

Dentistry in London

Teethbrush with toothpaste

Key information

Publication type: General

Publication status: Adopted

Publication date: Thursday 16 January 2025

Contents

[London's dental problems](#)

London's dental problems

- One quarter (25.8 per cent) of 5-year-olds in London experienced tooth decay in 2021-22 – which is higher than the English average of 23.7 per cent.
- More than 5,000 children aged 0 to 9 in London were admitted to hospital for tooth extractions in 2022-23.
- 47.1 per cent of children in London did not access an NHS dentist between March 2023 and March 2024.
- Nationally, the tooth extraction rate for children and young people living in the most deprived communities was nearly 3 and a half times that of those living in the most affluent communities.
- Water is not routinely fluoridated in London. Since 2022, the Government has had new powers to introduce water fluoridation schemes across the country.
- In the two years to March 2024, just 39 per cent of adults accessed an NHS dentist in London, while just 53 per cent of children accessed an NHS dentist in the previous year.
- The current NHS dental contract is severely flawed and needs fundamental reform.
- Funding for NHS dentistry has not kept pace with inflation. There is currently not sufficient commissioned NHS activity to meet the needs of London's population.

The **London Assembly Health Committee** report 'Decay & Delay: The state of Dentistry and Oral Health in London' makes a number of recommendations including:

- The Mayor should lobby the Government to start the process of dental contract reform as a matter of urgency, setting out how the current contract is not serving Londoners, with the aim of reforming the contract by the end of 2025.
- The Mayor should work with NHS England (London) and London's Integrated Care Boards on a public messaging campaign in 2025 to highlight the importance of visiting the dentist and to publicise the fact that dentistry is free for certain groups, particularly children. This should be targeted at the areas of highest need in London, and at demographic groups who are less likely to access appointments.

- The Government should provide funding for local authorities to expand the provision of supervised toothbrushing in primary schools in London, targeted at areas with the greatest need. Schools must be provided with the necessary level of support to deliver these programmes. The Mayor should lobby the Government to do this.
- The Mayor should carry out a review of the feasibility of fluoridating London's water in 2025. He should submit the findings of this review to the Government, with a recommendation as to whether the Government should introduce fluoride into London's water.

[Read the report in full](#)

n

City Hall Conservatives support the recommendations in this report but believe the term 'Dental Hygiene Programme' more accurately reflects the end goal of this work. This was suggested to the Chair during the drafting of this report and was subsequently rejected. We believe the term 'Supervised Toothbrushing' risks overstating the extent of what can realistically be delivered by school teachers on top of their existing workload. It also risks suggesting it could be a replacement for personal hygiene routines at home which could be offensive or misleading for parents and carers.

[Back to table of contents](#)