

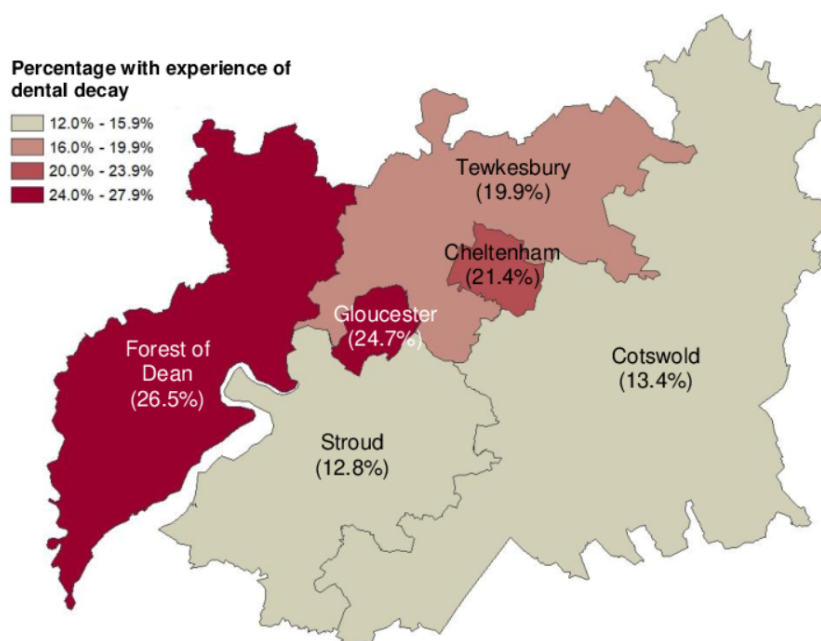
GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report Title:	Oral Health Promotion Update
Reporting to:	Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	6 December 2022
Author/ Presenting Officer:	Beth Smout, Specialty Registrar in Public Health Siobhan Farmer, Director of Public Health
Purpose of the report:	To provide an update to Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on oral health promotion activities that Gloucestershire County Council currently provide, commission and support.
Background documents:	Oral health - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Health and Care Bill: water fluoridation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Improving oral health: an evidence-informed toolkit for local authorities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Summary:	At the Full Council meeting on 9 November 2022, members considered a motion relating to NHS Dentistry, where members expressed concern about the quality and cost of dentistry in Gloucestershire and believed every Gloucestershire resident should have a right to a healthy mouth at affordable NHS rates. As part of this motion, Council resolved to ask the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Director of Public Health to bring a report to the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to explain what is being done to promote good oral hygiene, specifically in children and young people and our vulnerable residents.
Outcomes:	The committee to note the report and make comment on the activities outlined.

1. Background

- 1.1. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is statutorily responsible for improving the oral health of its local population. Local authorities are expected to do this by:
 - Providing or commissioning appropriate oral health promotion programmes to meet local need.
 - Providing or commissioning oral health surveys (oral health surveys are carried out as part of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) National Dental Epidemiology Programme).
- 1.2. Data on the oral health of the population is limited. The most recent data regarding the oral health of children comes from the national oral health survey, part of the national Dental Epidemiology Programme. Every two years, the survey focuses specifically on the oral health of five-year-old children. In the intervening years, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) choose which population group the survey will focus on. As a result of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest data for Gloucestershire comes from the 2019 survey of 5-year-old children.
- 1.3. This data shows that 19.5% of 5-year-old children in Gloucestershire have dental decay. This is lower than the average for both the South West (20.4%) and England (23.4%). However, rates of dental decay vary across the county. 26.5% of 5-year-old children in the Forest of Dean and 24.7% of 5-year-old children in Gloucestershire have experience of dental decay, compared to just 12.8% of 5-year-old children in Stroud. Dental decay is strongly associated with deprivation, with 5-year-olds living in the most deprived areas being more likely to experience dental decay than those living in the least deprived areas of Gloucestershire.

Figure 1: Prevalence of experience of dental decay in 5-year-olds in Gloucestershire, by lower tier local authority (Source: Public Health England)



- 1.4. In line with the life course approach outlined in Gloucestershire's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2019-2030), oral health promotion activities in Gloucestershire are targeted towards two significant stages of the life course:

- Early years and best start in life – targeting those aged 0-5 years, as good oral health in early childhood has a positive impact in later life.
- Ageing well – targeting vulnerable older people who rely on others for good oral health.

2. Current position

- 2.1. GCC currently provide or commission the following oral health promotion activities and surveys:

Health visitors: provision of toothbrushing packs and oral health advice

- 2.2. GCC's Prevention, Wellbeing and Communities (PWC) Hub procured 2,750 toothbrushing packs for Gloucestershire's Health Visiting Service. These are being distributed to targeted children aged between nine months and one year during their routine developmental review and provided along with dental advice. Further oral hygiene packs will be distributed to families through the First Dental Steps programme.
- 2.3. Health visitors across Gloucestershire also provide advice and support around oral health as part of the healthy child programme. They provide oral health advice, encourage dental attendance and signpost to dental services where required, and identify families that may need additional support (for example, the siblings of children who have required a dental extraction due to tooth decay).

Oral health promotion in schools

- 2.4. GCC's PWC Hub also commission Gloucestershire Healthy Learning and Living (Gloucestershire's Healthy Schools Programme) to work with schools to develop their health and wellbeing programmes. This includes oral health, alongside healthy eating.

Oral health survey

- 2.5. OHID and GCC have commissioned Gloucestershire's Community Dental Service to conduct an oral health survey of a small sample of Year 6 children across Gloucestershire. This oral health survey is part of the National Dental Epidemiology Programme. The survey provides information about the oral health of children, as part of the local authority's legal responsibility to monitor the oral health of people in Gloucestershire. Last year's survey was of 5-year-old children in reception and year 1 classes across the country; the results of this survey are due to be published by OHID in early 2023.
- 2.6. This year's survey collects information on the oral health of Year 6 children and how this affects their daily lives. The findings of this survey will help to inform planning to improve oral health, reduce health inequalities and shape the provision of treatment services.

Oral health training for care home staff

- 2.7. The development of an oral healthcare training package for care home staff has been a key priority area within the oral health portfolio. The development of a training offer was originally discussed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but capacity in the adult social care system has changed significantly in this time.
- 2.8. Individuals from GCC's PWC Hub, Adults Integrated Commissioning, the ICB, Community Dental Service, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust have all

come together to discuss a county-wide approach to oral healthcare training. This will involve a blended offer of both virtual and face-to-face training, alongside the development of reference resources and training aids that care home staff can refer to whenever required.

- 2.9. The approach will be piloted in approximately 10 care homes across Gloucestershire in 2023, including both nursing and residential units, with a wider rollout informed by an evaluation of the pilot.

Water fluoridation

- 2.10 Water fluoridation schemes involve adding fluoride to the drinking water supply to reduce tooth decay. Scientific evidence shows that fluoride is effective at reducing tooth decay in both adults and children, and there is no evidence of health harms associated with water fluoridation schemes. Water fluoridation schemes are supported by the Chief Medical Officers for the UK, as well as the World Health Organization.
- 2.11 Previously, local authorities had the responsibility for proposing and consulting on water fluoridation schemes in their local areas. However, under the new Health and Care Bill, these powers have been transferred to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The Secretary of State, rather than local authorities, is now able to establish new water fluoridation schemes or vary or terminate existing schemes in England. The Secretary of State will have to undertake formal public consultation before introducing any new schemes or before varying or terminating an existing water fluoridation scheme.

Two further oral health promotion activities are currently being led by NHS England, with support and input from GCC.

Supervised toothbrushing

- 2.12 NHS England are proposing the rollout of a supervised toothbrushing programme across all local authorities in the South West. This is planned as a targeted programme, aimed at 3-year-old and reception class children in the most deprived areas of Gloucestershire. It is hoped that this programme will be funded for seven years (five years plus a 2 year extension).

First Dental Steps

- 2.13 First Dental Steps, a multi-stranded oral health improvement initiative, is to be rolled out across the South West. This will be funded by NHS England, following a successful pilot of the programme across six areas across the South West.
- 2.14 First Dental Steps is an evidence-based oral health improvement intervention, embedded in the Healthy Child Programme that aims to: improve oral health for children aged 0-2 years, reduce oral health inequalities and increase uptake of local dental services. It is delivered by the health visiting team in collaboration with local Community Dental Services. It involves:
- Oral health champion training for the health visiting team to support parents with oral health information and advice
 - Distributing oral hygiene packs to every baby at the 9-12 month mandated check (or reasonable alternative)

- Establishing a direct referral pathway from the health visiting team to the local Community Dental Service for children deemed to be at high risk of decay
- Embedding mandatory oral health questions into the health visiting team's electronic patient record, to capture relevant data on oral health

2.15 Discussions are currently taking place between NHS England, GCC's PWC Hub and the health visiting team to make plans for the introduction of First Dental Steps in Gloucestershire.

3. Outcomes

3.1. The committee to note the report and make comment on the activities outlined.