

How to Register with a Dentist After Leaving Prison



Why it's important

Seeing a dentist regularly helps prevent pain, infections, and serious health issues. Once you've left prison, dental care becomes your responsibility — but NHS dental care is available and often low-cost (or free) depending on your situation.

What you'll need

Before registering, try to have:

- Proof of address – a letter from your probation officer, hostel, support worker, or the Jobcentre can count.
- NHS number – if you don't know it, ask your GP or use the Find your NHS number service. <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/find-nhs-number/>
- Photo ID (if possible) – like a passport, driving licence, or prison release papers.

Don't worry if you don't have all of these — most dentists will still register you if you explain your situation.

Find a local NHS dentist

You can:

- Go to www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist.
- Call NHS 111 and ask for help finding a dentist near you
- Ask your probation officer, key worker, or resettlement worker for local dentist contacts
- If you're staying in a hostel or supported accommodation, ask staff — they often have links with local practices

Contact the dental practice

When you find a dentist:

1. Call or visit the practice.
2. Tell them you've just left prison and need to register as an NHS patient.
3. Ask:
 - “Are you taking on new NHS patients?”
 - “Do you offer emergency appointments if I'm in pain?”
4. If they aren't taking new patients, ask them to suggest another nearby practice or check the NHS website for others.

Check if you can get free dental care

You might be entitled to free NHS dental treatment if you:

- Are on Universal Credit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, or Employment and Support Allowance
- Have a NHS low-income certificate (HC2 or HC3)

You can apply for help with health costs using form HC1 (available from Jobcentres, dentists, or online at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme).

Your first appointment

At your first visit, you'll be asked to:

- Fill in a form with your details (address, NHS number, etc.)
- Discuss your dental history and any pain or issues
- Bring your HC2/HC3 certificate or proof of benefits (if you have them)

If you have urgent pain or infection, tell the receptionist — they may offer a same-day emergency appointment.

If you're in pain or can't find a dentist

- Call NHS 111 and explain you've just been released and need urgent dental care
- They'll direct you to an emergency dentist or urgent care clinic
- You can also visit a walk-in centre or A&E if it's severe (e.g. swelling or bleeding)

Keep your details updated

If you move address or get a new phone number, contact the dentist to update your record — this helps them reach you for check-ups and reminders.

Extra support

If you're struggling to register or access care, you can ask for help from:

- Your probation officer or resettlement worker
- NHS England Customer Contact Centre: 0300 311 22 33
- Healthwatch (local service that helps people find and complain about NHS services)

Quick Checklist

Step Task

- 1 Get your NHS number
- 2 Find a local NHS dentist
- 3 Call and ask if they're taking new patients
- 4 Apply for help with costs (HC1 form)
- 5 Book your first appointment
- 6 Keep your details up to date

Done

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Who we are

New Connections is an organisation which provides support for prisoners and ex-offenders with addiction and mental health challenges who are preparing for Parole or release after a substantial period of imprisonment.

New Connections provides support and guidance in prison through individual and group sessions and the agreement of individual recovery plans to give the ex-offender the opportunity to recover from their addiction and change the direction of their life away from drugs and crime.

If you are interested in hearing more about our work, have any questions, or know someone who could benefit from our services, please contact us via our website.



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