

BASCD 2022 ABSTRACT 24**Barriers and Dental Care Pathways for Children Looked After in the UK**

Hurry, K.J.,^{1} Ridsdale, L.,² Davies, J.,¹
Muirhead, V.E.¹*

¹Queen Mary University of London, UK; ²Leeds Dental Institute, UK

Background:

The number of Children Looked After (CLA) in the UK is increasing. CLA have higher rates of dental disease than their peers. However, little is known about the barriers to accessing dental services and the dental care pathways available for CLA.

Objectives:

The objective of this scoping review was to summarise the evidence on the barriers to dental services for CLA and the current dental care pathways in the UK.

Methods:

The scoping review followed PRISMA-ScR guidance, and searched Embase, MEDLINE(R), Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed and CINAHL databases up to February 2022, the grey literature and third sector organisation websites. Included studies were restricted to any study type involving CLA residing in the UK aged 0–18-years-old. No limits were placed on time in care or placement. The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool assessed the quality of the included studies. Thematic analysis identified key themes related to barriers to access and dental care pathways.

Results:

Nineteen articles were identified (seven publications, four poster abstracts and eight unpublished reports). Perceived barriers included (i) the lack of dental care experience of CLA because of their irregular attendance before and during their care placement; (ii) the lack of integrated working between health and social care teams; and (iii) psychological issues (such as dental anxiety) making dental treatment more complicated. A clinical oral health assessment was rarely part of the initial general health assessment. Four different dental care pathway models were identified that varied across the UK: care navigation, facilitated access, nurse-led oral health triage and onward signposting/referral, and signposting to local dentist plus multi-agency information sharing. Few care pathways had been formally evaluated.

Conclusion:

This scoping review identified barriers that suggest the need for integrated working between dental and social care teams, specialist services and an evaluation of pathways to identify best practice.

Correspondence to:

K Julia Hurry

Email: k.j.hurry@qmul.ac.uk

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