

Gateway reference: 18136



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To: Directors of public health
Directors of dental public health

23 October 2012

Dear colleague,

NHS Dental Epidemiological Survey of 3 year olds; school year 2012/13

I write to seek your support in delivering the above survey, which is part of a rolling programme of nationally coordinated dental surveys designed to provide quality assured local information on dental needs.

The responsibility of primary care trusts (PCTs) to gather information on the health needs of the local population will be transferred to local authorities, as set out in the white paper 'Equity and excellence; liberating the NHS' (July 2010) and in subsequent papers specific to public health – 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People': update and way forward (July 2011). Previously, the need for collection of dental needs information was described in the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003, underpinned by Statutory Instrument 2006 number 185, and was also highlighted in Choosing Health (2004) and Choosing Better Oral Health (2005). Information on oral health needs should be considered as part of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs), as well as a required component of the dental measure in the Public Health Outcomes Framework, i.e. rate of dental caries among children aged 5 years (decayed, missing or filled teeth), for which local authorities will have responsibility.

The Strategic Health Authority Dental Public Health Leads Network agreed that during the academic year 2012/13 the population group for scrutiny would be three year olds. This follows a feasibility survey in the North West SHA, and similar surveys in Tower Hamlets and Scotland.

These surveys will improve knowledge about caries progression in pre-school years and inform planners about the timing and impact of interventions to meet the targets linked to the oral health of five year olds which are listed in the Public Health Outcomes Framework. The surveys will measure the prevalence and severity of dental caries in three year old children attending child care institutions in each local authority to provide a baseline for comparison in subsequent years and, for some areas, establish a cohort for follow up.

The success of these surveys will be much increased if you could actively express your support to relevant colleagues, in particular heads of education and children's services and early years. This may be achieved, in part, by forwarding a copy of this letter to these colleagues.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barry Cockcroft". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Barry Cockcroft CBE
Chief Dental Officer (England)