

BASCD 2023 ABSTRACT #18**Service evaluation of an integrated dental model
for people experiencing homelessness**

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Background:

One in every 208 people in England experience homelessness. By 2023, homelessness is expected to affect over 300,000 households. Despite 90% of those experiencing homelessness reporting a problem with their mouth, access remains a key challenge in places like Exeter as limited services exist enabling this population to receive dental care.

Objective:

Present preliminary data on oral health needs and attendance of individuals accessing an integrated dental care pathway designed for those experiencing homelessness.

Methods:

A dental care pathway has been established in Exeter in partnership with a range of community partners. Referrals are made into the service from local GP homelessness services. The service model provides routine and urgent care by a salaried dental practitioner. Anonymised patient data was collected over a one-year period (December 2021-22). Data covered demographics, oral health related behaviours, baseline oral health needs, treatment provided and clinic attendance. Data are presented as descriptive statistics. The University of Plymouth granted ethical approval (3752).

Results:

There were 76 patients referred to the service, 50 attended at least one appointment (male 68%). Of a total 299 offered, 189 appointments were attended, a rate of 63%. Patients were on average 42 years old with 62% in transient housing accommodation. Several oral health risk factors were identified; 84% of patients were smokers, 36% did not brush their teeth, 68% of patients had not visited a dentist in over a year. There were on average 7.6 decayed teeth per person, compared to the national average of 2.7. The most common treatments performed were extractions (60%) and denture provision (48%), with 396 individual items of treatment delivered.

Conclusion:

Preliminary data indicate significant unmet need in the Exeter homeless population. The referral pathway shows promise with acceptable attendance rates. Further work is underway on a comprehensive evaluation to identify key enablers, optimising the care pathway and individual/service outcomes.

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