

Health Scrutiny Panel

19 July 2018

Date 19/7/2018

Briefing Paper

To: The Chair, Councillors of Health Scrutiny Panel

Title: Oral Health in Older Adults Update

a) Background

This briefing provides an update on the progress we have made to improve oral health in older adults in Wolverhampton, and outlines ongoing plans to improve oral health in older adults.

Oral health in older adults

- Older adults are more susceptible to poor oral health. With an aging population, and more people retaining their teeth into older age, the need for dental care is increasing.
- Care homes or those receiving care at home are particularly at risk of poor oral health.
- When someone moves into a care home, their oral health tends to get worse.
- Care home residents in the West Midlands are twice as likely to have dental caries compared to non-care home residents, but half as likely to brush their teeth twice daily.
- Oral health is fundamental to ensuring people can talk, eat and remain independent.
- Poor oral health affects general health, and can increase the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer and dementia.

NICE guidelines for Oral Health for Older Adults in Care Homes were published in July 2016, and the NICE Quality Standard was published in June 2017.

b) Key Issues

A report on oral health in older adults in Wolverhampton was given to Health Scrutiny in January 2018. The panel requested a progress report against the recommendations for improvement presented to a future meeting of the panel. Our recommendations included to

- Support vulnerable adults to access mainstream services if they do not qualify for the Special Care Dental Service
- Ensure care homes are aware of resources and support
- Ensure low sugar foods in care homes are available in care homes
- Encourage GPs to prescribe sugar-free liquid medications if applicable
- Liaise with social care to introduce regular oral health assessments and education for staff and residents as part of contracts for care homes and domiciliary care

What are we doing to improve oral health in older adults in Wolverhampton?

1. Care home oral health improvement pilot project

In Wolverhampton, together with the CCG, we introduced a pilot oral health improvement project across five care homes in March 2018, and initial feedback from care homes has been positive. This will be expanded over the next few months. The project includes

- Baseline audit/questionnaire
- Discussions with care homes
- Awareness raising
- Training on oral health
- Re-audit
- Improvements and extension

1.1 Baseline review/audit

A baseline review of oral health care in a sample of Wolverhampton care homes as part of this project, undertaken in April-May 2018, revealed variations in oral health care training and monitoring between care homes:

- Most care homes (77%) had an oral health care plan in place
- 71% of care home staff felt confident in giving some oral health care

However

- More than half of care homes (62%) had no oral health risk assessments
- Only a third of staff had received some form of training on oral health

Staff comments included that they would like resource packs, information about how to assist residents with behavioural or non-concordance issues and those with swallowing difficulties, and information about equipment. Staff also wanted oral health care included as part of induction training. Comments were used to inform the development of the oral health training.

1.2 Oral health training

Oral health training is being delivered to representatives from care homes, and resource packs provided. Training includes raising awareness of the importance of oral health and common oral health conditions, prevention of poor oral health including healthy food choices, oral health hygiene (tooth brushing and denture cleaning) and techniques for providing oral health care to residents that have difficulty cooperating. In addition, information on access to dental care is provided, and the potential to ask GPs to prescribe sugar free medication to vulnerable residents. Certificates are issued to participants. Evaluation by participants has been positive.

1.3 Re-audit/review

Following oral health training provision to representatives from all care homes in the project, a re-audit/review will be undertaken to identify whether improvements have been made and highlight any areas where further support/improvements are needed.

2. Liaison with Social Care Commissioning

We are working with Social Care Commissioning to improve oral health, and are considering the possibility of introducing oral health into contracts for care homes and domiciliary care.

3. Awareness Session at Domiciliary Care Forum

As mentioned, adults receiving care at home are also vulnerable to poor oral health. We held an awareness raising session to providers of domiciliary care at the Domiciliary Care Forum in May 2018. Further collaboration with domiciliary care is being developed, with the possibility of introducing a requirement for oral health care into domiciliary care contracts.

Recommendations and next steps

- We will extend the oral health improvement pilot, ensuring that staff at care homes across Wolverhampton are trained to provide oral care.
- We will work with domiciliary care to introduce staff training on oral health, and identify any barriers to oral health care provision in this environment.
- We will continue to liaise with Social Care Commissioning to introduce oral health into care home and domiciliary care contracts.

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