

LEAP's oral health service – Learning Journey



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LEAP's oral health promotion service

How LEAP worked to improve the oral health of young children living in a diverse inner-city area.



A blueprint for improving oral-health outcomes

This Learning Journey tells the story of Lambeth Early Action Partnership's early years oral health service. Learn about the children and families we prioritised, the sectors and local professionals we involved, the barriers we overcame and the evidence that drove our planning and implementation.

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Who is this for?

These learnings provide a blueprint for those responsible for improving oral-health outcomes in their communities. This report will be useful for anyone with a professional or academic interest in dental public health and early childhood development.

The background

Despite improvements over the past 20 years, almost a quarter of 5-year-olds in England have tooth decay.

Children are at more risk of developing tooth decay if they:

- eat a poor diet;
- brush their teeth less than twice per day with fluoride toothpaste;
- reside in areas of greater deprivation.

Poor oral health can have negative impacts on general health, wellbeing, and attainment. Dental neglect may also indicate wider safeguarding issues.

LEAP works in areas in Lambeth that have greater inequalities for young children than the rest of the borough. Evidence demonstrates that the more deprived a community is, the higher the risk of tooth decay. There is also evidence that less well-off parents have more difficulty gaining access to an NHS dentist.

Before 2017, there was no structured, early years, oral health promotion service within the LEAP areas of Lambeth. The LEAP oral health service was designed to meet this need as part of our Diet and Nutrition work. We used a strong evidence base that was **well-aligned with national policy and priorities**. We also involved experts, parents and key community service providers along the way.

We focused on the provision of toothbrushes and paste, and supervised tooth brushing in childcare settings. We delivered training for local early years practitioners and oral health promotion at community events. We also worked with local dental practices to increase dental check-ups for children under one year old.

Headline numbers

Key statistics you can read more about in our full Learning Journey:

- 6,000+ toothbrush packs were distributed.
- 31 childcare settings were trained to deliver supervised toothbrushing.
- 818 children reached by our supervised tooth brushing service (78% age 0-3).
- 77% of those children were living in two of the most deprived areas we cover.
- 64% of those children were identified by their parents as Black, Asian, mixed race or other.

Read our full Learning Journey report to discover how we planned and implanted the service, and the conclusions we came to about training, engaging key stakeholders and the wider links to childhood obesity prevention.

This research is a rich and valuable source of learning.

Dip inside and head straight to the findings you're most interested in.

View our complete learning journey (<https://story-of-leap.leaplambeth.org.uk/reports/leaps-oral-health-promotion-service-learning-journey/full-report/>)