

# Providing oral health prevention for children and young people in a North East England foodbank: Findings from a community engagement project

## BACKGROUND

- In the North of England, almost **4 in 10** 5-year-olds have tooth decay, worse than the national average (3 in 10).
- These oral health disparities are driven by material deprivation.
- Community hubs are **familiar and accessible spaces that could enable access** to preventative health and care services.
- We aimed to **dentally screen children** attending Newcastle Foodbank.

## ORAL HEALTH SERVICES

We provided prevention-focussed services over a 1-week period in April 2024:



**Dental check**  
screening,  
fluoride varnish  
and silver  
diamine fluoride  
(SDF)  
application

**Oral health  
education**  
oral hygiene  
practices (e.g.  
tooth brushing  
technique),  
dietary advice

## METHODS

- **Multi-method approach** to explore service delivery in a community hub, including its acceptability to children.
  - Quantitative: demographic data, clinically-assessed and self-reported oral health status
  - Qualitative: focus groups
- Clinical outcomes:
  - Decayed, Missing and Filled Teeth (DMFT) Index
  - Oral Health Quality of Life
- Data analysis:
  - Quantitative: descriptive statistics
  - Qualitative: thematic analysis

## FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

- **141** children were screened and given fluoride varnish/SDF.
- **One in two** were female and on average 6.4 years old. 36% were white British, 33% Black, 16% Asian, 15% Other.
- Mean **dmft/DMFT** scores:
  - Primary dentition: **1.7** (SD=2.9; range=0-15)
  - Permanent dentition: **0.3** (SD=0.9; range=0-4)
  - Combined dmft/DMFT: **2.0** (SD=3.1; range=0-19)
- Almost **3 in 10** children rated their oral health as **fair/poor**; more than **1 in 10** reported their oral health having **some or very much impact** on their lives.
- Children had **positive** experiences:
  - Parent/caregiver **support** is important
  - The food bank is a **safe space** for appointments.
  - **Information** on what to expect and **increased privacy** would enhance experience.
- Dental decay in this group of children aligns with regional/national rates.
- Prevention-focussed care in food banks **can be delivered and is acceptable** to children, overcoming barriers to access.

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Newcastle Foodbank