

# What Young People Told Us At Middlesex University Fresher's Fair 2018

## Introduction

Starting university is a stressful time for most young people and registering with a GP or getting routine dental checks, is often not a priority. They tend not to realise the importance of doing these two things, until they need it. The purpose behind this research was to find out how many young people are registered with a GP currently and use a dentist. According to Healthwatch England research in 2016, close to half of 18 – 24 year olds do not think it is necessary to go to the dentist, indicating a potential lack of interest and engagement by this age group. Having just moved away from home, most students tend to start neglecting their oral health and don't find out where the local dentist is until later.

## Methodology



Healthwatch Barnet was invited to take part in the Middlesex University 'Fresher's Fair' event, where we had a stall in the Wellbeing Tent along with other local healthcare organisations and charities. We asked for feedback on two general areas of healthcare to see if students had thought about these two health concerns or not. We also wanted to raise awareness of the local health services available to the students as many of them are not familiar with these. We designed a simple survey with two questions and the option to tick either *Yes* or *No* to either.



The first question was to find out how many students were already registered with a GP. We asked, *are you registered with a GP?*

The second question was to find out how many students have been to a dentist in the last few years thus keeping on top of their oral health care. We asked, *have you seen a dentist in the last 3 years?*

The questionnaire was printed on an A3 sheet and displayed on a panel behind the stall. We invited students to come and tick the box with the answer that applied to them.

A leaflet informing students about the local medical services and emergency healthcare was jointly produced by Middlesex University with Healthwatch Barnet Primary Care Group. This leaflet was handed out to the students after they took part in the survey.

## Findings

Overall 93 students took part in the survey.

- 69% said they were currently registered with a GP and 31% were not.
- 66% said they had been to see a dentist in the last 3 years and 34% had not.

	Yes	No
<b>Are you registered with a GP?</b>	<b>64 (69%)</b>	<b>29 (31%)</b>
<b>Have you been to see a dentist in the last 3 years?</b>	<b>61 (66%)</b>	<b>32 (34%)</b>
<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>93</b>	

## Conclusion

From the feedback from students, we found out the following:

**GP registration.** On the whole, most of the students understood the importance of registering with a GP and those that had not registered, planned to do it soon. Those students that were registered did so close to their home address.

**Costs of dental services.** Several students who were not currently registered with a dentist wanted to know how much it would cost them to register and get a check-up. Others were interested in finding out whether they would get a student's discount. Clearly the expense of seeing a dentist, and getting regular dental care was of the highest concern for the students.

**Understanding the system.** We talked to 10 international students, who were not too sure about how the GP system worked but will be given some advice and guidance from the university on this and other healthcare matters.

**Prevention.** Even though a significant amount of students had not been to the dentist lately, they all valued and understood the importance of oral healthcare especially at this stage of their life, with wisdom teeth coming through between the ages of 17 – 25, which can result in pain, infections and their removal in some cases.

## Recommendations

- Continuous awareness raising is needed to remind this age group about the importance of registering with a GP and dentist. This could be through social media, the university, and student union websites and leaflets.
- Guidance should be provided for international students on the health service, how to access services and any potential costs.
- Guidance should be provided on how to find and use dental services, including details of any potential costs and any reductions that students may be entitled to.
- Even though many students were very conscious of the importance of registering with a GP and a dentist, continuous awareness sessions are needed to remind this age group about this and provide them with the information they need.



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