5.1% respectively.

While access to NHS dentistry is limited in ABMU, it seems that areas within ABMU are experiencing similar levels of access. In both Swansea and Bridgend only 12% of practices are accepting NHS adults. While ABMU has seen some improvement in access for NHS children, access is still limited. Access for new NHS adults remains poor.

Figure shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in ABMU for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 8: Access to GDS for would-be patients in ABMU Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Powys Teaching Health Board

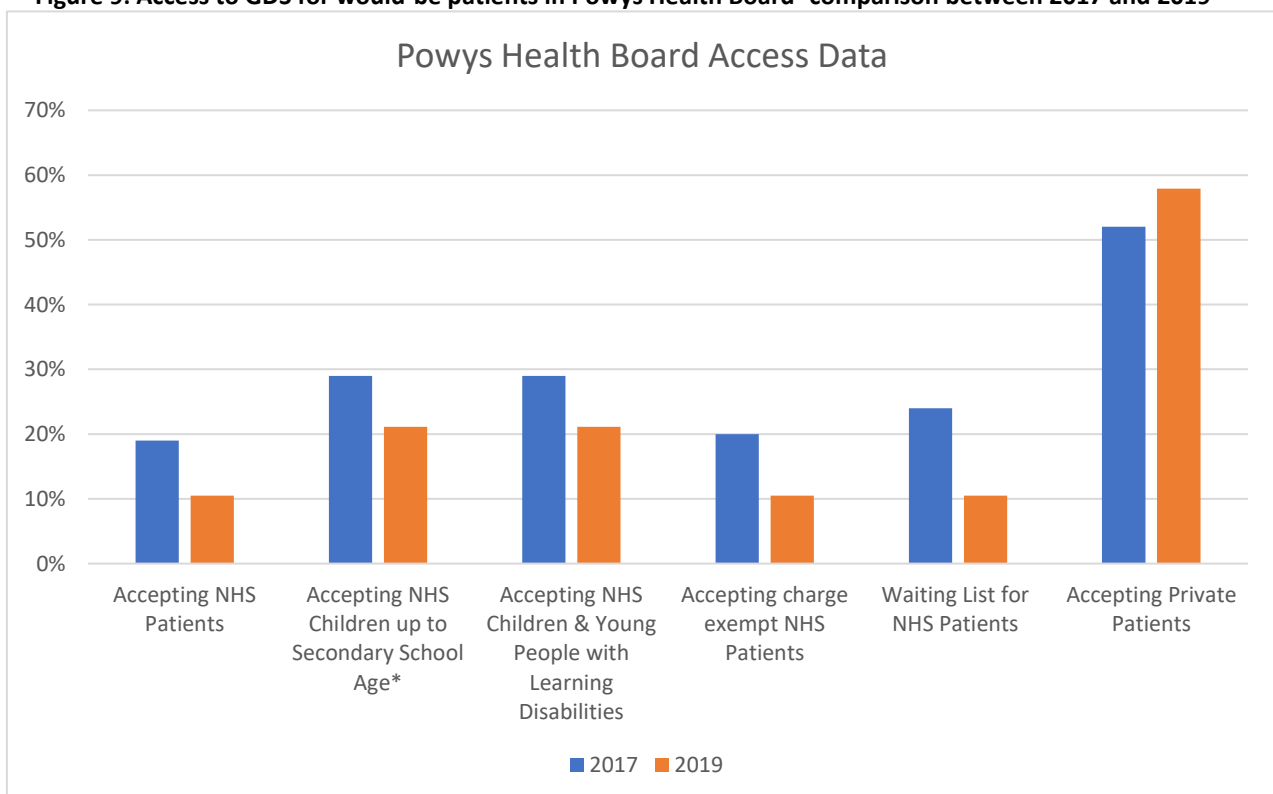
Powys Teaching Health Board has seen a significant drop in access since 2017. Access has dropped by close to 10% in all NHS patient classifications. As access for NHS adults was already low, this means that just 10.5% of practices are accepting NHS adults. Powys Teaching Health board has a smaller number of practices than most Health Boards, which means that 10.5% of practices accepting NHS adults translates to only 2 practices.

As there is such a small number of practices accepting both NHS adults and NHS children, many local areas in Powys do not have an NHS dentist currently accepting NHS patients. This is the case for Brecon, where practices are unable to accept any NHS patients.

Multiple practices stated that they receive calls from would-be patients looking for an NHS dentist daily. One practice stated they received an **endless number of calls every day**. Another practice stated that they have experienced problems recruiting a new dentist, and that if they were able to fill this post, they could treat hundreds more patients. Over 60% of practices said that they spoke to a would-be patient looking for an NHS dentist either daily or in the last half hour.

Figure 9 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Powys for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 9: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Powys Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board

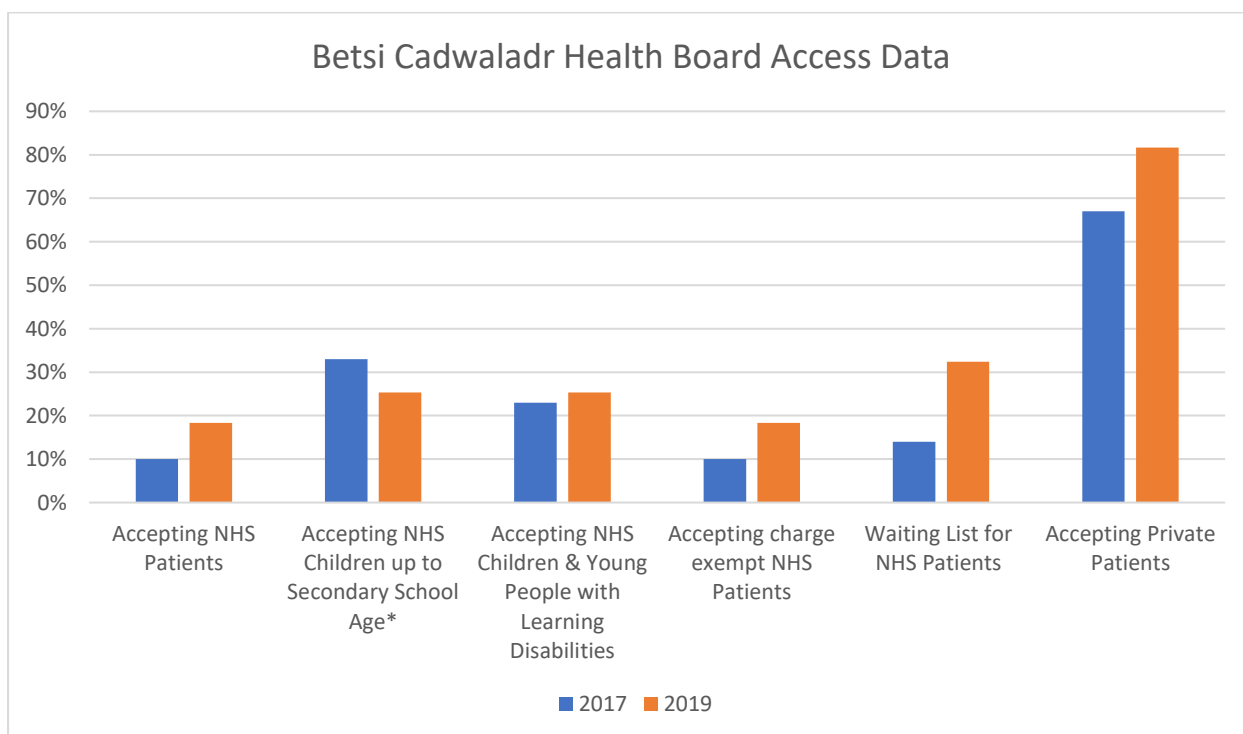
While Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board has seen an 8% increase in access for NHS adults since 2017, it has also seen an 8% decrease in access for NHS children up to secondary school age. There has been a mere 2.3% increase in access for NHS children and young people with learning disabilities.

Areas within Betsi Cadwaladr are still experiencing problems accessing NHS dentistry. In 2019, zero practices in both Conwy and Anglesey were accepting NHS adults, and only one practice was accepting NHS children. In Denbighshire, zero practices were accepting any NHS patients.

Practices in Betsi Cadwaladr frequently experience would-be patients calling looking for an NHS dentist. Over 50% of practices stated that these calls occur daily. One staff member stated that would-be patients called every day looking for a dentist since they (the staff member) joined the practice 4 years prior. Only one practice said they spoke to someone looking for an NHS dentist last week; all other practices had a more recent experience. Four practices volunteered that they had lost or were looking to recruit a dentist. Waiting lists estimates were long in Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, with one practice estimating their **waiting list to be 5 years long**.

Figure 10 shows the comparison of access to NHS dentistry in Betsi Cadwaladr for 2017 and 2019.

**Figure 10: Access to GDS for would-be patients in Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board -comparison between 2017 and 2019**



## Access to NHS Dentistry in 2017 and 2019 by AM Constituency Profiles

### AMs constituencies where no dental practices are accepting new adult NHS patients:

Mark Drakeford  
Elin Jones  
David Melding  
Angela Burns  
Adam Price  
Paul Davies  
Sian Gwenllian  
Lynne Neagle  
Ann Jones  
Lee Waters  
Rhun ap Ioworth  
Kirsty Williams  
Mike Hedges

### AMs constituencies where no dental practices are accepting new child NHS patients:

Mark Drakeford  
Elin Jones  
David Melding  
Angela Burns  
Adam Price  
Paul Davies  
Sian Gwenllian  
Lynne Neagle  
Ann Jones

**Full details are provided in a spreadsheet and profiles for each AM are being developed**

## AM Regional Profiles

**Table 3. Access to NHS dental care by Regions**

Patient Classification	Region					
	South Wales Central	South Wales East	South Wales West	Mid and West Wales	North Wales	Wales total
Accepting adult NHS Patients	23.9% (21)	14.9% (10)	13.8% (9)	3.1% (2)	18.3% (13)	15.5% (55)
Accepting NHS Children up to Secondary School Age*	29.5% (26)	28.3% (19)	43.1% (28)	7.8% (5)	25.3% (18)	27% (96)
Accepting NHS Children & Young People with Learning Disabilities	29.5% (26)	28.3% (19)	43.1% (28)	7.8% (5)	25.3% (18)	27% (96)
Accepting charge exempt NHS Patients	25% (22)	20.9% (14)	15.4% (10)	3.1% (2)	18.3% (13)	17.1% (61)
Waiting List for NHS Patients	10.2% (9)	26.9% (18)	30.8% (20)	29.7% (19)	32.4% (23)	25.1% (89)
Accepting Private Patients	83% (73)	71.6% (48)	69.2% (45)	76.6% (49)	81.7% (58)	76.9% (273)
Waiting list for Private Patients	4.5% (4)	3% (2)	4.6% (3)	20.3% (13)	1.4% (1)	7% (25)
NHS Practice accepting Private Patients Only	64.8% (57)	71.9% (41)	73.2% (41)	76.6% (49)	79.3% (46)	64.9% (234)
Total Number of Practices = N	88	67	65	64	71	355

### South Wales Central:

Gareth Bennett AM, (South Wales Central), United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)  
 Andrew RT Davies AM, (South Wales Central), Welsh Conservative Party  
 Neil McEvoy AM, (South Wales Central), Independent  
 David Melding AM, (South Wales Central), Welsh Conservative Party

### South Wales East:

Mohammad Asghar (Oscar) AM, (South Wales East), Welsh Conservative Party  
 Delyth Jewell AM, (South Wales East), Plaid Cymru  
 Mark Reckless AM, (South Wales East), Brexit Party  
 David J Rowlands AM, (South Wales East), Brexit Party

### South Wales West:

Suzy Davies AM, (South Wales West), Welsh Conservative Party  
 Caroline Jones AM, (South Wales West), Brexit Party  
 Dai Lloyd AM, (South Wales West), Plaid Cymru  
 Bethan Sayed AM, (South Wales West), Plaid Cymru

### Mid and West Wales:

Neil Hamilton AM, (Mid and West Wales), United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)  
 Helen Mary Jones AM, (Mid and West Wales), Plaid Cymru  
 Eluned Morgan AM, (Mid and West Wales), Welsh Labour  
 Joyce Watson AM, (Mid and West Wales), Welsh Labour

### North Wales:

Michelle Brown AM, (North Wales), Independent  
 Llyr Gruffydd AM, (North Wales), Plaid Cymru  
 Mark Isherwood AM, (North Wales), Welsh Conservative Party  
 Mandy Jones AM, (North Wales), Brexit Part

## Appendix 1: SUMMARY DATA

**Table 4: Number of practices from each Health Board accepting patients in April 2019**

Patient Classification	Health Board							Wales total
	Cwm Taf	Aneurin Bevan	Cardiff and Vale	Hywel Dda	Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	Powys Teaching	Betsi Cadwaladr	
Accepting adult NHS Patients	53.6% (15)	14.9% (10)	10% (6)	0% (0)	13.8% (9)	10.5% (2)	18.3% (13)	15.5% (55)
Accepting NHS Children up to Secondary School Age*	57.1% (16)	28.3% (19)	16.7% (10)	2.2% (1)	43.1% (28)	21.1% (4)	25.3% (18)	27% (96)
Accepting NHS Children & Young People with Learning Disabilities	57.1% (16)	28.3% (19)	16.7% (10)	2.2% (1)	43.1% (28)	21.1% (4)	25.3% (18)	27% (96)
Accepting charge exempt NHS Patients	53.6% (15)	20.9% (14)	11.7% (7)	0% (0)	15.4% (10)	10.5% (2)	18.3% (13)	17.1% (61)
Waiting List for NHS Patients	14.3% (4)	26.9% (18)	8.33% (5)	37.8% (17)	30.8% (20)	10.5% (2)	32.4% (23)	25.1% (89)
Accepting Private Patients	71.4% (20)	71.6% (48)	88.3% (53)	84.4% (38)	69.2% (45)	57.9% (11)	81.7% (58)	76.9% (273)
Waiting list for Private Patients	3.6% (1)	3% (2)	5% (3)	24.4% (11)	4.6% (3)	10.5% (2)	1.4% (1)	7% (25)
NHS Practice accepting Private Patients Only	32.1% (9)	71.9% (41)	88.9% (48)	84.4% (38)	73.2% (41)	57.9% (11)	79.3% (46)	64.9% (234)
Total Number of Practices = N	28	67	60	45	65	19	71	355

\* (up to 16 years of age or 18 years of age if in full time education)

**Table 5 Comparison of Number of practices from each Health Board accepting patients in 2017 and 2019**

Patient Classification	Health Board							Wales total
	Cwm Taf	Aneurin Bevan	Cardiff and Vale	Hywel Dda	Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	Powys Teaching	Betsi Cadwaladr	
YEARS COMPARED	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019	2017 2019
Accepting NHS Patients	52% (15) 53.6% (15)	10% (6) 14.9% (10)	3% (2) 10% (6)	21% (9) 0% (0)	14% (9) 13.8% (9)	19% (4) 10.5% (2)	10% (7) 18.3% (13)	15% (52) 15.5% (55)
Accepting NHS Children up to Secondary School Age*	59% (17) 57.1% (16)	25% (15) 28.3% (19)	6% (4) 16.7% (10)	21% (9) 2.2% (1)	38% (24) 43.1% (28)	29% (6) 21.1% (4)	33% (23) 25.3% (18)	28% (98) 27% (96)
Accepting NHS Children & Young People with Learning Disabilities	59% (17) 57.1% (16)	18% (11) 28.3% (19)	6% (4) 16.7% (10)	21% (9) 2.2% (1)	31% (20) 43.1% (28)	29% (6) 21.1% (4)	23% (16) 25.3% (18)	23% (81) 27% (96)
Accepting charge exempt NHS Patients	55% (16) 53.6% (15)	16% (10) 20.9% (14)	3% (2) 11.7% (7)	21% (9) 0% (0)	19% (12) 15.4% (10)	20% (4) 10.5% (2)	10% (7) 18.3% (13)	17% (60) 17.1% (61)
Waiting List for NHS Patients	38% (11) 14.3% (4)	28% (17) 26.9% (18)	8% (5) 8.33% (5)	28% (12) 37.8% (17)	20% (13) 30.8% (20)	24% (5) 10.5% (2)	14% (10) 32.4% (23)	21% (73) 25.1% (89)
Accepting Private Patients	72% (21) 71.4% (20)	66% (40) 71.6% (48)	86% (57) 88.3% (53)	86% (37) 84.4% (38)	67% (43) 69.2% (45)	52% (11) 57.9% (11)	67% (47) 81.7% (58)	72% (256) 76.9% (273)
Total Number of Practices = N	29 28	61 67	66 60	43 45	64 65	21 19	70 71	354 355

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