



NHS Dentistry

healthwatch
Southend

Introduction

Healthwatch Southend, along with other local Healthwatch across England, is regularly asked for help in finding NHS dentists.

With our colleagues, we have been lobbying MPs to secure improvements to NHS dentistry.

This is an update about current availability of appointments and the lack of information for patients.



What have we done?

We searched the NHS.uk website, which is meant to have up to date information about which dentists, if any, are accepting new patients. Having up to date information is essential to patients, although sadly there appears to be no capacity available at the time of writing within Southend itself.

Whilst there are some dentists outside the City accepting NHS patients, the increased costs of transport – added to current NHS charges – add another barrier to access.

What have we done?

We have also contacted NHS dental practices to ask about specifically about children's appointments. We thought only adult patients were having problems getting an NHS appointment, but it seems that it can be as hard for a child to get NHS dental treatment.

Seeing a dentist is only part of making sure children grow up with healthy teeth and mouths. We have offered our support to A Better Start Southend (ABSS) and the Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board for their work on improving children's oral health.

"I'm not happy that majority dentists are not taking on NHS patients meaning my stepson hasn't been able to receive any oral care for the past 3 years." Feedback from a Southend parent via ABSS

Information on NHS.uk, 17 January 2023

Practice	Date of update	Accepting?
Mr Vapiwala	06/01/2011	no update
Advanced Dental Aesthetics	05/10/2017	no update
Rose Dental	17/07/2019	no update
Westcliff Dental Practice	24/12/2020	no update
Leigh Dental Centre	23/02/2021	if referred
Smiles on Broadway	23/02/2021	no update
Longford House	26/02/2021	no update
ND Rankin	07/03/2021	if referred
Mr Patel	19/11/2021	no update
Southend Dental Care	02/12/2021	if referred
Mr Lutterodt	11/02/2022	no update
Thames Dental	19/04/2022	no update
Parmar Dental	09/08/2022	if referred
Inspire Dental Eastwood (London Road)	17/11/2022	no
Inspire Dental Eastwood (West Road)	17/11/2022	yes
Inspire Dental Eastwood (Rayleigh Road)	23/11/2022	no
Dentistry for You	05/01/2023	yes

Children's dental access

As at 10 January 2023

Practice	Accepting children under 5?
Mr Vapiwala	Call on day for emergency
Advanced Dental Aesthetics	[No response]
Rose Dental	Yes
Westcliff Dental Practice	No
Leigh Dental Centre	No
Smile on Broadway	Limited capacity
Longford House	No
Mr Rankin	No
Mr Patel	Limited capacity
Southend Dental Care	No
Mr Lutterodt	No
Thames Dental	Call on day for emergency
Dentistry for You	[No response]
Parmar Dental	No
Inspire Dental London Road	Call on day for emergency
Inspire Dental West Rd	Call on day for emergency
Inspire Dental Rayleigh Road	Call on day for emergency
Chalkwell Dental Partnership	No

The advice from the NHS website

"Problems finding an NHS dentist

If after contacting several dental surgeries you still cannot find a dentist accepting NHS patients, call NHS England's Customer Contact Centre on 0300 311 2233.

NHS England commissions dental services in England and is required to meet the needs of their local population for both urgent and routine dental care.

Your local Healthwatch may be able to give you information about services in your area or raise a concern if you have one."

Calls to the NHS England Customer Care Centre can be placed in a long queue, although a call-back option is available. The recorded message advises that patients can search the NHS.uk website, or call 111 in an emergency. Re-visiting the NHS.uk website will not help, as patients will presumably already have looked and failed to identify any local NHS dentists. Healthwatch Southend unfortunately has no more information and patients will be more frustrated as a result.

*"I spent the last 10 days trying to get an NHS dentist, to no avail. Phoned 111 repeatedly to be told they have no way of helping."
Southend resident 16 January 2023*

The Government response

“Patients have told us that they have difficulty finding an NHS dentist, due to information on the NHS website being out of date. Patient representative groups, including Healthwatch [England], have reported that this is an important issue for patients. To improve this, we are making the updating of the NHS website and Directory of Services a requirement in legislation for dental practices. This will make it easier for patients to find up to date information on NHS dentistry and for services such as NHS 111 and dental helplines to refer patients to practices with capacity. “

Letter to Caroline Lucas, MP, from Neil O'Brien, Minister of State, DHSC, November 2022.

The Government response

The Health and Social Care Committee has also launched an inquiry into dentistry, following a survey that showed 90% of practices across the UK were not accepting new adult NHS patients.

MPs will look at the current NHS dental contract to see if it discourages dentists from taking on new patients. They will look at what incentives can be offered by the NHS to recruit and retain dental professionals, and also explore the role of training.

They will also explore the possible impact of changes to be introduced next April to make new Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards responsible for the provision of dental services.

We know that the number of dentists doing any NHS work in Southend has fallen from 119 in 2018/19 to 91 in 2021/22. See slide 15.

The cost of living crisis

We know that there are NHS dentists accepting new patients who can travel outside Southend. However, a survey by Healthwatch England found that in December 2022

- 15% of respondents avoided going to a dentist because of the cost of checks ups or treatment, up from 12% in October
- Over one in ten (11%) have avoided booking an NHS appointment because they couldn't afford the associated costs, such as accessing the Internet or the cost of a phone call; up from 7% in October

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme does not cover going to an NHS dentist.

The last survey of children's oral health in 2019 showed 12.6% of 3 year olds and 20% of 5 year olds in Southend had some dental decay (slides 18 and 19). Seeing a dentist is only part of good oral health for children. As Dr Camilla Kingdon, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health, told the British Medical Journal in January 2023,

"It reflects diet, and it reflects a family's ability to buy a toothbrush and toothpaste, because when you're struggling to feed your family, [that] becomes a luxury item. It is simple but very visible, alarming evidence of how [the cost of living crisis] is impacting children's health."

BMJ 2023;380:p5

Mrs Smith

A fictional, but not unrealistic, resident of Southend

- Mrs Smith lives on Caulfield Road, Shoebury. She needs an NHS dentist. There are three practices less than half a mile from her home. None are currently accepting NHS patients
- Healthwatch Southend is able to put her in contact with Oak Dental on Canvey Island. She accepts one for 12:15pm , two weeks after calling
- Her daughter is unable to take her, but uses Google Maps to work out a route for her mother using public transport.
- Leaving at about 10am, Mrs Smith will walk for about 5 minutes to the bus-stop at Shoebury Sports Centre. The number 2 bus will take an estimated 21 minutes to drive to Whitegate Road; a return ticket for this bus costs £4.60*. She then changes buses in Southend
- The number 27 bus should take an hour and seven minutes to get to Haystack Corner on Canvey Island, and costs £4.50* for a return ticket. She walks another five minutes to the dentist
- Mrs Smooth will probably have spent about 3 hours and 20 minutes on two buses, at a cost of £9.10. Adding in a train journey from Thorpe Bay to Benfleet would save about 40 minutes travel time, but at an additional cost of £4.90; she would still have to take two separate buses as well as the train
- The NHS charge for her visit will be £23.80. The treatment required will mean further bus trips and NHS charges of up to £282.80
- * bus fares are currently capped at £2 between January and March 2023

Mrs Smith's bill

Mrs Smith
Caulfield Road
Shoebury

CASH RECEIPT

		£
January XX, 2023	Arriva day return	4.60
	First Bus day return	4.50
	Band 1 dental charge	23.80
	Total	32.90

Help with NHS dental charges

Information about how to get help with the costs of dental treatment is available on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/get-help-with-dental-costs/>

A couple of charities also have advice on their websites:

- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/health-services/dental-services-for-older-people/>
- <https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/free-NHS-dental-treatment/>

Conclusion

1. The Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) will take on the responsibility for the planning and funding of NHS dentistry in 2023.

Our questions to the ICB would be:

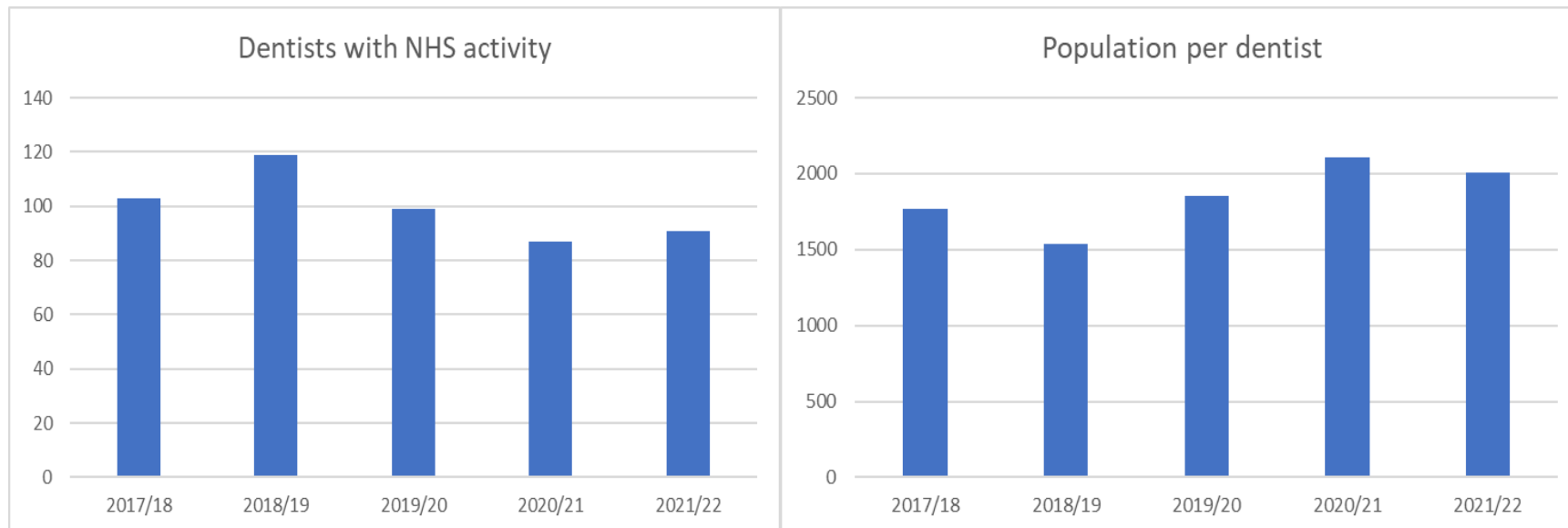
- *Is it confident that it has the skills and resources to take on this new aspect of care?*
- *How will it ensure that residents can access up to date information about availability of and actual dental care when needed?*
- *How will it ensure NHS dentists follow NICE guidance to offer dental check-ups based on the patient's individual risk factors? This will help free up NHS slots for more people who currently can't find an NHS dentist and are forced to go private*
- *How will it promote the availability of help with NHS costs?*

Conclusion

2. The Council's People Scrutiny Committee includes the role of Health Overview & Scrutiny. We will ask the Committee to include NHS dentistry on its forward plan, so that local residents can hear what is being done to improve access.
3. We will monitor the NHS.uk website to see how often it is updated by practices, feeding back our results to the ICB.
4. We will also capture the experience of local people and aim to submit our evidence to the Select Committee.

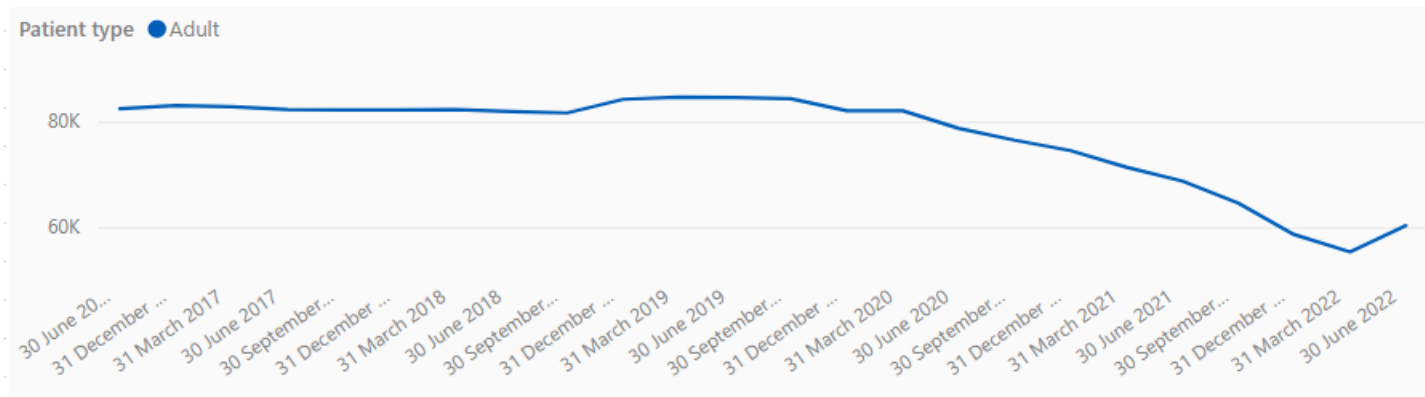
Appendix

How many dentists do NHS work in Southend?

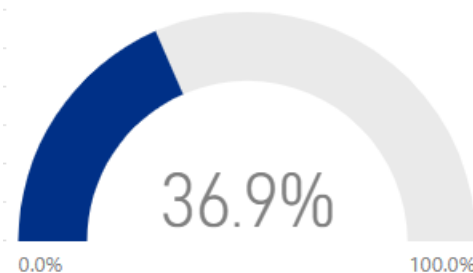


Source: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics/2021-22-annual-report>

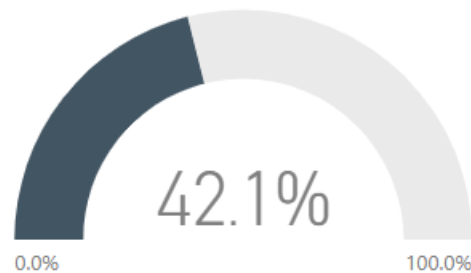
Number of adults seen by an NHS dentist in Southend June 2016- June 2022



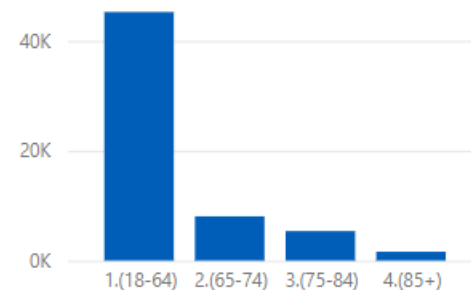
England population seen



Population seen for selected geography



Number of patients seen by age-band

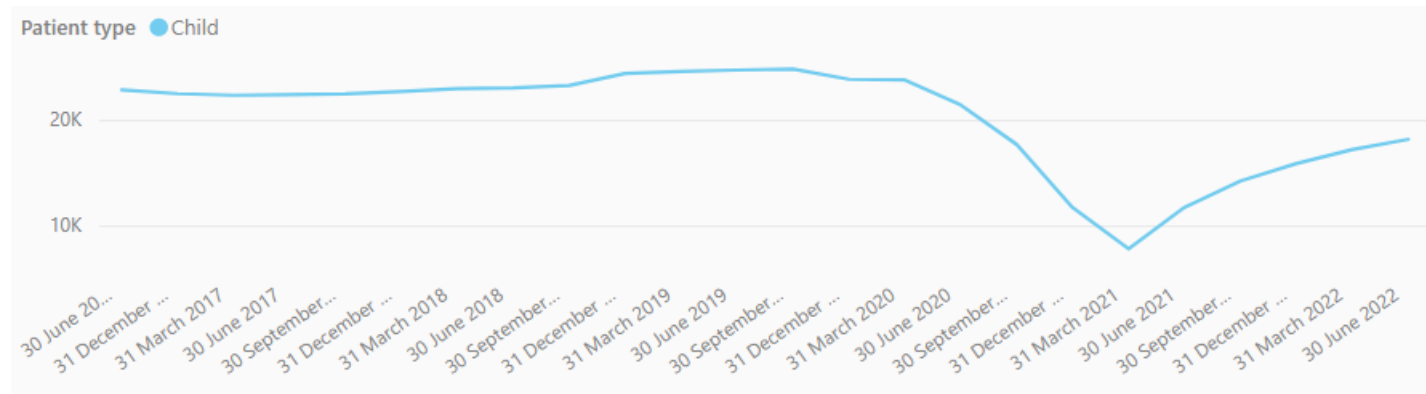


Adult breakdown available from 30 September 2019

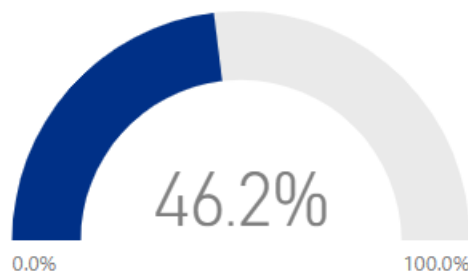
Source:

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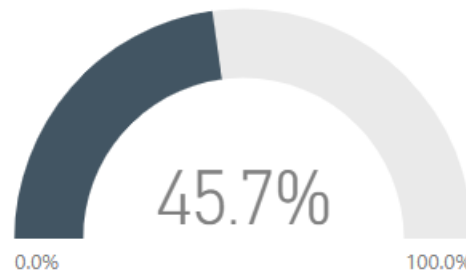
Number of children seen by an NHS dentist in Southend June 2016 – June 2022



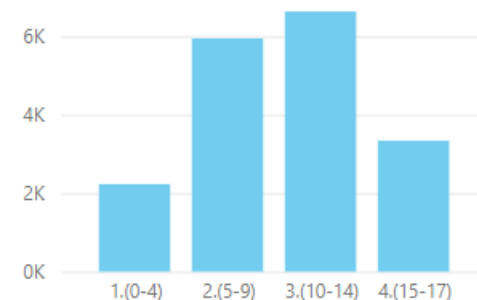
England population seen



Population seen for selected geography



Number of patients seen by age-band



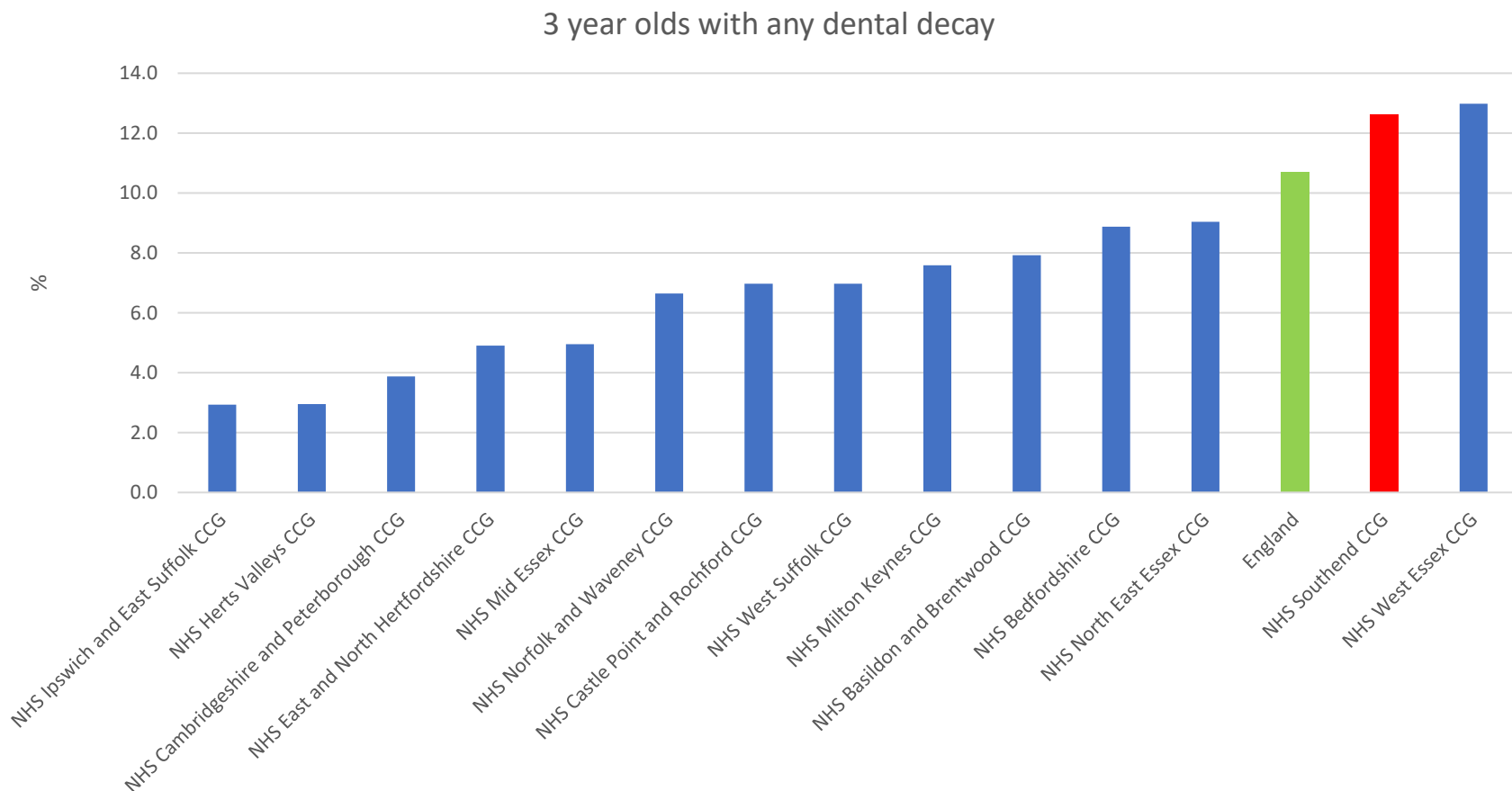
Adult breakdown available from 30 September 2019

Source:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieYTRIMzJiYTETMTgwMi00ZTdiLTgzMWUtZGM5Y2NmMTI5MGE4IiwidCI6IjUwZjYwNzFmLWJiZmUtNDAXYS04ODAzLTY3Mzc0OGU2MjIiIiwiaXN0Ijo9>

Our children's oral health

Data from the last survey, taken in 2019

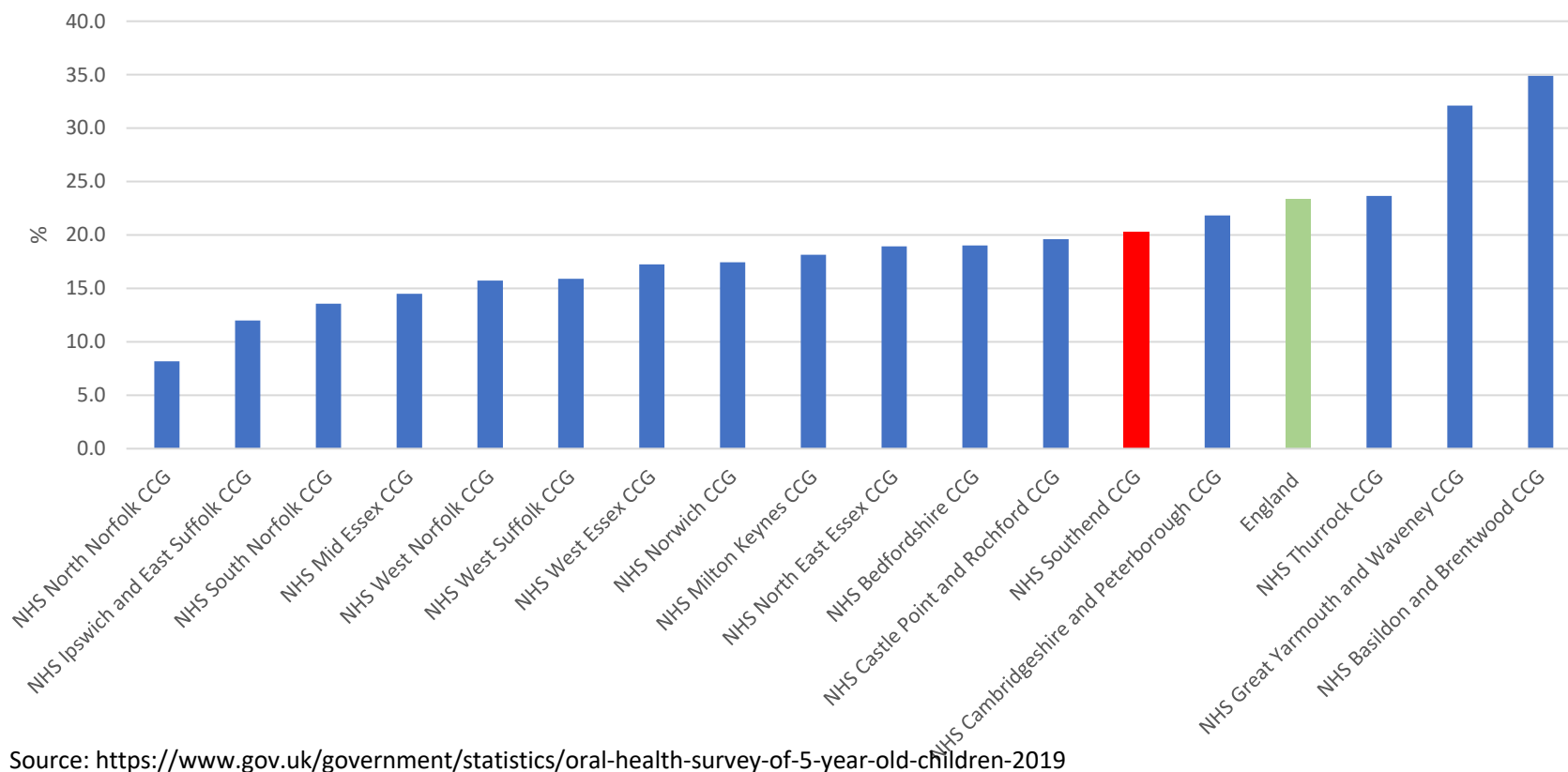


Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/oral-health-survey-of-5-year-old-children-2019>

Our children's oral health

Data from the last survey, taken in 2019

5 year olds with any dental decay



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/oral-health-survey-of-5-year-old-children-2019>

For more information

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healthwatch