

# A Quality Improvement Approach to Improving Dental Registration Rates for 0–2-year-old Children; A Survey for New and Expectant Parents

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## Introduction

In Grampian, NHS dental registration rates for children under two are below the national average. Early access to care has significant oral health and system level benefits. To improve registration rates for this age group, the Grampian Dental Public Health team developed a survey, targeted at new and expectant parents, with the aim of better understanding their child's dental attendance and their preferences for receiving oral health information



## What did we do?

Using a PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) Quality Improvement methodology, a questionnaire was developed on the Snap Survey platform, incorporating both open-ended questions and Likert scales. The questions were based on established theoretical models, with the focus on understanding health-behaviours, how to support behaviour change (1,2) and assessing how easily people can access healthcare (3).

In collaboration with the Grampian Maternal and Infant Nutrition team, the survey was distributed through healthcare professionals and third sector partners working directly with new and expectant parents. To maximise reach, the survey was promoted via posters in key locations within Aberdeen Maternity Hospital and across social media platforms.



## Key Findings

**108** new and expectant parents took part, with the majority already registered with an NHS dentist (89%).

However, while pregnant, only **61%** were advised to register their baby with a dentist.

Surprise Finding!



**92%** of respondents indicated they would bring their child to their first dentist appointment between 0–2 years old.



**57%** The vast majority reported they would bring them between 6 – 12 months of age (which aligns with when baby's first teeth start to come in!)

### What are the barriers?

A significant barrier identified was knowing how to find which local practices are accepting NHS patients:



**42%** did not know where to find this information



**21%** unsure



Surprise Finding!

Despite **93%** of respondents being aware they were entitled to free NHS dental care during pregnancy and 12 months post birth

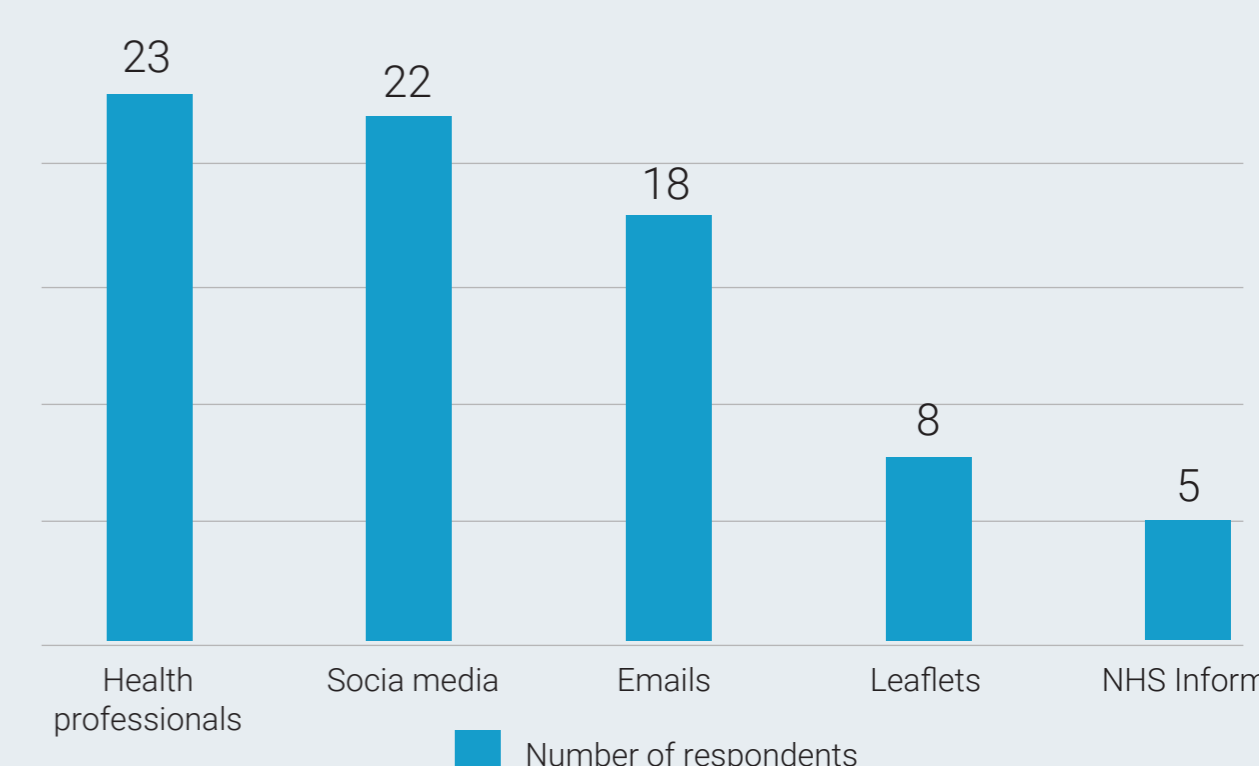


**55%** (more than half) were worried about dental treatment costs

### How do new and expectant parents prefer to access oral health information?

Health professionals, particularly health visitors, were parents' main and preferred source of information. Overall, 87% preferred to get information about their own health and their baby's health from a health professional (e.g., GP, midwife, or health visitor).

**Social media** emerged as a prominent preference for receiving health-related information, while a surprising proportion of respondents specified a preference for receiving information via email.



"(I prefer) the health visitor or in person... rather than having to look for information and being unsure what to look for and missing something (important)".

"(I prefer) NHS social media pages or health visitors... and NHS staff".

## What now?

- Work closely with Health Visitor teams to provide clear, timely information about dental registration and oral health.
- Use insights to design a survey for Dental Care Professionals in Grampian and integrate findings for a more comprehensive understanding.
- Promote the NHS Grampian Dental website to help parents find practices accepting new NHS patients.
- Create online resources for new and expectant parents, emphasising free dental care for 12 months after birth.

### References:

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