

Dental Care **in Barnet**

**A Report on Family Attitudes
and Experience**



Background

Healthwatch Barnet has commissioned Home Start Barnet to capture the views of young parents and families with young children, on their experience of how they access dental services.

Healthwatch Barnet

Healthwatch Barnet is an independent local organisation, and part of the national network led by Healthwatch England. Healthwatch aims to help local people get the best out of their health and social care services, to enable residents to contribute to the development of quality health and social care services, and to provide information on local services in Barnet. It was formed in April 2013.

Home Start Barnet

Home Start Barnet's mission is to support vulnerable Barnet families with young children who are experiencing difficulties. Home Start Barnet recruit volunteers with parenting experience from the local community and train them to make home visits to families who often are at crisis point. They offer time, practical support and friendship, thereby, building parents' confidence and improving the lives of their children.



Methodology

A survey was designed to explore the effectiveness of dental services, and whether these services fulfil the needs of service users. A wide range of methods was used to engage with families and young parents. This included online social media, newsletters, focus groups and one-to-one interviews. The parents of 96 young children completed 56 questionnaires, representing 56 families. Feedback collated provides vital information on the attitude of young local families towards dental health, and their experience with dental services in Barnet, whether dental services fulfil their needs.

The survey was circulated among Home Start Barnet network including:

- One-to-one volunteer home-visiting family support
- Family Group in Grahame Park, Colindale
- Women's Support Groups at Parkfield and Newstead Children Centres
- Parenting courses and play therapy programmes
- Money Smart programme for volunteers, run by Home Start Barnet
- The Loft charity shop in East Barnet Village
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter and Home Start Barnet website

Please see Appendix 1 for survey detail

Findings

- 26% of children and 9% of adults do not regularly visit a dentist currently
- One third of parents find it difficult to make an appointment with a dentist
- **More than 20% of respondents claim that they do not have access to an NHS dentist within a walking distance of their home (less than a mile). This may be of an issue for families with young children who may find it difficult to use public transport or may not own a car.**
- Nearly 10% of respondents find it difficult to find an NHS dentist who is willing to accept new patients

Current dental care guidance

NICE suggests that local authorities consider supervised tooth-brushing and fluoride varnishing programmes in nurseries and primary schools in areas where children are at high risk of poor oral health (Oral Health Improvement, NICE, 2014)

NHS Choices guidance recommends parents to start brushing their children's teeth as soon as their first tooth appears which could be at the age of six months or older (Children's Teeth, NHS Choices, 2015).¹ The guidance specifically advises parents to supervise their children while brushing, as follows:

- To brush children's teeth for two minutes
- To use fluoride toothpaste
- To not rinse with lots of water

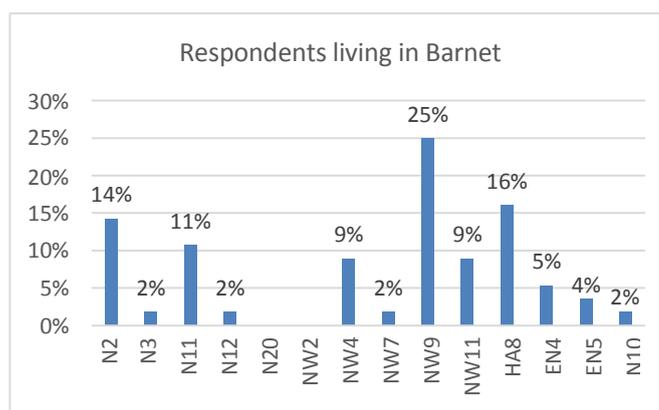
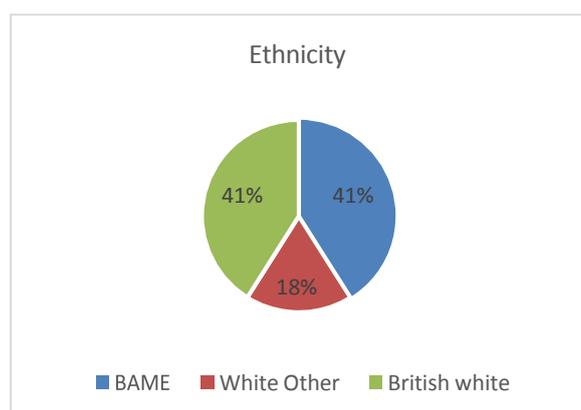
The guidance also advises parents to have the following dental care for their children:

- To take their child to the dentist when their first milk teeth appear, and then take the child for dental check-ups as per the dentist's advice
- To apply fissure sealants (i.e., plastic coating to keep germs and food particles out of the grooves), by a dentist, to the child's back teeth to protect them from decay
- To apply fluoride varnish, by a dentist, to the child's teeth, when they are three years old, to prevent decay
- To use sugar-free medicines, and to reduce the amount of sugar in food and drinks, particularly for children 0-6 years old (Oral Health Improvement, NICE, 2014)

Survey results

Key facts about respondents (parents)

- 56 parent respondents took part in the survey
- 61% of parents were in receipt of benefits
- 65% are entitled to free NHS dental treatment
- 20% are smokers
- Nearly 25% live in Grahame Park/Colindale area of Barnet
- More than 50% of respondents are from Black, Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) and White Other groups



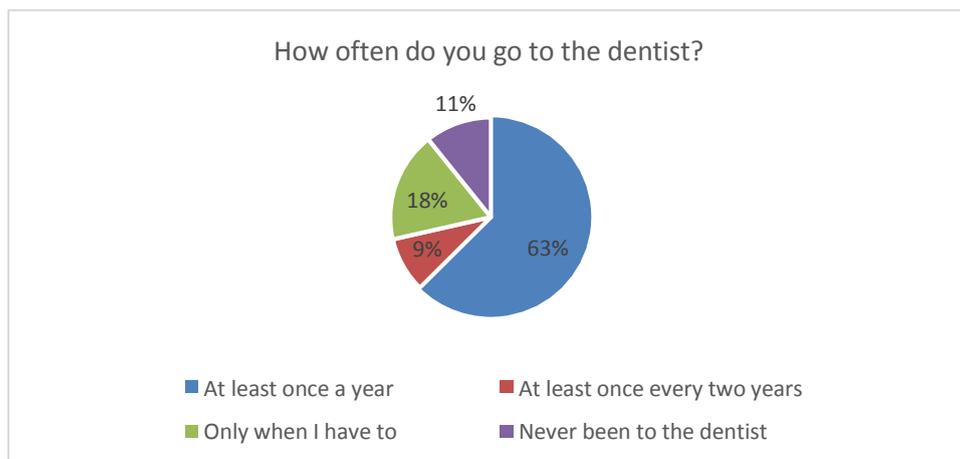
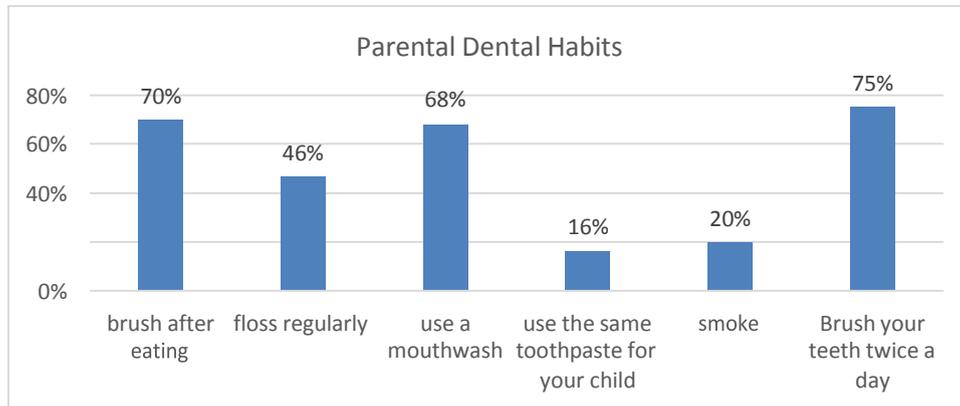
¹Children's Teeth. www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth.aspx. Accessed on 15 August 2016

Family Dental Habits

The survey focused on how often parents visited a dentist, what their experience had been, and what their perception of their daily dental hygiene is.

Overall

- 63% of parents valued dental care and had regular checks at least once a year
- 75% brush their teeth twice a day
- 68% use a mouthwash regularly



Those who never – or only when absolutely necessary – visit their dentist, commented:

Cost

- Cost is a prohibiting factor
- Could not find an NHS dentist to accept them

Experience

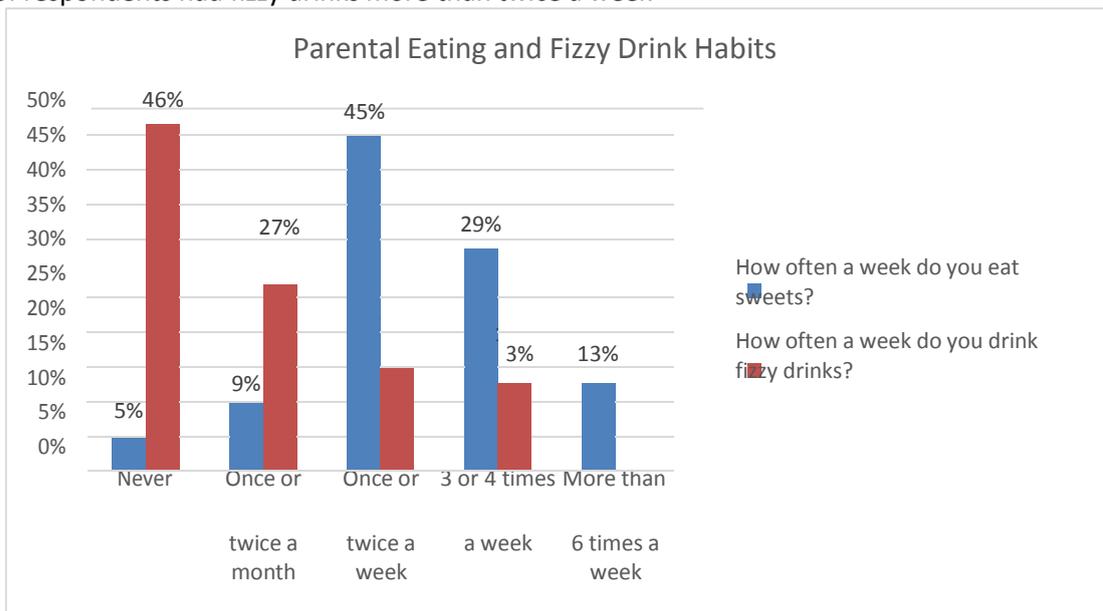
- Had a bad experience with dental health
- Embarrassed to go to a dentist because of poor dental hygiene
- Their teeth were fine and they felt it unnecessary to visit

Children's dental habits

- 77% of children are helped to brush their teeth at least twice a day by their parents
- 15% of children had first visited the dentist by their first birthday. More than 40% had first visited the dentist by the age of three. Of those registered, 60% had regular checkups
- 20% of children needed dental treatment

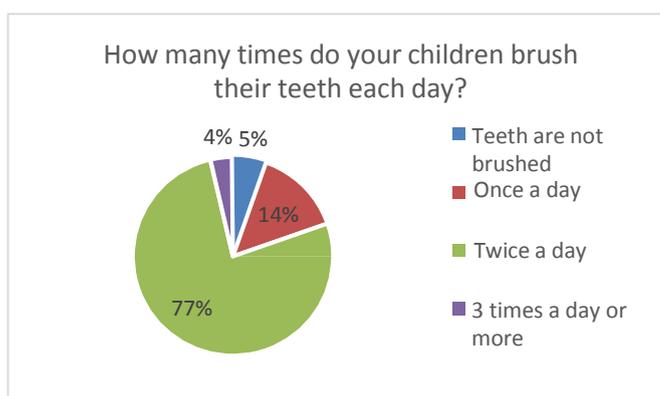
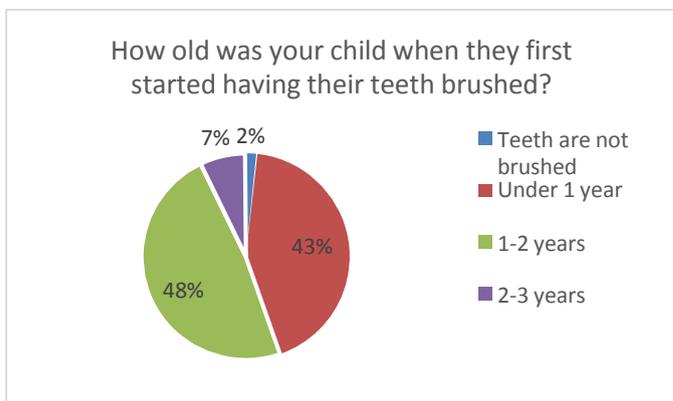
Parents' attitude towards snacking and fizzy drinks

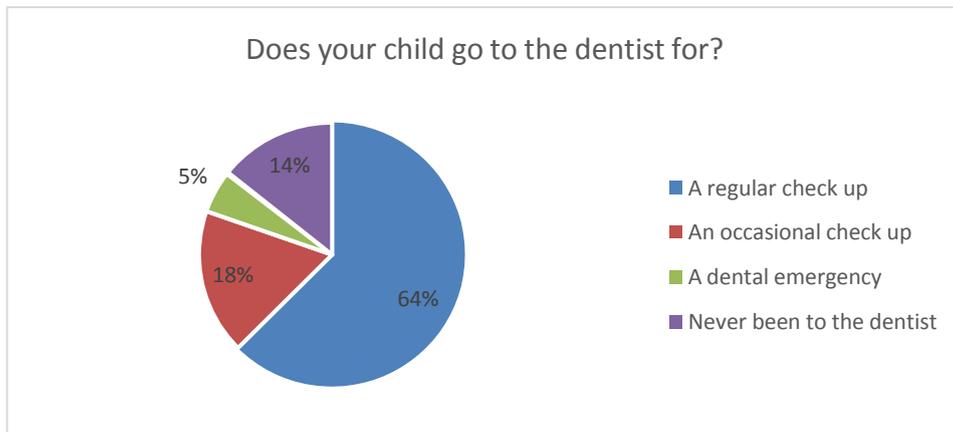
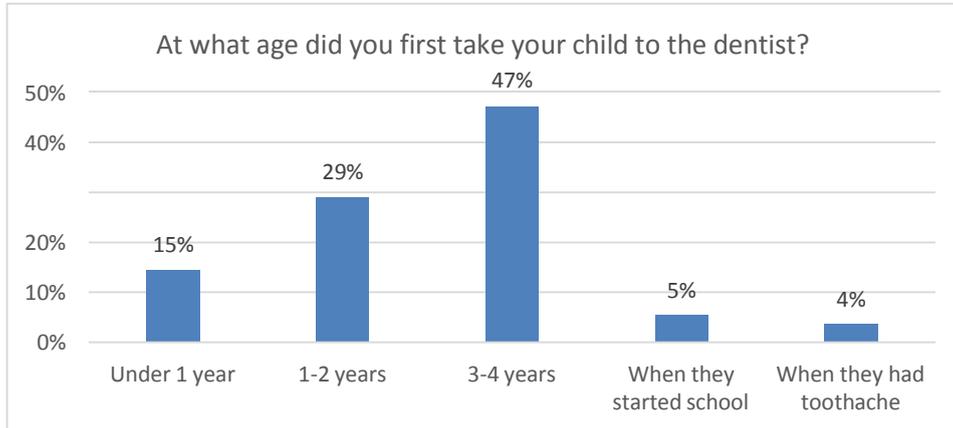
- 45% of parents admit to snacking on biscuits, chocolates and sweets once or twice a week; 29% admit to snacking 3 or 4 times per week
- 13% snack on sweet food almost every day.
- 46% of respondents never had a fizzy drink per week
- 14% of respondents had fizzy drinks more than twice a week



Children's Dental Habits

- 43% of children start brushing their teeth when they are younger than their first birthday, and 48% start brushing at the age of one to two years old.
- 77% of the children are helped to brush their teeth at least twice a day by their parents.
- 15% of the children in our questionnaire had visited a dentist by their first birthday
- 47% of children first visited a dentist at the age of 3 or 4
- Over 60% of children went for regular checkups.
- However, almost 20% of the children in the questionnaire currently needed dental treatment





Dental Practice Experience

- 86% of parents think that their dental practice is child-friendly, and more than 90% think that staff are friendly.
- 95% of parents say their dentist took the time to explain their treatment
- 13% of parents find it difficult to find an NHS dentist
- 34% of parents think that it was difficult to make an appointment with a dentist



Observations

The following observations have been gathered on some wider dental care issues. Therefore, further research is needed to evidence these observations.

During the research period, it has been noted that dental clinics have varying degrees of care quality as follows:

- Parents' perception of the access criteria for dental braces, is seen as complex and strict, which may hinder some parents and children trying to access the service
- Dental practices do not all have child-friendly facilities e.g., areas allocated for buggies inside the practice
- New migrant and transient families do not see dental care as a priority, and therefore, they do not visit a dentist, unless it is a medical emergency
- Private dental care is sometimes offered in the first instance to patients, rather than NHS dental care

Recommendations

- To explore avenues on how to raise awareness of good diet particularly among hard-to-reach parents and communities, and to ensure that sufficient appropriate services supporting this are commissioned.
- To explore how to make NHS dental services more visible and accessible among low-income and ethnic minority families and communities
- To ensure that all providers offer child-friendly facilities in their practices.
- To ensure that parents are encouraged to ensure that their children access a dentist at an earlier age.

Conclusion

The questionnaire highlighted that the majority of parents valued annual dental checks and regular brushing of teeth, thereby modelling positive dental habits. Once attending a local dentist, our findings show that most dental clinics are child friendly. We also found that parents need more education in the link between the dangers of sugar on poor dental health and the risk to children from an early age, as well as the importance of taking their children to the dentist as early as possible so that regular checkups take place preventing tooth decay and other dental issues later on in life.

Commissioner's Response: the London Region of the Dental, Optometry and Pharmacy Commissioning Team of NHS England

Distance to dental services

Dental access has been addressed in our previous report earlier this year

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s29343/-%20Dentistry%20in%20Barnet.pdf>

It would not be possible to commission dental services with a mile radius of each home and nor would it be necessary as it has already been highlighted in the report provided earlier this year and last year.

Dental Health Promotion

As part of a Dental Access initiative last year, NHS England London Region hosted dental health promotional events for patients in the Barnet Borough. The London region has been working closely with the Oral Health Promotion teams and the Local Authority (LA) across London.

Family Dental Habits and Dental Health Checks

Whilst for some people it may be customary to have 6 monthly or annual check-ups, the NICE guidelines as attached link advise that attendance should match patient's individual assessment of risk

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG19/chapter/introduction>

The 'recall interval debate' has also coincided with an important period of change in the NHS dental services in England and Wales, designed to encourage these services to move towards a more preventive oriented and clinically effective way of meeting patient needs. This means that a comprehensive Oral Health Assessment should be conducted when a patient first visits a practice and will involve taking full patient histories, carrying out thorough dental and head and neck examinations and providing initial preventive advice. The dentist and patient will discuss the findings and then

agree a personalised care plan and a 'destination' for this particular journey of care. Therefore, patient recall is not simply every 6 months or every year, but in accordance with clinical need which could be between 3 months to 2 years.

Dental Practice Experience

The London region can share the Healthwatch report with NHS dental providers and the Local Dental Committee to enable them to learn from the findings and take appropriate action.

Orthodontic Treatment

Eligibility criteria apply for orthodontic treatment and the system is called IOTN – Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need. The IOTN is a measure for the necessity of orthodontic treatment for any child under the age of 18. Further details as per attached link:

<http://www.bos.org.uk/Public-Patients/Orthodontics-For-Children-Teens/Fact-File-FAQ/What-Is-The-IOTN>

Public Engagement:

NHS England will engage with the local authorities, to ensure the hard-to-reach and migrant groups are included in oral health promotion activities. The London region can share Healthwatch report with NHS dental providers and the Local Dental Committee to enable them to learn from the findings and take appropriate action. A reminder will also be sent about the need for providing clear information on treatment options and charges, including the provision of a treatment plan.

Conclusion:

NHS England would be happy to work with and support Healthwatch Barnet and the local authority with any joint initiatives to support the uptake of NHS dental services in Barnet.

Useful Resources:

1. Patients who find it difficult to access NHS dental services can contact NHS Choices for the nearest practice by calling NHS 111 or NHS England customer contact centre (Tel: 0300 311 22 33)
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/>
2. Some people on low income may be entitled to help with costs. See attached:
<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/help-with-health-costs.aspx>
3. Orthodontic Treatment: Eligibility criteria apply for orthodontic treatment called Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need. This measures the necessity of orthodontic treatment for any child under the age of 18. Further details: <http://www.bos.org.uk/Public-Patients/Orthodontics-For-Children-Teens/Fact-File-FAQ/What-Is-The-IOTN>
4. Guidance on dental services in Barnet:
http://www.healthwatchbarnet.co.uk/sites/default/files/healthy_teeth_healthy_smiles_barnet_finding_nhs_dentist_-_2015.pdf

Appendix

Dental Health Survey

Child's Name:	Age:
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Are you registered with an NHS dentist?

YES	NO
YES	NO

Is your child registered with an NHS dentist?

If yes, how easy was it to find an NHS dentist?

Easy	Quite difficult	Very difficult
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How easy was it to make an appointment?

Easy	Quite difficult	Very difficult
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How far is the dentist from your house? Is it:

Walking distance?	Less than a mile	More than a mile
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How do you travel to the dentist?

On foot?	By car?	Public transport?
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When did your child last visit the dentist?

Never		Within the last year	
Within the last 3 months		Within the last 6 months	
Over a year ago			

At what age did you first take your child to the dentist?

Under 1 year		When they started school	
1-2 years		When they had toothache	
3-4 years			

Does your child go to the dentist for?

A regular check up		A dental emergency	
An occasional check up		Never been to the dentist	
Has your child ever needed to have any dental treatment?	YES	NO	

How often do you go to the dentist?

At least once a year		Only when I have to	
At least once every two years		Never been to the dentist	

If never, how come?

No need to, teeth are fine		I can't find a NHS dentist	
NHS charges are too costly		I'm afraid of the dentist	
It's difficult to get to		I've had a bad experience	
I'm embarrassed to go		None of the above	

Is the dental practice child friendly?	YES	NO
Were the staff friendly?	YES	NO
Did the dentist explain your treatment?	YES	NO

Do you brush after eating?	YES	NO
Do you floss?	YES	NO
Do you use a mouthwash?	YES	NO
Do you use the same toothpaste for your child?	YES	NO
Do you smoke?	YES	NO
Are you entitled to free dental care?	YES	NO
Are you currently in receipt of benefits?	YES	NO
How many children do you have?		

Does your child do any of the following?

Suck their thumb		Sleep with a bottle	
Bite their nails		Grind their teeth	
Use a pacifier (dummy)			

How old was your child when they first started having their teeth brushed?

Teeth are not brushed		2-3 years	
Under 1 year		3 years or over	
1-2 years			

How many times a week do you eat sweets/chocolates/biscuits/cake?

Never		Less than once a week	
Once or twice a week		3 or 4 times a week	
More than 6 times a week			

How many times a week do you drink fizzy drinks?

Never		Less than once a week	
Once or twice a week		3 or 4 times a week	
More than 6 times a week			

How many times do you brush your teeth each day?

Teeth are not brushed		Twice a day	
Once a day		3 times a day or more	

How many times do your children brush their teeth each day?

Teeth are not brushed		Twice a day	
Once a day		3 times a day or more	

Do they get help when brushing their teeth?

YES	NO	Sometimes
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Does your child use toothpaste for children or adults?

CHILDREN	ADULTS
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What brand of toothpaste does your child most commonly use?

Do **you** go to the dentist?

YES	NO
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Ethnicity

Asian or Asian British				Black or Black British			Chinese or Other Ethnic		Mixed	White		
Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Caribbean	African	Other	Chinese	Other Ethnic	Any mixed	British	Irish	Other White

Postcode										
N2	N3	N11	N12	N20	NW2	NW4	NW7	NW9	NW11	HA8

Do you have any concerns about your child's teeth?

YES	NO
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If yes, please state your concerns:

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