

The logo for the Dental Project features a pink speech mark on the left and a green speech mark on the right, both partially overlapping the text. The text 'Dental Project' is written in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font.

# Dental Project

Dental patient experience project for children,  
young people and parental views

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## Foreward

This report outlines the view of respondents who took part in the Dental survey which Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham carried out.

Throughout September, Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham carried out a number of engagement sessions in various settings, with the local community. We asked children and young people about their experiences of visiting a dental practice. The main focus was on three areas:

- *If children and young people have been to the dentist and to find out the reasons if they had not.*
- *Find out the opinions, experiences and views, of children and young people who have used the dentist.*
- *If the dental practice is child friendly*

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham are the voice of local people, groups and networks. We are independent and therefore do not have a pre-set agenda or a pre-determined interest in influencing the outcome of the results of a consultation.

This document represents a collective public response to the consultation and is a random sample which has been anonymised. This has been conducted impartially - Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham have no organisational view.

Copies of this report are available by contacting Barking and Dagenham Healthwatch on 020 8596 8200 or by emailing [info@healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbarkinganddagenham.co.uk)

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## Background

A study undertaken by Public Health England published in September 2013, results showed that there have been improvements in dental care and nationally tooth decay in 5 year olds has reduced. However it was highlighted that at a national level 27% of 5 year olds have tooth decay.

In a local context the needs assessment for Barking and Dagenham surveyed 459 children (3 and 4 years of age) and found that, while dental health disease in the borough is in line with the national rates, there is a substantial opportunity for improvement. It found that “28% had dental disease and 91% of this was untreated. It also states that “the extent to which children in Barking and Dagenham access dental services is below London average and England averages with only 60% of children being seen by a dentist in the last 24 months”.

Currently there are 55,647 children and young people between the ages of 0 and 19 in Barking and Dagenham.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham requested figures from the NHS Business Authority. The figures showed that between the ages of 0-17 there were a total of 33,495 who have attended the dentist in the period of June 2012 - July 2013.

These figures show that it is still a constant 60% of children and young people who access dental services in Barking and Dagenham.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham has undertaken a survey of 157 local young people to discover their views on going to the dentist and better understand why 40% do not attend at all.

## Summary

Of the 157 respondents, 52% have been to the dentist in last twelve months. This is not huge percentage considering 47% of the respondents had not been to the dentist in the last year.

Over 65% of respondents were aware that dental treatment is free until the age of 18. One may suspect that children and young people do not visit the dentist due to financial reasons as they assume they have to pay, however what this report indicates is the fact that the reasons behind individuals not going to the dentist was simple due to the fact that they had no pain or problems with their teeth. This raises the concern that education around dental care needs to include how important 6 monthly checks are in terms of detecting possible health issues relating to dental health. The importance of prevention needs to be stressed.

Over 60% of respondents indicated that they brush their teeth two times a day. This shows that more than half the respondents are following national guidance.

From the 35 respondents who had treatment undertaken, 82% of those had fillings.

Overall a large proportion of individuals who had treatment undertaken were either very satisfied or satisfied with the treatment they had. Respondents indicated this was due to the nature of dental staff explaining what treatment was given and why. This shows that those respondents who had undergone treatment had a professional who explained treatment in a manner that the individual understood.

## HEALTHWATCH ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The questionnaires were focussed on finding out the views from local children and young people therefore particular venues were targeted:

- Gascoigne Children's Centre
- Marks Gate Youth Centre
- Axe Street Dental Practice
- Harmony House Nursery

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham also had a number of stands across the borough where the dental questionnaires were handed out, these stands were at King George Hospital, Dagenham Library, Barking Learning Centre and The Learning Disability Sports Day.

To enable participants to take part and share their experiences, Healthwatch Representatives explained to individuals:

1. That Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham is all about local voices being able to influence the delivery, design, quality and standard of local health and social care services and one of the projects currently being looked at is dental services.
2. That participation is **voluntary**, and individuals are not required to answer any questions that they do not want to, it was also made clear that participation or non-participation will not affect access to dental care. Healthwatch representatives also explained that all the information collected will be kept **strictly confidential**.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

In total Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham engaged with 157 individuals. The questions asked were as follows:

1)

- In the last twelve months have you been to the dentist?
- Were you aware that dental treatment is free until you are 18?
- How often do you brush your teeth?
- What has been your families' experience of finding an NHS dentist for you?
- How old were you when you first went to the dentist?
- Was this due to you having a problem with your teeth at that time?

2)

- Have you had any dental treatment in the last twelve months?
- If so what treatment?
- How satisfied are you that the treatment given was appropriate for you?
- Please use this space to tell us anything you would like to tell us about your experience with the staff at the dental practice.
- Were you anxious/nervous when you went to see the dentist?
- If yes what did the dentist do to ease this, if anything?
- Is there anything your dentist does to make the place child friendly?

## RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

### 1) Use of dental services

In the last twelve months have you been to the dentist?

Over half 52% of the respondents have been to dentist in the last twelve months.  
48% of the respondents had not been to the dentist.

	Yes	No	Total
Number	82	75	157
Percentage	52%	48%	100%

If yes please tell us how many times?

	Once	Twice	Three	Three +	Don't remember	Total
Number	22	43	2	7	8	82
Percentage	27%	52%	2%	9%	10%	100%

If no, is there a particular reason for this?

Respondents who said they have not been to the dentist were asked to tell us if there was a particular reason behind this. Out of the 75 respondents these were the answers we received from 51 of them.

72% respondents told us they did not go to the dentist as they had no pain and no problems with their teeth.

12% parents told us that their children were not old enough

14% respondents told us they had no reason not to go to the dentist

2% respondent said that they were scared



These are some of the comments made by the respondents about why they have not been to the dentist in the last twelve months:

*“No reason”*

*“No pain in teeth”*

*“I am scared”*

*“My teeth do not hurt”*

*“My teeth have had no problems; I brush them two times a day and keep them clean”*

*“ I do not feel any pain in my teeth”*

*“My teeth seem okay”*

*“ No reason really, just can’t be bothered”*

### Were you aware that dental treatment is free until you are 18?

Over half the respondents (67%) said they were aware that dental treatment is free until the age of 18.

28% respondents told us they were not aware that treatment was free until the age of 18.

6% of respondents did not answer.

	Yes	No	Not answered	Total
Number	105	42	10	157
Percentage	67%	28%	6%	100%

### What has been your family’s experience of finding an NHS dentist for you

Majority of children and young people were unable to answer this question, however from the parents who had filled in the questionnaires for their young children

12% said it was very easy and

16% said it was easy.

Only 1% said it was difficult.

	Very Easy	Easy	Reasonable	Difficult	Very difficult	Don't Know	Na	Total
Number	19	16	7	2	1	60	52	157
Percentage	12%	4%	4%	1%	0.63%	38%	33%	100%

**Please tell us what made it easy or difficult?**

*“It was easy; I went to my local dentist and registered”*

*“ I went to my local dentist”*

*“ I could not find a local dentist, they had very long waiting times for appointments”*

*“It was not hard I looked on internet, took a few names down, went to two and registered with one”*

*“It was okay, it was the waiting time for an appointment not actually registering”*

**How old were you when you first went to the dentist?**

Age	People	Percentage
1	2	1.28%
2	8	5%
3	3	2%
4	6	4%
5	5	3%
6	2	1.28%
7	3	2%
8	2	1.28%
9	3	2%
10	1	0.64%
Not answered	14	9 %
Dont know	107	69%
Total		100%

### Was this due to you having a problem with your teeth at that time?

Respondents were asked whether they had been taken to the dentist as there was a problem with their teeth. 55% of the respondents did not answer and 18% did not know.

30% indicated that their visit to the dentist was not due to a problem at that time.

3% of the respondents said they had a problem with their teeth.

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Not answered	Total
Number	5	36	29	87	157
Percentage	3%	30%	18%	55%	100%

### How often do you brush your teeth?

62% of respondents said that they brush their teeth twice a day and 26% said they brush their teeth once a day.

There were a few respondents (3%) who said they brush their teeth more than twice a day.

10% did not answer.

	Once	Twice	Twice +	No answer	Total
Number	41	97	4	15	157
Percentage	26%	62%	3%	10%	100%

## 2) Dental Treatment

Have you had any dental treatment in the last twelve months?

Respondents were asked if they have had any dental treatment in the last twelve months.

From the 82 respondents who had been to the dentist 43% said they had treatment whilst 57% said they had not had any treatment.

	Yes	No	Total
Number	35	47	82
Percentage	43%	57%	100%

If so what treatment?

Respondents were asked what treatment they had. Most people who gave an answer said that they had fillings.

	Fillings	Gum treatment	Root canal	Braces adjustments	Total
Number	24	3	1	2	35
Percentage	82%	9%	3%	6%	100%

How satisfied were you with the treatment that was given was appropriate for you?

66% of respondents were very satisfied that the treatment they received was appropriate for them, A further 31% were satisfied.

There was 3% of respondents who were not satisfied.

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied	Total
Number	23	11	1	0	35
Percentage	66%	31%	3%	0%	100%

## Please tell us the reasons behind this?

74 % indicated that satisfaction of dental treatment was mainly in relation to dental staff giving an explanation on the treatment and the need for it.

23% did not answer.

3% told us that they were dissatisfied as dentist was rushing.

These are some comments made about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the treatment given:

*“The dentist explained to me why the filling was needed”*

*“Dentist explained what he was going to do”*

*“My dentist is really friendly and explained step by step what was going to happen”*

*“My dentist is good and explained why I needed the treatment”*

*“Didn’t pull my tooth out”*

*“Dentist explained what and why”*

*“Gives general advice”*

*“The child’s reservations are considered”*

*“Check gums and explained the process”*

## Were you anxious/nervous when you went to the dentist?

Out of the 82 respondents who have been to the dentist in the last twelve months, 23% were anxious or nervous.

54% of the 82 respondents were neither anxious nor nervous.

23% of the respondents did not answer this question.

	Yes	No	Not answered	Total
Number	19	44	19	82
Percentage	23%	54%	23%	100%

## Did the dentist do anything to make you feel better?

The respondents were asked what the dentist did when they were anxious/nervous. Here are some comments from the respondents:

- *“The dental nurse told me it will not hurt”*
- *“My dentist is patient with me”*
- *“Dentist told me to put my hand up if in pain and she will stop”*
- *“The dentists was calm and the nurse held my hand”*
- *“The dentist told me that it was important to do the filling or I will get an infection and it would hurt more if it got worse and I had to then have the whole tooth removed”*
- *“General talk to get me feel comfortable”*
- *“Spoke to me slowly and completed my check up as quickly as they could”*
- *Very polite I have a learning disability and speaks slowly to explain things”*

Please tell us anything else about your experience with the staff at the dental practice.

From the respondents who commented on this question, over 50% indicated that staff were friendly, happy, nice and happy.

There was one respondent who felt that the dental staff at his practice are usually rushed.

These are comments made by respondents in regards to satisfaction of treatment.

*“Staff at the dentist always nice, the dentist is calm and as I am scared, they always calm tod own.”*

*“Staff are pleasant, there is never a problem.”*

*“Staff are nice and ask if I am okay”*

*“The staff seem to always be in a rush”*

*“The dental nurse was holding my hand”*

*“The dentist and everyone always are in a rush, if I was younger and the dentist was doing my treatment that quick I would be scared.”*

*“The dentist explained what was going to happen step by step and this helped me to see why it was important to have my filling”*

*“The dentist was nice and slow when he looked at my teeth”*

## Is there anything else your dentist does to make the place child friendly?

29% respondents told us that the dentists give younger children stickers once they have been seen.

29% told us that there was nothing that made the dental practice children

18% respondents told us that there are books in their dental practice

4% respondents indicated that there were toys in the waiting area and 2% said that the dentist would speak to them to make them feel comfortable.

4% indicated that there were wither pictures or colouring for young children.

6% said that there were televisions in the waiting rooms which played children's channels.

10% told us that there were toys in the waiting room

These are comments made by respondents in regards to their dental practice being child friendly:

*"I have seen small children come out with stickers"*

*"There are wooden toys in the waiting area"*

*"The whole of Axe Street is clean and the dental waiting room has toys there"*

*"Books"*

*"The television is always on children's channels"*

*"Stickers are a given"*

## VISITS TO DENTAL PRACTICES

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham went to five dental practices to see what they do to encourage children and young people to go for regular checks and how they make their practice child friendly.

All the practices were happy to answer questions from Healthwatch Representatives.

All of the practices said that they have models, which they use to demonstrate how to brush teeth to young children. Dentists felt that this is a interactive activity which children tend to enjoy and learn from as they can see what they should do when they brush their own teeth.

3 dentists said they take children as soon as they have teeth, so they can get use to the environment, 2 of the dentists said they take children from the age of 2.

All of the practices give young children stickers.

All of the practices did not have any toys, however this was as there were health and safety issues about having toys in the waiting room.

Although dentists said that there were models that are used for interactive activities with children, there was not one respondent who mentioned this.



## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the feedback it is evident that respondents who went to the dentist were clearly happy with the treatment they received. This highlights the fact that professionals are communicating with service users especially children and young people in a way they understand. It should be noted that throughout the whole findings no one commented that dental staff used medical terminology that confused them. This needs to be highlighted as good practice.

Comments made by respondents about their experience of dental staff was positive, they found the staff to be helpful, friendly and kind.

The majority of young people and children are following the national guidelines in terms of brushing their teeth twice daily. However the most common treatment was fillings; this shows that although the majority of respondents brushed their teeth twice a day, there may be an issue with the way they brush or potentially they have a high sugar intake which is leading to dental fillings.

Similar to the findings of the local JSNA although slightly higher percentage, 48% of our respondents did not attend the dentist in the last year.

Results from the questionnaire show that 72% of the 48% said they do not go to the dentist as they do not have any problems with their teeth or pain. This indicates that individuals are not aware that dental health issues are not always accompanied by pain. It also indicates that individuals are not going for regular checks, which could allow dental health issues to be detected earlier.

The population of children and young people aged 0-19 years of age in Barking and Dagenham 55,647, however only 33,495 have not been to the dentist. That means only 60% have been to the dentist. This indicates that there is a constant 40% who do not attend the dentist.

Taking into consideration the results from the survey and the information from the JSNA we recommended:

- To encourage regular brushing of teeth at an early age, all B&D Children aged between 3 and 5 years are given a free toothbrush, with a written reminder to parents to take their children to the dentist every 6 months whether they need it or not. There are 18,700 children in this age group.
- An advertising campaign via posters and leaflets is undertaken to encourage parents and leaflets is undertaken to encourage parents to take their children and young people to the dentist regularly.
- To use the national smile month (19<sup>th</sup> May to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014) as a focus to raise awareness of oral health for children in the borough.

The delivery of the recommendations will need to be done through partnership working. Stakeholders including The Public Health Team, NHS England, Community Health Services, Early Years Settings, Child Minding Service and local dental practices will be best placed to work in collaboration and deliver these recommendations.

## Demography

### Age

Under 5 years old	5 – 8 years old	8-10 years old	11-16 years	Prefer Not to Say
29	18	23	38	49

### Gender

Male	Female	Prefer not to say
43	66	48

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

No	Yes	Prefer not to say
97	10	50

Mobility Impairment	Hearing Impairment	Learning Disability	Learning Difficulty	Wheelchair User
4	2	1	1	2

### What is your religion or belief?

No religion	Atheist	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Sikhism	Prefer not to say	Other
30	2	43	11	8	1	2	57	1

### How would you describe your ethnicity?

White British	White English	White Irish	Black or Black British - African	Black or Black British - Caribbean	Black or Black British – Other Black background
33	14	2	18	14	1

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	Asian or Asian British - Indian	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	Asian or Asian British – Other Asian Background	Asian or Asian British - Chinese

1	7	6	0	2
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Mixed - White and Asian	Mixed –White and Black African	Mixed –White and Black Caribbean	Mixed - Any Other Mixed Background	Other	Prefer not to say
0	0	0	1	4	54