

# Smiles all 'round: children's oral health improving in Wales

The report by Public Health Wales is the latest dental survey of five-year-old children in Wales, undertaken by the Welsh Oral Health Information Unit, as part of the NHS dental survey programme.

The report shows:

- a reduction in the proportion of children with decay between 2007-08 (47.6%) and 2015-16 (34.2%). This represents continuing improvement of the proportion of children who have no obvious decay experience by age 5. In 2015-16 in a class of 30 children 20 will have no decay experience. This compares with 16 decay free in a class of 30 children in 2007-08;
- the all-Wales mean decay experience (decayed missing and filled teeth – dmft) has also continued to reduce from 1.98 in 2007-08 to 1.22 in 2015-16. This represents a 38% reduction in mean dmft scores in 9 years.
- in 2007-08, 14 children out of a class size of 30 would have decay experience, with an average of 4.2 teeth affected. By 2015-16 this had fallen to 10 children out of a class of 30, with an average of 3.6 decayed teeth;
- dental disease levels in children in Wales continue to improve across all social groups. In absolute terms, the most deprived quintile have seen the largest reduction in decay prevalence (by 15%) and mean dmft score (by 0.6). There is no evidence of widening inequalities.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“I’m pleased to see the continued progress in improving children’s oral health. It’s clear that our Designed to Smile programme is making a real impact in improving the oral health of children across Wales but we know that we have to continue seeing these improvements.

“As a government, we are fully committed to tackling all forms of inequality So I’m particularly pleased to see that children from the most deprived backgrounds are seeing the biggest reduction in tooth decay.”

Chief Dental Officer for Wales, Dr Colette Bridgeman said:

“Although we’ve seen great improvements in tooth decay in school year 1 children over the last decade or so, there is scope for further improvement for the third of children still experiencing tooth decay.

“We know that dental decay starts early. Typically, half of the decay experienced at 5 years of age will be evident by age 3. Therefore, primary intervention will have most impact before the age of 3, so we are re-focussing Designed to Smile on the 0-5 age group, restating the overarching aim of the programme, to keep children decay free by the age of 5. This will help us deliver the further improvement we need.”