

Good Oral Health for All, for Life

CDHB Investment in Child and Adolescent Oral Health Services

This is the first in a series of newsletters that you will receive on the progress of the Canterbury District Health Board's plans for increased investment in child and adolescent oral health services.

The DHB has started work on the Community Oral Health Service Development Project. This project is in response to a Ministry of Health request that DHBs complete business cases to access funding for investment in child and adolescent oral health services.

The first stage of the project is to develop a model of care for improving oral health services for children and adolescents aged 0-18 years

Its goal is to reduce tooth decay and the incidence of dental disease among Canterbury children and adolescents.

The proposed service model supports improved use of services by Maori and Pacific children and adolescents, and those living in rural areas and within socially disadvantaged families.

Like the Ministry of Health, the CDHB believes that significant investment and changes in the way services are delivered are required to improve the prevention and early detection of tooth decay, particularly among infants and pre-schoolers. The development of an oral health promotion programme, focusing on factors such as nutrition and tooth brushing, is an important component of the planned model.

Building links and integrating services with Primary Care and Wellchild providers are key goals for the proposed infant and pre-school oral health service.

The service model suggests reducing the number of dental clinic sites in Canterbury so that dental care can be delivered from larger community clinics that are suitable for modern-day dentistry and open for extended hours. Recent reviews of the current School Dental Service have shown that ageing equipment and buildings often hamper services and limit flexibility of use. Clinics are currently open on average only 60 days a year. Feedback from the public has been that closed clinics give the perception of a very limited service or no service at all.

It is suggested that the new clinics be based in communities of greatest need. Much of the dental care for primary and intermediate school-aged children could however be provided in mobile clinics or with portable equipment, that would allow dental therapists to examine children's teeth and provide

preventive care on school sites. If they required further treatment, children could be referred to a community clinic.

The establishment of community dental clinics will support the oral health service to provide a more comprehensive range of dental care from a dental team including dental therapists, dentists and dental assistants.

The model also provides opportunities for trained oral health workers to deliver oral health education and fluoride programmes.

Young people, from school year 9, will continue to have their oral health care provided free-of-charge by dentists in the community until their eighteenth birthday.

A reference group including representatives from the education and primary care sectors has been established to provide advice and guidance on the framework for the development and implementation of child and adolescent oral health services. The first meeting will be held on 30 October.

Where to Next

The next stage of the project is to establish a workforce and facility plan to support the service model.

The timeframe for completing the CDHB business case is December 2006, with the first request for funding to be presented to the Ministry of Health in February next year.

Introduction of the model of care and the construction and upgrade of dental clinics is planned to occur over a 3 –5 year period, following Ministry of Health approval of funding requests. Implementation of the oral health service plan will be based around Territorial Local Authority areas and wards.

Contact and communication with schools and communities will occur as part of consultation on TLA community and area plans

Find Out More

The Ministry of Health has released the following documents to support the Investment in Child and Adolescent Oral Health Service:

- Good Oral Health for All for Life
- Community Oral Health Service Facility Guideline
- Business Case Guidelines for Investment in Child and Adolescent Oral Health Services

These documents are available on line at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/oralhealth>

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