

# Taking care of oral health in care settings

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A free guide from Citation's  
Health & Safety experts.

**Citation**

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In June 2019, the Care Quality Commission released their Smiling Matters report. In it, they look at the state of oral health care in care services across England.

What the report found, was that many care providers were not aware of NICE guidelines around oral health and many residents are not supported in maintaining and improving their oral health.

## What are the NICE Guidelines?

NICE stands for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. They provide national guidance and advice to improve health and social care across the country. Their recommendations are evidence-based and developed by independent committees.

The NICE Guidelines on oral health for adults in care homes includes recommendations on providing residents with access to dental services, oral health assessments and mouth care plans.

## What did the CQC review find?

To conduct their review, the CQC took dental professionals with their adult social care inspectors on a sample of 100 routine inspections. Overall, the inspection exercise found that there:

- a) Was a lack of awareness of the importance of oral health to service user's quality of life
- b) Needed to be a re-prioritisation of NICE guidelines on oral health in care services

Let's take a look at the statistics behind their findings.

- **17%** of care homes said they hadn't initially assessed people's oral health when they were admitted.

The NICE guidelines say that an oral health assessment should take place immediately, regardless of the length or purpose of a service users stay.

- Only **27%** of care plans fully covered oral health

The level of detail in care plans relating to oral health varied between different homes. Even more concerning, **10%** of the care plans reviewed didn't consider oral health at all.

- Just **28%** of care home managers had both heard of and read the NICE guidelines on oral health

Further to this, **39%** of managers had never heard of the guidelines at all.

- **47%** of care homes visited in the inspection said that staff didn't get any specific training on how best to meet the oral care needs of residents.

While the guideline does not state oral health training is a requirement, it does recommend that care home managers ensure care staff who provide daily personal care know how and when to deliver daily mouth care, report any oral health concerns, and respond to a person's changing needs and circumstances.

- There's a lack of NHS dentists willing to visit care homes.

Based on feedback, the report highlights the fact that many dentists don't provide services for those living in care homes. There were also other barriers and challenges when it came to accessing dental and oral health services, including local dentists waiting times (which can sometimes be months long) or not being able to find dentists accepting new NHS patients.

For more details on the in-depth findings in the CQC's report, [click here](#).

## Recommendations for care service providers

The report outlined six recommendations for care service providers and oral health professionals, in order to take effective action based on their findings. The recommendations provide the perfect place to start if you want to make sure that you and your colleagues are giving oral health due care and attention in your service.

### 1. Service users, their families and carers need to be made more aware of the importance of oral care.

- Are you assessing service users oral health needs?
- Do you keep a record of their oral health?
- Are your colleagues aware of the importance of day-to-day dental hygiene?

### 2. Care home services need to make awareness and implementation of the NICE guideline 'Oral health for adults in care homes' a priority.

- Are you using the guidelines to plan, document and deliver oral care?
- Is daily oral hygiene of equal priority to other personal care?
- Are you assessing oral health needs on a regular basis?
- Is oral hygiene part of your person-centred care plans? Are they reviewed every six to 12 months?

### 3. Care home staff need better training in oral care.

- Have your staff received specific training in oral care and dental hygiene?

- CQC has recommended that Skills for Care, Health Education England and Skills for Health introduce a mandatory oral health component in the next iteration of the Care Certificate.

### 4. The dental profession needs improved guidance on how to treat people in care homes.

- CQC is recommending that Health Education England updates their guidance to dental professionals on how to provide care for care home residents.

### 5. Dental provision and commissioning needs to improve to meet the needs of people in care homes.

- CQC has made a number of recommendations that NHS England works more closely with the care sector to reduce dentist waiting times and find ways to better signpost people to local dental provision.

### 6. NICE guidelines need to be used more in regulatory and commissioning assessments.

## A word from Citation...

Commenting on the CQC's findings and recommendations around oral health, Citation's Care Manager Mick Feather commented,

"It's clear that the CQC is placing a renewed focus on the importance of oral health on the quality of life of care service users. And their findings show that it's time for a number of changes to make sure that oral and dental care is given equal priority as other elements of care.

It's clear that service providers and dental professionals have to come together to improve service users' quality of life up and down the country. And now that CQC have placed greater emphasis on this issue, there's no doubt that the Care Inspectorate Scotland and other regulatory bodies will follow suit."

## Take the hard work out of compliance

One of the biggest challenges facing care providers today is making sure regulatory requirements are delivered. But proving you're doing everything right – and having the evidence to back it up – can feel like a full-time job alone.

That's why we've created CQC Pro and Care Inspectorate Pro. Specifically designed to complement the HR, Employment Law and Health & Safety support we already offer, CQC Pro and Care Inspectorate Pro are online tools that are the perfect way for you to self-evaluate your care service against recognised standards.



To find out more about how Citation's expert team and suite of online tools can help you become outstanding, just give our team a call today on **0345 844 1111**. Already a client? Just call us on **0345 844 4848** any time.