

Executive summary

Main findings of the oral health needs assessment of children in York 2019

The most recent dental survey shows that whilst the prevalence and severity of dental decay in 5 year olds in York is less than the Yorkshire or England average, those children that are most affected have almost 4 teeth decayed, extracted or filled by the time they reach 5 years of age.

Dental decay is an issue for those affected, and can result in pain, difficulties eating and speaking, loss of sleep and days off from school, and from work for parents accompanying children to dental appointments. Sometimes dental extractions under general anaesthesia are also required. It will be the most vulnerable and poorest who will have the worst oral health.

Tooth decay is almost entirely preventable. However, those individuals that are unable to brush their teeth without supervision, frequently intake a high sugar diet, have a dry mouth and/or have poor access to regular dental care are more susceptible to dental decay. Those most at risk include children of all ages, particularly younger children and infants, those with severe disabilities and medical problems and those from deprived communities.

One of the aims of this needs assessment was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the levels of dental decay of children and dental extraction rates under general anaesthesia for children in York. From the latest available data, provision of general anaesthesia for dental extractions for children in York would appear to be higher than the England average, but there may be a number of reasons for this. NHS England are exploring this issue, within a wider piece of work reviewing the services that provide dental extractions under general anaesthesia. The potentially, slightly higher rates of dental extractions under general anaesthesia for dental decay in young children in comparison with England has not been fully explained to date due to the limitations of available data.

Next steps

This needs assessment is an on-going shared planning resource to enable locally prioritised actions. We are fortunate in having an evidence based toolkit for local authorities: commissioning better oral health for children and young people. This document supports local authorities to commission oral health improvement programmes for children and young people aged up to 19 years and will provide an evidence based approach to the development of an oral health strategy for children in York.

Using this toolkit, the Oral Health Improvement Advisory Group (OHIAG), which includes representation from NHS England, CYC and PHE will be able to develop a preventive oral health strategy and a prioritised list of actions based on the evidence of effectiveness, addressing inequalities, with consideration to cost and resources available, local organisational structures and the potential for greatest impact. Review of the actions should be planned from the outset to evaluate their impacts.