

Mr Rod Thomson  
Director of Public Health  
Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire  
SY2 6ND

North Midlands  
Anglesey House  
Towers Business Park  
Wheelhouse Road  
Rugeley  
WS15 1UL

[darrell.jackson1@nhs.net](mailto:darrell.jackson1@nhs.net)

0113 825 3727

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Dear Mr Thomson

**Armed Forces Covenant – Responsibility for Dentistry & Orthodontics for the Armed Forces Community**

Your letter of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017 submitted via email to Kate Taylor-Weetman regarding the Armed Forces Covenant and responsibility for dentistry and orthodontic treatment has been forwarded to me for response.

We are obviously very sorry to hear that military families and transitioning Veterans have or will experience problems registering with NHS dentists in Shropshire. I am not aware of any specific examples and I am therefore grateful to you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Since the existing NHS primary care dental contractual framework was implemented in April 2006, there remains the common misconception that patients can register with NHS dentists; the registration element was abolished on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. Under the existing contractual framework, patients can seek to attend any NHS dental practice that is currently accepting NHS patients. At practice level, many dental practices tend to keep a list of regular attenders and for all intense and purpose, this is the practices own informal register.

At local level, we hold details of all NHS dental practices that are currently accepting dental patients and anyone, including military families and Veterans that are seeking to find an NHS dental practice can telephone our Shropshire dental access line, the number is 0113 824 7343. Alternatively, details of accepting NHS dental practices are recorded on the NHS Choices website which is publically available via [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) Patients are also able to access information regarding local dental services, in and out of hours by telephoning NHS 111. In addition to our existing dental practices, we commission Community Dental Services directly from Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust who provide a number of dental access centres across Shropshire.

We would encourage anyone that encounters problems accessing NHS dental

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services to contact us directly so that we can assist and wherever possible resolve the issues.

With reference to orthodontic waiting times, these are variable from one orthodontic provider to another. NHS England – North Midlands is about to launch a dental electronic referral service which will ensure that all patients are triaged to ensure that they are seen in the most appropriate clinical setting of their choice, i.e. within primary or secondary care. The electronic dental referral system will also provide patients with additional information to enable them to make a more informed choice when selecting an orthodontic provider, this will include orthodontic waiting times and the distance between the patients home and available providers. This additional information will help patients decide on the most appropriate provider to meet their specific needs. Again, any orthodontic patients that encounter any problems when transferring into Shropshire should be encouraged to contact us directly so that we can assist and intervene if required.

We value the work of the Armed Forces Community and will assist and intervene wherever possible on their behalf if and when they encounter problems regarding dental access.

Yours sincerely



Darrell Jackson  
Primary Care Lead

cc.

Kate Taylor-Weetman ~ Consultant in Dental Public Health, Public Health England  
Amanda Alamanos ~ Primary Care Lead (Shropshire), NHS England