
Oral health needs assessment recommendation

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	19 March 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Patrick Clark
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	24 February 2026
Report Author:	Matt Pearce, Director of Public Health
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4773

1 Purpose of the Report

To provide a proposed response to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee recommendations related to oral public health.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive accepts the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee recommendation and commits to undertaking a rapid oral health needs assessment.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Nil – recommended option will not incur any financial costs.
Human Resource:	Nil - recommended option can be resourced from existing staff.
Legal:	Nil – health needs assessments are advisory only.
Risk Management:	Health needs assessments are advisory only, although production of recommendations could raise partnership and public expectations of the Council to take action.

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Property:	Nil.
Policy:	The Government undertook a consultation on the NHS dentistry contract (now closed and under analysis) on its proposals to follow on from the 2022 to 2024 Government policy paper for dentistry reform and Labour's 2024 manifesto Dentistry Rescue Plan .

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	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of inequalities in oral health outcomes, although it is advisory only so will not, of itself, have a positive or negative impact on those outcomes.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of oral health outcomes for those with protected characteristics, although it is advisory only so will not, of itself, have a positive or negative impact on those outcomes.
Environmental Impact:		X		There are no anticipated environmental impacts.
Health Impact:		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of oral health outcomes, although it is advisory only so will not, of itself, have a positive or negative impact on those outcomes.
ICT Impact:		X		Nil identified.
Digital Services Impact:		X		Could not be delivered digitally.

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Council Strategy Priorities:		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of oral health outcomes in the context of Council priorities, although it is advisory only so will not, of itself, have a positive or negative impact on those priorities.
Core Business:		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of oral health outcomes in the context of Council business, although it is advisory only so will not, of itself, have a positive or negative impact on that business.
Data Impact:		X		The recommended option will include a consideration of oral health outcomes as part of its general duties to plan for services.
Consultation and Engagement:	Public Health Leadership Team			

4 Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

4.1 This report is presented in response to the Health Scrutiny Committee's recommendation, following its March 2025 review of oral health in West Berkshire, that an Oral Health Needs Assessment should be undertaken to address identified concerns about oral health outcomes, inequalities, and service access.

Summary of Proposals

4.2 Accept the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation to undertake an Oral Health Needs Assessment.

4.3 Deliver a **rapid assessment** within existing resources, focusing on:

- (a) Analysis of local oral health data and dental service utilisation.
- (b) Review of evidence on effective oral health prevention interventions relevant to the Council's remit.

4.4 Avoid a full-scale assessment due to disproportionate cost and resource implications.

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- 4.5 Ensure findings inform future decision-making without committing additional resources at this stage.

Conclusion

- 4.6 Approval is recommended as the proposed rapid assessment offers a proportionate, cost-effective response to identified oral health concerns, providing essential intelligence to guide future actions while minimising financial and staffing impact.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 On 11th March 2025, Health Scrutiny Committee received a report from the Director of Public Health on Oral Public Health which covered the following topics:

- Overview of oral health needs and promotion in West Berkshire.
- Common oral diseases and their public health impact.
- NHS and local authority roles in dental care and prevention.
- Key national policy reforms and political commitments.
- Oral health inequalities across population groups.
- Local data on children's and adults' oral health outcomes.
- Access to NHS dental services in West Berkshire.
- Local initiatives: Brushing for Life, Family Hubs, school workshops.
- NICE guidance recommendations for improving oral health.
- Upcoming dental survey of older adults in care settings.
- Suggested future actions: needs assessment, strategy review, partnership development.

- 5.2 Health Scrutiny Committee subsequently (in June – see below) decided to make a formal recommendation to the Executive for: “An Oral Health Needs Assessment be undertaken in West Berkshire”.

- 5.3 This paper proposes a response to these recommendations.

Background

- 5.4 Excerpt from Minutes of the discussion at the Health and Adult Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12th June 2025:

- (a) *Action 36 – It was advised by Matt Pearce, Director of Public Health, that the oral health needs assessment would require a significant resource commitment. It was*

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advised that the key priorities for the Public Health Team would be reviewed in September by the Health and Wellbeing Board. This would include reviewing data and determining priorities for West Berkshire. It was confirmed that this would be a returning to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) in December. It was highlighted by Cllr Codling, that as a representative of the Health and Wellbeing Board, this conversation at the HASC would be considered. Members felt strongly that an Oral Health Needs Assessment was required due to the concerning data in the report reviewed at the Health Scrutiny Committee in March.

The Committee AGREED to issue the following recommendation:

1) An Oral Health Needs Assessment be undertaken in West Berkshire.

5.5 A “health needs assessment” aims to identify the population health needs relating to a specific topic (in this case, oral health), the services available, and their adequacy for meeting the identified needs.

(a) This typically involves collecting the following information, and using it to develop informed recommendations to address any gaps or improve services:

- Local epidemiology (patterns of disease) including trend, benchmarking, risk factors and vulnerable groups
- Mapping of existing services, and assessment of performance, quality, and equity of access and outcomes
- Review of scientific evidence and guidance on effectiveness of interventions
- Insights from residents, service users, service providers and other stakeholders

(b) This typically takes 6-9 months and involves significant officer time, including analytical, engagement, and project management resource, or may be commissioned to a third party, with market prices typically around £15k - £30k, depending on the scope and depth required.

(c) The resources required for, and timeline of, a health needs assessment can be reduced by focusing on specific questions, or prioritising certain aspects of the analysis – i.e. a “rapid”, “desktop” or “pragmatic” health needs assessment.

Proposed Executive response to recommendation

5.6 It is proposed that the Executive accepts the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee recommendation and commits to undertaking a rapid oral health needs assessment that focuses on analysis of quantitative data on oral health outcomes and dental service utilisation for West Berkshire residents (of all ages), and a review and assessment of the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions for oral health *prevention* that could fall within the public health remit of West Berkshire Council. In particular, the provision of *NHS-funded dentistry treatment services would not be within the scope of the needs analysis*, apart from as an indication of need for preventative measures.

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- 5.7 This would be deliverable within existing resources without significant opportunity costs, with a target date of June 2026.
- 5.8 Since a health needs assessment is conducted to inform decision-making, there would be no necessary commitment of further action or resources. However, the recommendations it leads to may indicate a need for further resource commitment, and the production and publication of recommendations, even if they are only advisory, may raise partner and public expectations of the Council to take action.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Do not undertake a health needs assessment of any kind - This is not recommended due to the identified need for data and intelligence to support action in this area.
- 6.2 Undertake a full scale health needs assessment, including examination of NHS-funded dentistry treatment services – This is not recommended as it would generate significant financial costs or staffing opportunity costs for the Council and partners which are not necessarily proportionate given the relative burden of oral health compared with other diseases that need public health attention in West Berkshire.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Executive commits to undertaking a rapid oral health needs assessment to identify the key data on oral health epidemiology and service use, and opportunities for prevention, to inform recommendations for further action. This is considered to be an important and proportionate response to the identified need.

8 Appendices

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position:

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

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Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

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