

Update on dental access for children for the HWBB

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This briefing paper gives an overview of dental access for children in Tower Hamlets. It summarises the available dental services, current data on dental service uptake and provides a background and basis for the targets in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 1.2 Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities (Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 3094 Section 4) specifically relating to oral health.
- 1.3 The responsibilities include assessing the oral health needs of their population, developing oral health strategies, commissioning appropriate population-based oral health improvement programmes to meet those needs and commissioning oral health surveys as part of the national dental epidemiology programme or other local surveys.
- 1.4 Local Authorities are also responsible for delivering the Public Health Outcomes Framework Indicator 4.2 '*Tooth decay in children aged 5*'. The national dental epidemiology programme will provide the data for monitoring this indicator.
- 1.5 All clinical dental services for Tower Hamlets are commissioned by NHS England.

2. Summary of dental services

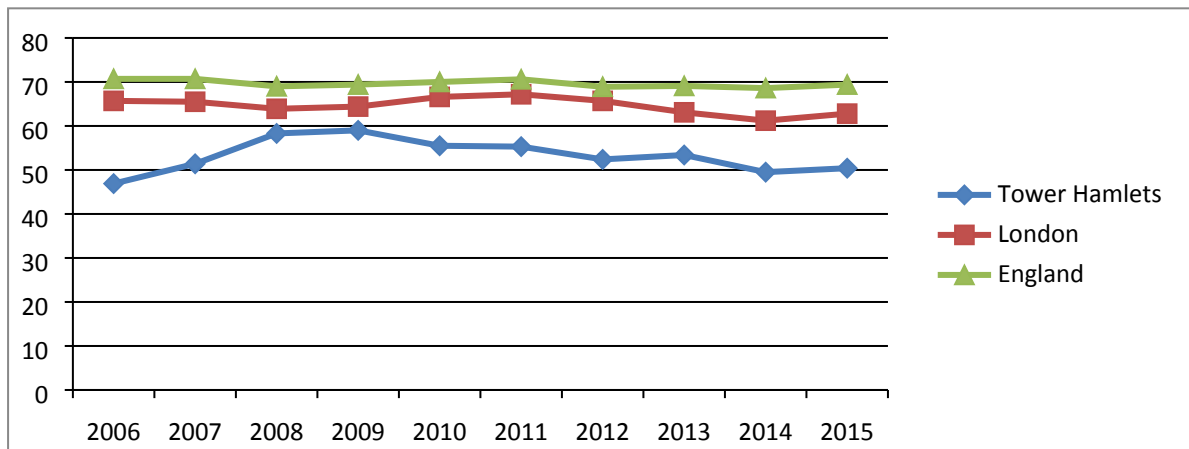
- 2.1 Dental services available to children in Tower Hamlets are summarised below:
 - 30 general dental practices
 - 2 practices providing specialist orthodontic services
 - Out of hours dental services for evenings, weekends and bank holidays via NHS 111 (From April 2016)
 - Community dental services for children with special care needs (including children with physical and learning disabilities and looked after children) provided by Barts Health
 - Hospital dental services for specialist paediatric dental care provided by Barts Health

In addition to the services above, a number of children access primary care dental services at the Dental Institute of Queen Mary University as part of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes.

3. Dental Access

- 3.1 The percentage of children accessing dental services has increased from a baseline of 46.9% in 2006 when the current dental contact was introduced to the current figure of 50.4% (2015). This compares to 62.8% for London and 69.4% for England. Figure 1 summarises the trends in dental access for children from 2006 to 2015.
- 3.2 The steady increase in child dental access from 2006 to 2009 was associated with a significant investment in dental services. However much of this was non-recurrent funding.
- 3.3 Fewer children in Tower Hamlets are accessing dental services compared to London and England. This is thought to be due to a combination of socio-economic, cultural, religious and educational factors.
- 3.4 Whilst the percentage of children accessing dental services in England has remained the same over the years the percentage accessing dental services in Tower Hamlets has steadily fallen.
- 3.5 When very young children attend a dental practice families are often turned away and advised to come back when the child is 3 years old. This is often too late as many have established dental disease by 3 years and children would benefit from attendance before 1 year of age to access appropriate preventive dental care.
- 3.6 Dental extraction is the highest cause of non-emergency hospital admissions for children in London. In 2014, the number of children living in Tower Hamlets admitted to hospital for dental extractions was 469. This represented 0.7% of the child population, similar to London.
- 3.7 A number of children access primary care dental services at the Dental Institute of Queen Mary University. These figures are not included in the national data. The percentage of children accessing dental services in Tower Hamlets is therefore thought to be much higher than the current figure of 50.4%. Several attempts have been made to quantify the number of children accessing services at the Dental Institute but because the general and hospital dental services use different systems this has been difficult to resolve. Discussions are on-going.

Figure 1. Percentage of children accessing dental services 2006 - 2015



4 National and Regional Action

- 4.1 A National Steering Group led by NHS England is finalising a Paediatric Dentistry Commissioning Guide. This guide is expected to ensure that there is a consistent and coherent approach to improving oral health, reducing oral health inequalities and ensuring good and equitable access to dental services for children that would reflect the need and complexity of care.
- 4.2 A new national dental contract has been piloted and prototypes are being tested. The contract is expected to be introduced in 2018.
- 4.3 NHS England London Region is in the process of re-commissioning specialist paediatric services and service for children with special care needs across London. This includes children with physical and learning disabilities. The new service should improve access for these children.

5. Local Action

- 5.1 A new dental practice will open at The Harford Street Health centre, near the Ocean Estate on the 1st April 2016. This practice will provide services for 4,500 new patients.
- 5.2 NHS England has provided additional funding for a small number of general dental practices.
- 5.3 The Council is implementing a number of programmes targeted at children. These include the Smiling Start, Brushing for Life and School Fluoride Varnish Programmes.

- 5.4 The school fluoride varnish programme commissioned by the Council is expected to prevent tooth decay but also identify children with tooth decay and direct them to treatment services thus improving uptake.
- 5.5 The Tower Hamlets oral health promotion team plays a major role in working with families through schools and Children's Centres to encourage them to access dental services.
- 5.6 The Council is working with the CCG to develop and implement a dental care pathway for looked after children.

6. Access trajectory for 2016/17

The current dental access figure of 50.4% is way below the London average of 62.8%. We would expect to see an increase in the trajectory of 5%.

7. Key priorities for 2016/17

- 7.1 The following actions are being taken to improve access to dental services:
 - Council services for children and young people will have oral health and dental service uptake embedded at a strategic and operational level. The CYP team will ensure that performance reviews for commissioned services include a focus on oral health
 - Council PH team will work with NHS England, Health Education England and the Dental Institute of Queen Mary to identify training needs of dental teams to enable them to provide services for very young children in Tower Hamlets. A plan of action has been agreed
 - The Public Health team will work with the communications team to ensure that the local population are made aware of the new dental practice at Harford Street
 - The Council will support the implementation of the Paediatric Dentistry Commissioning Guide (when published)
 - The Council will collaborate with Queen Mary University to identify/undertake research to identify strategies to increase access to dental services in multi-cultural deprived communities
 - The Public Health team will continue to make the case to NHS England to identify additional resources for dental services for children
 - The impacts of these measures will be monitored on an ongoing basis and evaluated at the end of 16/17 by the Public Health team to assess effectiveness and value for money.

Desmond Wright
Consultant in Dental Public Health

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