

Mobile clinics bring dental care to people who are homeless

Leading community dental provider, CDS CIC has been piloting a treatment programme for people with Severe Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) and/or homelessness. The pilot is a partnership between CDS and the East Midlands Primary Care Team, working on behalf of five Integrated Care Boards in the Midlands.

The CDS Mobile Dental Clinic has been visiting locations in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire that offer established services for people who are homeless. Patients are supported to attend appointments in an environment they are familiar with for check-ups and follow-up treatment.

People experiencing SMD and homelessness face many barriers to accessing oral health care and experience higher levels of dental caries and periodontal disease than the general population. Poor oral health is linked to a decreased quality of life among these patients, compounding issues such as poor diet and substance misuse to alleviate pain. 36% of people who are homeless have accessed A&E services due to oral health related pain. People who are homeless can often feel ashamed and embarrassed to attend a dental practice full of people,

fearing that they will be judged as well as facing difficulty finding and registering with a dentist without a fixed address.

The pilot, which began in June and is set to continue for 12 months, has been specifically designed around the needs of this patient group, with the mobile dental clinic attending places they are already familiar with and trust. So far, the mobile clinic has seen 145 patients at twice weekly sessions which are also an opportunity to signpost to other services, such as smoking cessation and drug and alcohol support. The mobile clinic is equipped to provide a full range of dental treatment.

Nicola Milner, Chief Operating Officer for CDS in the Midlands, said: 'We know people who are homeless have multiple problems with their oral health. They find it incredibly difficult to access the care they need experiencing pain, frequently visiting A&E or even resorting to taking out teeth themselves. We worked closely with people who support this group of patients, and we are becoming known and trusted. It is fantastic that we can provide a positive experience for patients who may not have had good experiences accessing dental care before and to relieve their pain and embarrassment associated with their teeth.'

Dentists back breakfast club brushing plan



The British Dental Association has welcomed moves by Labour to roll out supervised brushing programmes in breakfast clubs.

Historic modelling from Public Health England indicates targeted schemes could generate £3.06 in savings for every pound spent in the short to medium term owing to reduced treatment need.

National programmes overseen by devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales have secured record breaking improvements in oral health, and elements have been adopted worldwide in countries ranging from Chile to Israel. While some English local authorities have financed schemes, the UK Government has failed to even take forward historic pledges to consult on rollout.

British Dental Association chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Supervised brushing is a tried and tested policy, that the Government's own modelling shows pays for itself.

'It's a scandal that decay remains the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children. Prevention isn't just better than cure it's cheaper too.'

