**Guidance for settings regarding raising a dental concern.**

**Introduction**

This guidance provides information and advice for early years settings such as nurseries and schools regarding raising a dental concern. It aims to support teams to spot a potential dental concern, approach conversations with parents and guardians, and escalate a dental concern when necessary.

**Dental concern**

Staff at nurseries and schools, particularly those with a tooth brushing programme, are well placed to spot potential oral health issues in children.

An important first step is to highlight a child’s dental problems to parents/ carers, allowing them to seek appropriate and acceptable treatment.

However, poor oral health could be suggestive of safeguarding issues, therefore it is important teams do follow up dental concerns.

**Features of concern**

* Visually obvious, severe untreated dental disease including holes in front or back teeth or signs of infection in the mouth or on the child’s cheek.
* Dental disease resulting in a significant impact on the child such as a child:
	+ - complaining of dental pain.
		- difficulty eating or chewing.
		- prefer to drink or request soft food.
		- appearance of pain or discomfort during toothbrushing.

**What to do if you have a dental concern**

If you are concerned about a child’s dental health, first discuss your concerns regarding a child’s dental health with their parent/carer. You may find it useful to use the conversation prompts provided in this resource to help approach discussions. There is also a template letter to send home. This will allow the parent/carer to seek appropriate and acceptable treatment.

If the problem persists, check your local safeguarding protocol and discuss your concerns with your designated safeguarding lead.

**Supporting Resources:**

**Conversation Prompts**

Here are some useful conversation prompts:

**Example 1**

Staff: Thomas has been complaining of pain in his teeth today, I was just wondering do you have a dentist?

Parent/guardian: Yes, we have a dentist.

Staff: Perhaps you could give them a call and see if they can see him for an appointment?

or

Parent/ guardian: No – we cannot find a dentist that is taking on patients.

Staff: Here is a leaflet on how to find an NHS dentist in the area and access urgent services.

**Example 2**

Staff: Did you manage to take Thomas to the dentist?

Parent/ Guardian: No, I can’t find a dentist that is seeing new patients.

Advise parent/ guardian to contact NHS 111 urgent services

Parent/ Guardian: No I hate the dentist!

Considering asking “is there someone else who can take such as another family member or family support worker?”

**A template letter for parent/carers**

[School logo]

[School Address]

Date:

Re: Oral Health Concern

Dear [Insert parent details],

Today, while in school [Insert child’s name] complained of toothache. I am concerned this pain and discomfort is now affecting their well-being.

I would recommend you take [Insert child’s name] to see a dentist as soon as possible. If you do not have a family dentist, I am happy to support you in either finding a local dental practice or seeking urgent care in the short term.

You may wish source dental care for [Insert child’s name] yourself by:

* Calling 111
* Visiting [www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist)

Should you require any further assistance or support, please feel free to come and chat to me in school.

Kind Regards,

[Insert class teacher name]

[Name of school]

**Information on how to find a dentist**

**How to find an NHS Dentist**

Everyone needs to see a dentist, even if your mouth doesn’t hurt. Children should have a dental check-up at least once a year – your dentist will tell you how often you need to see them.

People cannot register with an NHS dental practice in the same way that you register with your doctor, because dental practices do not have ‘catchment’ areas. Dental practices can only take on new people to be their regular patients if they have appointments available.

To find a regular dentist please search <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist/>

Not all dental practices will be able to take on new NHS patients. Your child may have to join a waiting list or you may need to look for a different dentist who is taking on new NHS patients. You may also wish to see a dentist privately.

**What sort of dental care does your child need?**

There are differences between **dental emergencies**, **urgent dental care,** and **routine care.**

**A dental emergency is something which is serious or life threatening** and needs immediate treatment at a hospital accident and emergency department. For example, if you have:

* bleeding that will not stop after having a tooth taken out.
* quickly increasing swelling around the throat or eye.
* injury to the mouth/face.

If you have a dental emergency, please go to your nearest A&E.

**Urgent dental care** is for those who need treatment at a dental practice within 24 hours so things don’t get even worse. For example, if you have:

* severe tooth/facial pain not controlled by painkillers
* dental infection/swelling (which is not rapidly increasing around the throat or eye).
* knocked out adult (permanent) tooth (you may be directed to take your child to the nearest A&E department)

**Routine care** is provided by dentists for conditions which are not urgent and can wait longer than 24 hours. **For example:**

* Check-ups
* Fillings and extractions (for people not currently in pain)

If you cannot get an appointment and **need urgent dental care**, **please contact NHS111**. **To get help from NHS111, you can**:

* call 111
* go online to [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk/?utm_source=nhsuk&utm_campaign=nhs_services&utm_content=nhs_111) (for people aged 5 and over only)

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have difficulties communicating or hearing, you can:

* call 18001 111 using text relay (in an emergency text users can call 18000 to get through to 999)
* use the British Sign Language service [signvideo.co.uk/nhs111](https://signvideo.co.uk/nhs111/)
* call 111 and ask for an interpreter for other languages.