

Department of Health: Refreshing the NHS Outcomes Framework 2015-16

Faculty of Dental Surgery response

Question 10: What views do you have on the effectiveness of using the incidence of secondary dental procedures on under 10s to highlight issues with child safety?

The Faculty of Dental Surgery shares the Department of Health's concerns about the high numbers of young children being admitted to hospital for tooth extractions. Action must be taken to improve children's oral health as tooth decay (dental caries) is almost entirely preventable. Therefore we support the proposal to "measure and highlight the incidence of secondary dental procedures for young children" (paragraph 30) as this will drive improvements in primary care. Moreover improving children's oral health is the best way to promote good oral health in adults.

However there are a number of reasons, in addition to tooth decay, for children receiving secondary dental care. For example, children may be referred to a specialist dentist as a result of congenital/acquired problems (such as the correction of misaligned teeth through orthodontic treatment); injury; or because they have special needs which make it necessary for certain dental treatments to be provided in a hospital. Therefore we recommend that for the outcome measure to be effective, it is necessary for data to be collected on the main reason for children receiving secondary dental care.

In addition, we suggest the phrasing of question 10 should be corrected as the incidence of secondary dental procedures cannot be used to highlight issues with child safety. Not only is tooth decay one of the most common childhood diseases, as detailed above, children may receive secondary dental care for a variety of reasons, which do not reflect neglect or ill treatment.

Finally we were surprised to read that "receiving secondary dental care under the age of 10 is classed as a 'never event' "(paragraph 29). We suggest this has been confused with the never event relating to wrong site surgery, which includes extraction of the wrong tooth.