

# Dementia patients fined in NHS blunder

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An automated NHS system designed to root out fraud is causing distress and financial hardship by wrongly fining dental patients with dementia and learning difficulties, campaigners have said.

Some 117,882 fines were issued for misclaiming free treatment between

May 2014 and July 2016, according to NHS figures, released to the British Dental Association under the Freedom of Information Act, which also showed that about a fifth were overturned.

On claiming free NHS dental treatment, a patient's details are checked for eligibility and if none is found they are required to provide proof of exemption

or pay for treatment, plus a penalty charge of up to £100, rising to £150 for late payment.

Caroline Abrahams, of Age UK said: "In addition to the financial burden, it will also be distressing for many to be thought of as committing fraud."

The NHS Business Services Authority said it was improving the system.

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