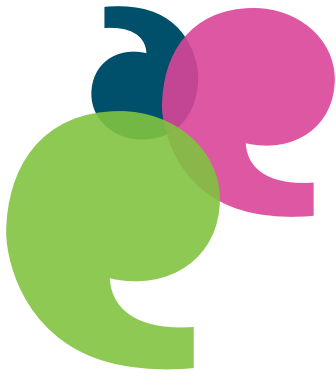




Young people's dental health project in Newcastle

A Healthwatch Newcastle report 2015



What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the national independent champion in health and social care established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Healthwatch has statutory powers to ensure the voice of the community is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. Healthwatch exists in two distinct forms - local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England at national level.

Healthwatch Newcastle

Healthwatch Newcastle is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations with a dual role to champion the rights of users of health and social care services and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public. The remit of local Healthwatch covers all publicly funded health and social care services for both adults and children.

Healthwatch Newcastle collects feedback on services from people of all ages and from all parts of the community, through our network of voluntary and community sector organisations, comments cards at events, monthly drop-in sessions at Newcastle City Library, online through the website and social media and from callers to our 'Just ask' helpline. As part of the remit to gather views Healthwatch Newcastle also has the power to 'enter and view' services and undertake announced and unannounced visits.

Recognising the importance of young people's views, Healthwatch Newcastle has developed a young people's group. The group is run by young people supported by Children North East and has the following four outcomes:

1. The views and opinions of children and young people on health and social care issues are gathered by Healthwatch Newcastle
2. A mechanism is established for children and young people to engage with Healthwatch Newcastle
3. Seldom heard children and young people are engaged by Healthwatch Newcastle
4. Children and young people know of and use Healthwatch Newcastle

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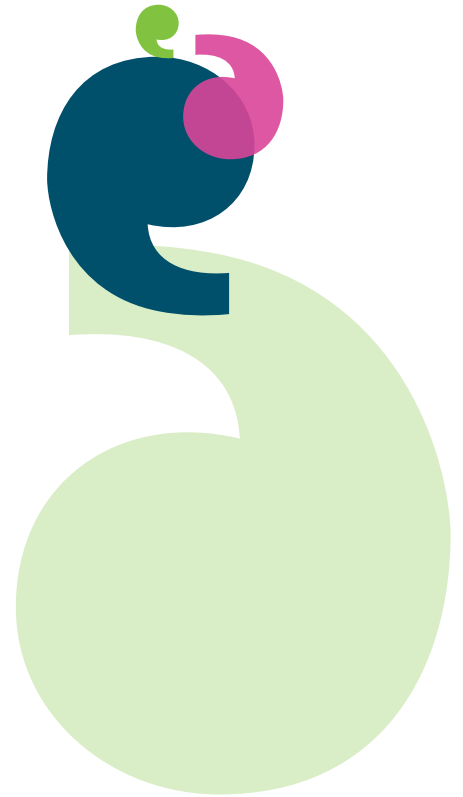
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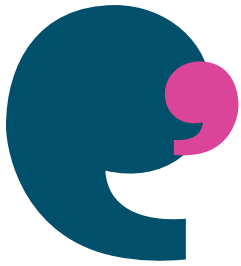
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Introduction

This project began in the late half of 2014. It sprang from a questionnaire that was handed out at National Citizen Service and Newcastle Pride events, where we asked young people what they thought were the most important healthcare issues affecting their age group (13-25). The answers given were many and varied, raising issues from mental health to GP waiting times. However one that stuck out to the group was dental care, in particular the lack of information for young people regarding eligibility for dental services. This was a subject the Healthwatch young people's group deemed unexplored by any current focus groups, especially voluntary ones, and so decided upon this as their first project focus.

Over the course of three months the group discussed viewpoints and ideas until it was decided the best way to get valid data from young people was some form of survey. The question then arose as to what to ask. The individual questions were discussed and eventually a small, single page leaflet was created. The reasons for going with a paper leaflet, rather than an internet based one for example, lay mainly in the convenience and practicality afforded by this format. Alongside this it gave us the opportunity to speak to young people one to one and gain individual, verbal feedback. The questions focused primarily on young people's awareness of dental care and their eligibility for said care. The first step was to perform a street survey at selected





Questions

The young people's answers to the questions asked are displayed below and any traits or correlations the group found are expanded and discussed.

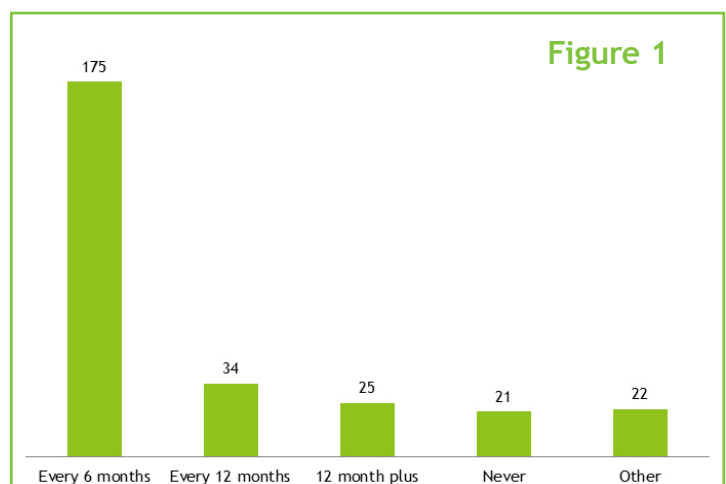
1) How often do you go to the dentist?

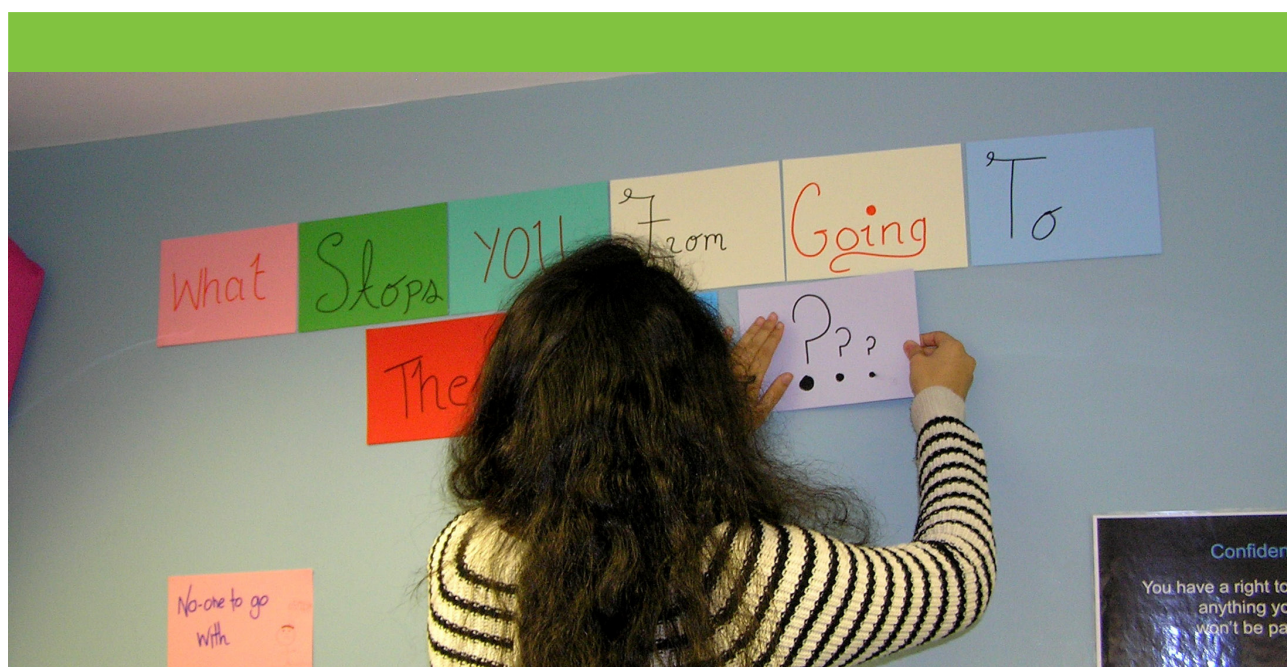
This was the first question on the survey. The young people were asked to tick the box that best reflected how often they went to the dentist. The options were:

- Every 6 months
- Every 12 months
- 12 months plus
- Never
- Other (please specify)

Figure 1 to the right is a graph showing the number of responders for each time point.

The biggest peak was generated at 'every 6 months'. The possible reasons for this were discussed by the group at length. One feeling was that the young people believed this is what we, as survey conductors, wanted to hear and therefore put this down purely to satisfy that notion. Others were that the young people believed this was the right answer even if it didn't apply to them and so chose this answer as a result. However, it can be safely assumed that most of the young people answered honestly and that





this graph is a true representation of how often young people go to the dentist. Six to twelve months is the current guideline time and so the results are promising, showing that the majority of young people do go to the dentist within the recommended time frame.

2) What stops you going?

This was the second question posed to the young people who took part in the survey. The question was deliberately open ended in order to obtain a broad range of issues that young people might face when going to the dentist. The answers are listed opposite.

We received over 20 different reasons about what prevents young people from visiting the dentist (Figure 2). Examples included motivation, no time, scared, bad experiences, price and making appointments. A lot of these reasons relate to one another, and could be improved if there was better education about how important it is to visit a dentist regularly and if there was more information on how to make appointments. The largest response was from 71 young people who said that nothing stops them from going to the dentist.

Figure 2

What stops you going to the dentist?
Nothing (71)
Motivation (15)
No time (13)
Scared (9)
Making appointments (9)
Needles (8)
Price (7)
Bad experience (6)
Attitude of dentist (5)
Pain (5)
Don't know where to go/too far (5)
No one to go with (3)
Nervous (3)
Forgetting to go (3)
Waiting times (2)
Don't need to (2)
Different dentist every time (1)
Busy/ill (1)
Fillings (1)
Smell (1)

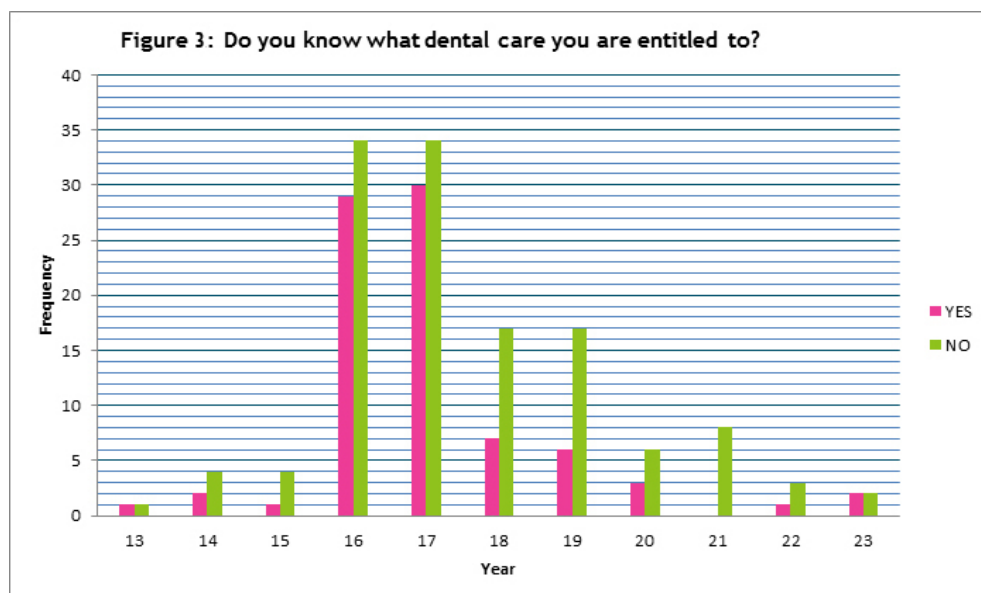


3) Do you know what dental care you are entitled to?

The third question asked was one the group believed to be very important, and perhaps the crux of the survey. One of the main reasons for choosing dental health as a subject was that the group believed there was a lack of awareness amongst young people and so the data gathered would be very significant to the study as a whole.

The young people were asked whether they knew what dental care they

were entitled to. 130 young people answered 'no' while 82 answered 'yes'. We found the number who answered 'yes' surprisingly high because our conversations with young people indicated that the majority of young people, due we believe to a lack of awareness, do not know what dental care is available to them. There also is a peak in the ages who answered the question at 16 and 17. This is primarily due to the questionnaire taking place at venues populated by this age group.





4) Would you like some more information about your dentist?

Out of the 225 people who answered the question 'Would you like some more information about your dentist?', 73.8% answered 'No', whilst the remaining 26.2% answered 'Yes'.

The reason for the high proportion of people answering 'No' to this question may have been due to the misconception that by answering 'Yes' they would inadvertently receive this information via email, text message, letters or phone call directly from taking part in the survey. Another reason may have been due to people already having access to any information that they may need regarding their particular dentist through the Internet or mobile phone apps.

Between the ages of 12 and 15 we found that generally, more answered 'No' to not wanting further information about their dentist than 'Yes'. This may be due to decisions about dentists being made by parents or carers. We also found this trend with ages after the age of 18 (see Figure 4). This may be due to the reason that after the age of 18 people are expected to pay for their dental appointments and their dental treatments, therefore, less people attend their dentist.

A high proportion (approximately 56%) of our total sample was completed by 16 - 17 year olds. This was because the events that we attended mainly consisted of 16 - 17 year olds compared to other age groups. Therefore, our sample was not representative of all ages and, therefore, the general population.

Figure 4: Would you like more information about your dentist?

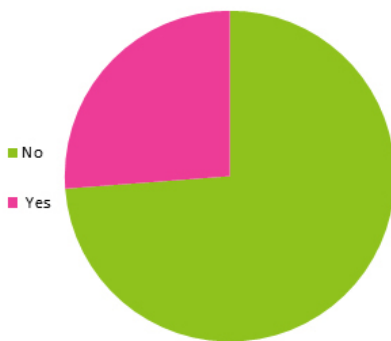


Figure 5: Young people wanting more information about their dentists

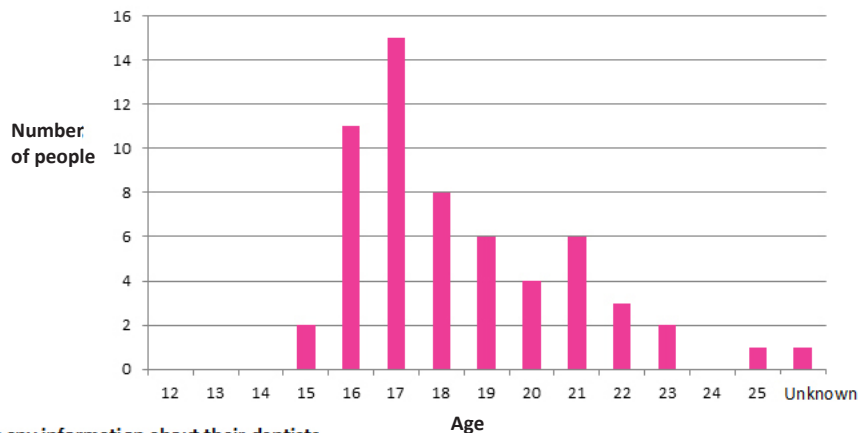
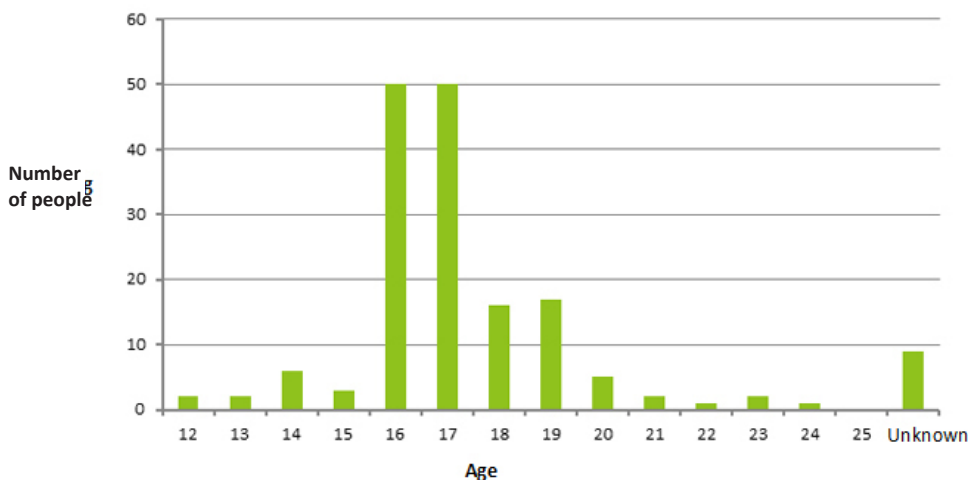
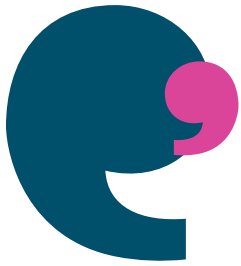


Figure 6: Young people not wanting any information about their dentists





4a) What information would you like?

The second part of this question was ‘What information would you like?’ For those who answered this question, the most frequent answers included information about opening times, how to make appointments, cost and information about treatment. Other answers given included entitlements concerning dental treatment, pain relief, the dentists available in their area and appointment times (see below).

Figure 7

If you answered Yes to Question 4? What information would you like?
How to make appointments (12)
Opening times (10)
Cost (9)
Information about treatment (8)
What am I entitled to (6)
What dentists are available (5)
Pain relief (2)
Appointment times (1)



4b) How would you like this information?

We gave the young people who answered the above questions options on how they would like to receive any information they requested. The options were leaflet, social media, text and email (Figure 8).

The group suggested that these would be the four most popular methods to provide information to young people. A leaflet was chosen by a similar number of people as email. This is an interesting and unexpected result which prompted the group to think further on creating a purely young people targeted leaflet, which could be available at schools, community centres and dental practices themselves.

Young people noted that the information on NHS Choices and individual dentist websites was out of date.

Figure 8: How would you like to get this information?	Leaflet	Social Media	Text	Email
	42	41	32	43



5) Which part of Newcastle do you live in?

One key issue in this survey was to get a valid spread of respondents from across the city of Newcastle. In order to do this the group decided to stage the street survey in the city centre on the basis that it has the most footfall from all areas where people from all corners of the city congregate. We asked the young people to tick the option, be it North, South, East, or West, that best reflects where they live. The question as it appeared on the survey is below with the number of young people who live in each area (Figure 9).

As you can see the group managed to obtain a cohort with an even spread, with similar numbers gathered from each specified area.

6) Age

We set out to involve young people aged between 13 - 25 years old. The group posed this as their penultimate question on the survey (Figure 10).

The group actively tried to obtain survey respondents from all age groups in order to get a good spread. This was best achieved by staging the street survey in the city centre where the age range of people present would best reflect our target audience.

Summary

- A high proportion of young people don't know what they are entitled to when it comes to dental services
- A lot of young people don't have the right information and knowledge about dental services
- Access to dentists is a problem, particularly:
 - knowledge about how to make appointments
 - appointment times clashing with school/college/work
 - the attitude of dental surgery staff (including dentists) to young people
- Information on dentists' websites and NHS Choices is often out of date

Figure 9: Which part of Newcastle do you live in?	Centre	North	West	East	Outside
	37	48	30	33	21

Figure 10: Age	13-16	17-18	19-25
	65	85	49

Recommendations

- NHS England (dental services commissioners) should prepare some information (in a range of formats) targeted at young people
- Providers of dental services should consider implementing You're Welcome and this should be encouraged by service commissioners
- Providers of dental services should review their online information regularly to keep it up to date

Healthwatch Newcastle young researchers

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WEYES is working with Healthwatch Newcastle to listen to and learn from the views and experiences of young people aged 13 - 25 who use health and social care services in Newcastle. The Healthwatch young people's participation group aims to:

- Gather feedback from young people
- Review and create publicity for young people
- Design pieces of research about young people's experiences of health and social care services
- Promote Healthwatch Newcastle to other young people

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