

BASCD 2024 Abstract #08

Dental attendance for children in care: facilitators and barriers

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Background:

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council reported 57% of children in care (CIC) did not receive their annual dental check in 2022. A new referral pathway was implemented in January 2023 to improve access.

Objective:

To understand dental attendance rates and the facilitators and barriers to accessing dental services, from carers and children and young people (CYP) perspective.

Methods:

This was a service evaluation. Quantitative data was collected on attendance rates. Carers were requested to complete questionnaires by public health nurses either during or after their Review Health Assessment (RHA) between April and June 2023. CYP who attended the “Lets Take Action” Youth Group were recruited to self-complete questionnaires. Quantitative data was analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

Results:

Dental attendance rates increased from 43% in September 2022 to 88% during the evaluation period. Carers' response rate was 52% (n=55/105), with 34 responses from CYP. Carers reported 82% of children had attended within the last 6 months (n=45/55), with the majority (n=47/55) having no problems finding an NHS practice. Some reported the referral pathway had improved access. Majority of CYP described their last visit as good (n=29/34), their experience could be improved by seeing the same dentist (n=30/34) and having things explained to them (n=14/34). Carer reported facilitators of attendance were: continuity of care with the same dental practice, after work/school appointments, and an oral health passport to share information between carers. Carer reported barriers were: appointments during work/school hours, and dental anxiety resulting in attendance refusal or poor cooperation.

Conclusion:

CIC in Stockton-on-Tees had good access to dental services and positive experiences of dental care. The implementation of a dental access referral pathway may have contributed to improved access. Maintaining continuity of care arrangements was considered important by both carers and CYP.

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