

Pensioner, 76, forced to pull out own teeth after 12 NHS dentists refuse to treat her

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A grandmother performed her own tooth extractions in despair after being turned away by 12 dentists.

Elizabeth Green, 76, was in agony with two front teeth and after a fruitless search for an NHS practitioner, resorted to DIY.

Her case is the latest of many to highlight the dwindling availability of NHS dental treatment.

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Days of agony: Elizabeth Green resorted to pulling her own teeth out after failing to find an NHS dentist

Mrs Green, a former chef, said it was made plain to her that if she could pay for treatment she would have been welcomed.

"I feel so angry," she said. "I've worked all my life and paid taxes and then when I need help I can't get it."

Last night she explained how she took matters into her own hands.

"Two of my front teeth started getting loose and became more and more painful.

"My gum became very sore so I contacted a dentist that I had been to in the past, but they said they were not taking on new patients.

"The problem was getting worse so I started ringing round the dentists in the Yellow Pages.

"I phoned about 12 but they all said they same thing - 'Sorry, we are not taking on any new NHS patients'.

"I also phoned a dental helpline but they couldn't offer a solution either. The teeth got more and more painful and one evening I couldn't take it any longer so I moved the teeth back and forwards and twisted them and eventually they came out."

Mrs Green, a mother-of-five and grandmother of 11, who lives in Winchester, has taken her complaint to her local Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate, Martin Tod.

He described her case as "a shocking story and an indictment of the current situation".

Mrs Green, whose late husband George served in the Army for more than 30 years, has now joined the waiting list for an NHS dentist in nearby Andover.

Since Labour introduced a new contract for dentists in 2006, more than 1,000 practices have stopped providing NHS care and 500,000 fewer patients see NHS dentists.

Dentists complain the new system forces them to provide "conveyor belt care" and to "drill and fill" to meet meaningless targets.

Last year, a great grandmother from Scarborough told how she pulled a tooth with a pair of pliers from her husband's toolbox after drinking beer as an anaesthetic.

Valerie Holsworth, 67, has repeated the operation six times now.

"It is just a matter of tugging and wiggling until the root comes loose," she said.

In October, a survey of patients and dentists exposed a case in Lancashire in which a man had to "remove 14 teeth using pliers".

Helen Clanchy, spokesman for the Hampshire Primary Care Trust, said: "We are very concerned to hear that this patient felt they had no option but to take this kind of drastic action.

"We have a dental helpline that is able to offer patients who are unable or have chosen not to register with an NHS dentist, sameday emergency treatment."