

Update on Oral Health 'Barnet Young Brushers' Project

HOSC 10 February 2022

Background

Officers have been requested by the HOSC committee meeting to outline progress in delivering improvements to Oral Health Promotion in Barnet. This paper is an update about the supervised tooth brushing (STB) project 'Barnet Young Brushers'.

It is widely acknowledged that dental decay is preventable, yet a third of young children in Barnet are suffering from tooth decay. Good oral health is integral to a child's overall general health.

Poor oral condition has an impact on quality of life affecting health and intellectual development through pain, impaired speech, embarrassment in smiling and laughing, poor child growth and low weight gain causing significant morbidity to the child and financially in turn to the family and society. Oral diseases are seen as a marker of wider health and social care issues.

Twice daily toothbrushing with a fluoride toothpaste is effective in preventing decay and improving oral health. Supervised toothbrushing establishes life-long healthy behaviours including twice daily home brushing and engagement with dentistry. From a public health perspective in light of the evidence available, the first programme recommended for a borough to introduce when attempting to tackle oral health inequalities is supervised toothbrushing in childhood settings.

Public Health and Family Services commissions the Oral Health promotion service for the London Borough of Barnet from Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust since 2014. Oral Health promoters play an important role in delivering the Healthy Child Programme (an early intervention and prevention public health programme) for all children aged 0-5 years. The current contract has been reprocured as part of the Healthy Child Programme and will be delivered by Solutions 4 Health from April 2022 to March 2025.

The purpose of the Oral Health Programme in Barnet is to deliver key messages on oral health for young children (up to the age of 5) including children in care and to upskill early years staff to disseminate oral health messages to families. It also raises awareness to parents of the importance of prevention of dental caries and by encouraging them to take their children to local General Dental Practitioners (GDP's) for advice on prevention and healthy eating to support National Oral Health Guidelines.

A pilot offering supervised toothbrushing to 41 Early Years (EY) settings in Barnet for up to 3,200 children is underway. It covers Colindale, Burnt Oak, Woodhouse and Childs Hill wards where over one third of children live in poverty. Our oral health promotion team are training and supporting Early Years workers to supervise brushing twice daily in accordance with national guidance for two cohorts of children (aged three and four). Uptake from the EY settings has

been strong and collaboration with the councils Early Years teams has ensured that the right settings have been offered to take part in the pilot in order to reduce oral health inequalities.

Current Barnet level data on roll-out of Barnet Young Brushers pilot

- 18 EY settings recruited – with a further 11 who have committed to start or are asking for further detail.
- 68 EY workers trained within 13 EY settings. Parent’s sessions are being arranged for all settings.
- 317 children have been reached by the intervention (as of 17th January).
- 12 EY settings have not responded yet to contact from the OH promotion team and these are under discussed with the Early Years teaching team to see how this can be brokered.

In addition, the team have received approaches from a few EY settings not on the original targeted list who are expressing an interest and and they will join a waiting list.

Initial feedback from parents and settings:

“Parkside View Nursery started the programme on the 22nd November and is on-going, as doing it in groups as its easier to manage, the children are enjoying it and are very happy to be taking part.”

“We had time to ask questions and talk about the topic with each other”

“Very informative! Enjoyed the training”

“The training was very informative and enjoyable”

“Team was very friendly and made us feel confident in taking part in this project”

“The Team was really helpful right from the beginning and still is now. They delivered a excellent course which told us everything that we needed to know. The resources are amazing and our parents are really impressed with the programme. We are all so excited here at Jack and Jill about tooth brushing, thank you”

Next steps

The Barnet Young Brushers project will continue to recruit and train Early Years settings to deliver the STB over the course of 2022 reaching a greater number of children and families. Alongside this intervention the oral health promotors will continue with their oral health awareness raising work with families and schools.

It is also important to note that within the Borough of Barnet there are other programmes in place to encourage better oral health in children. The **Healthy Early Years London** Award is a whole setting approach to health and wellbeing for staff and children. Oral health is one of the key themes for the bronze award and can be used as an intervention to gain silver and gold

awards. **Sugar Smart** is a campaign that aims to tackle excessive sugar consumption. Schools and early year settings can sign up to the campaign and have access to a wide range of resources for support. Recently Sugar Smart was re-launched in Barnet specifically targeting schools and early year settings to sign up and advocate for better food and drink. In Barnet all schools are also encouraged to become '**Water Only**' and a toolkit with information and resources is available to enable schools in Barnet to adopt and implement a water-only policy.

Public Health understands that HOSC are keen to really understand the picture of CYP oral health within Barnet, including the variation seen between wards and also how this compares to other areas in London and England. It would also be valuable to listen to the views of children and young people and their families about their oral health. To understand this better, Public Health are planning to conduct a focused mini oral health needs assessment in 2022. This will gain a comprehensive view on performance, access to dental services locally as well as barriers to good oral health. This information will feed into an improvement plan aimed at tackling children's oral health. These findings will be reported to HOSC in the second half of the year.

Clare Slater-Robins, Senior CYP Commissioner, LBB

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