



Northumberland
County Council

Northumberland Oral Health Strategy 2022-2025

Health and Wellbeing Board – Thursday 11 May 2023

Report of: Councillor Wendy Pattison – Adult Health and Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Gill O'Neill, Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities

Presenting author: Kerry Lynch, Senior Public Health Manager

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Purpose of report

To present the updated Northumberland Oral Health Strategy, following Boards agreement to extend it from 2022 to 2025.

(To assure Board of ongoing partnership action to improve oral health in Northumberland.)

Key issues

- Oral health is an important part of the overall health and wellbeing of individuals.
- Poor oral health will have significant impacts on many aspects of an individual's life throughout the life course.
- Oral health has improved considerably in the UK, with some areas now almost entirely free of dental decay in 5-year-olds.
- However, pockets of inequalities and areas with greater need remain, as seen in Northumberland. The 2022 Oral Health Survey of 5-year olds shows that 16.7% of 5-year olds in Northumberland had experience of tooth decay.

Key issues

- Oral health is also a key issue for adults - the 2017 Oral Health Needs Assessment noted the needs of the older population and the likely increase in the size of this group in the future.
- One indicator of adult oral health - the age standardised oral cancer mortality rate per 100,000 of the population in Northumberland in 2017-19 was 3.4, which is lower than the England value of 4.7 and the North East value of 6.0.

Wider elements of note for Board

Key elements of a county-wide and population approach to reducing oral health inequalities include community water fluoridation and NHS dentistry.

- Responsibility for fluoridation lies with the Secretary of State.
- Local dentistry commissioning transferred to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) from 1st April 2023.

The Northumberland Oral Health Strategy and action plan, and its implementation group partners, acknowledge the importance of these issues. We will continue to undertake oral health promotion activities as part of the wider multi-disciplinary approach as set out in the action plan and will work with relevant partners to influence and support the elements of dentistry and fluoridation which are outside Northumberland County Council (NCC) jurisdiction.

Dental access in Northumberland

- In Northumberland in 2020/21 78.6% of the population successfully obtained a dental appointment, slightly lower than the NE average of 80.1% but higher than the England average of 77%. This is lower than in previous years, due to the impact of, and recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Health and Wellbeing OSC received a report from NHSE on 7 March 2023 outlining
 - national and local recruitment and retention issues and the programme of dental system reforms.
 - Eight Northumberland practices are accessing NHS funding to offer additional clinical capacity above contracted levels for urgent cases in identified high-risk groups.
 - NHSE stated that a formal procurement to secure a new long-term provider in the Berwick area is progressing which, subject to completion of a successful formal procurement process, is likely to be in place from April 2024.
 - In the interim, options continue to be explored to secure short-term solutions to increase access for patients who require urgent dental care.

The Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities will continue to monitor this situation, respond to public enquiries where appropriate and report on developments.

Community water fluoridation (CWF)

- **Responsibilities for consultation on variations to community water fluoridation schemes have changed** – Responsibility has transferred from local authorities to the Secretary of State. Directors of Public Health continue to seek clarification from the Department of Health and Social Care about this new process.
- **The Administration supports fluoridation as part of its key theme of addressing inequalities** – whilst responsibility is no longer Council's, we support water fluoridation as a crucial measure for the health of our residents.

The Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities will keep Council, partners and Health and Wellbeing Board up to date regarding national consultation and the implementation of the north-east CWF scheme variation.

Oral Health Promotion - Background

- Health and Wellbeing Board approval for extended strategy period – 12 May 2022
- Oral Health Strategy and Implementation Group (OHSIG) began planning for the new time-frame 2022-2025
- The new 2022-2025 plan continues elements of the previous strategy and incorporates some new priorities and action. Eg further developing planning & process for delivery of oral health packs; training for carers of adults with LD; development of an oral health MECC module.
- The OHSIG will continue to meet twice a year to report on action and monitor progress toward the actions and strategy aims.

2022-2025 Strategy updates

The majority of the updated strategy remains current and applicable but there are a few updated data and additions, most notably:

- Oral Health Survey of 5 year olds (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID), 2018/19) - 16.7% of 5 year olds in Northumberland had experience of tooth decay. This is a decrease since 2019.
- Change in inequalities indicator from 'inequalities in tooth decay in children aged 5 years ' to 'percentage of children in absolute low income families (under 16s) (OHID 2020/21) – 23.4%
- Data updates relating to e.g. Hospital admissions for tooth removal under general anaesthetic; Mortality rate from oral cancer; Percentage of adult smokers; Access to NHS dental services

As well as reference to the changed responsibilities for dental commissioning and CWF, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (already mentioned).

The updated strategy will be ratified by the OHSIG at their next meeting following this HWBB meeting. Any comments or guidance from Health and Wellbeing Board arising from this paper/meeting will be incorporated.

Overview selection of DRAFT 2022-2025 oral health actions

Northumberland	Oral Health Strategy actions 2022-25 (abridged)
Improving oral health of children and young people (BSiL)	OH packs and messages at key contacts by 0-19 service; Early Years OH training programme NCC PH (IWS) OH workbook for working with children & young people Breastfeeding advice and policies to include oral health message
Improving oral health of older people	Support residential care settings to improve oral health of residents
Improving oral health of vulnerable groups	Oral health packs distribution to vulnerable groups such as Food Banks and Family Hubs NHCFT and HEE training programme for carers of adults with learning disabilities
Partnership working	Appropriately support the SoS and national consultation on water fluoridation scheme Work with partners via the Northumberland cancer strategy to raise awareness of oral cancer and risk factors
Service development and commissioning	Oral health improvement incorporated into appropriate LA commissioned services for children and older people

Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Note the work of the Oral Health Strategy and Implementation Group (OHSIG) to update the strategy and devise a new action plan for the corresponding period.
- Accept (and advise) the updated Northumberland Oral Health Strategy and Action Plan 2022-25.