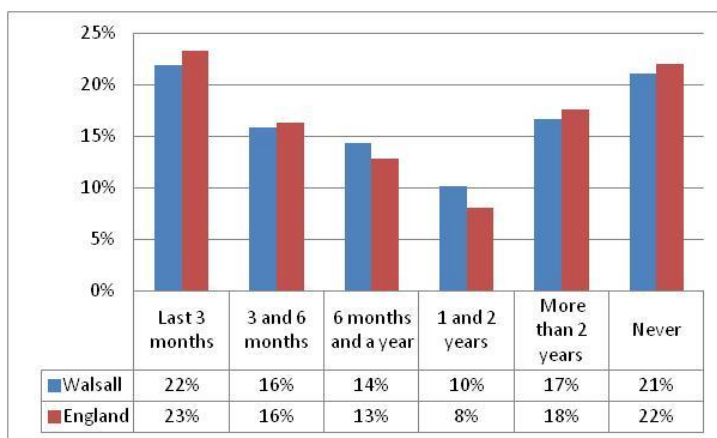


8.3 Adults Oral Health

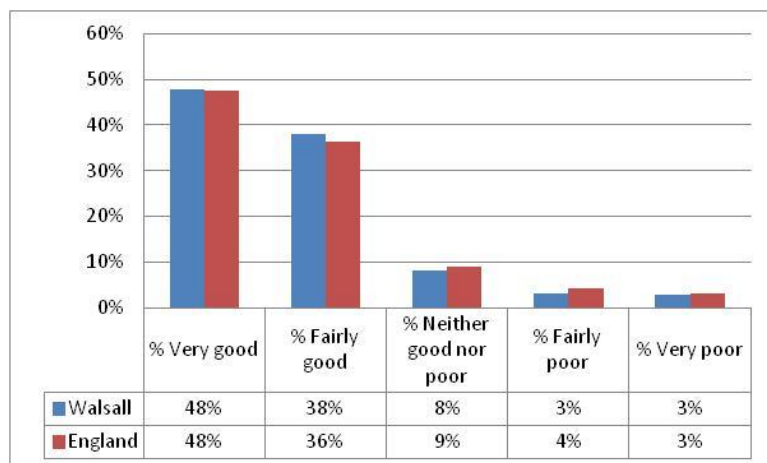
Oral health epidemiological studies are not generally carried out within adult populations leading to a lack of robust local data. However, data from the national 2012/13 GP Patient Survey is available as well as the 2011 West Midlands Dental Epidemiology Programme – Survey of Care Homes. Both of these will provide valuable data locally in terms of developing a picture of dental health within the adult population and amongst residents within care homes in Walsall.

The national 2012/13 GP Patient Survey included a section on NHS dentistry and asked patients (aged 18 and over) about their recent experiences.

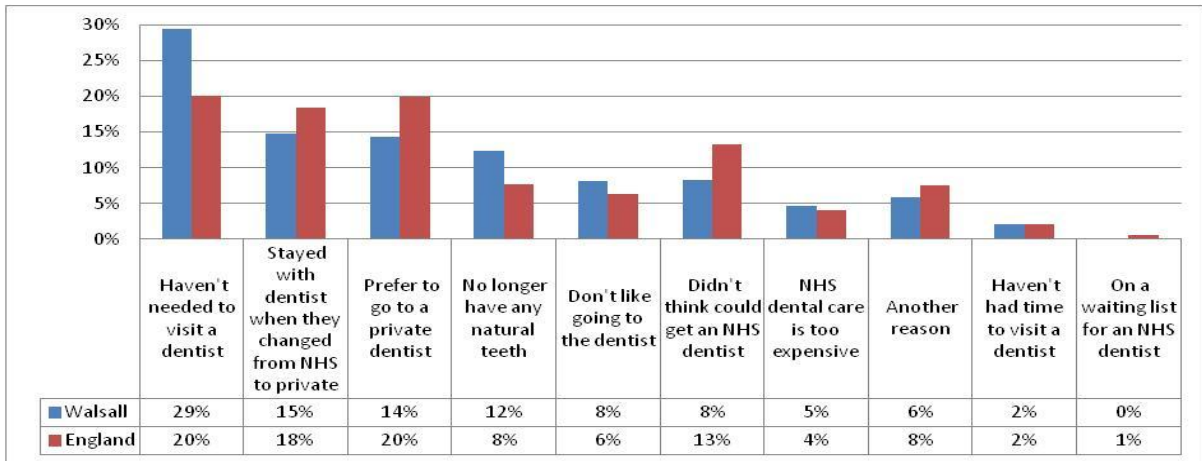


When asked about the last time a patient tried to get an NHS dental appointment, the majority of respondents in Walsall (22%) had done so in the last 3 months (23% nationally). 21% had never tried to get an appointment (compared to 22% nationally).

In terms of patients overall experience of NHS dental services, 86% of respondents' experiences were positive (very or fairly good). This is on a par with national figures.



The reasons respondents gave as to why they haven't tried to get an NHS dental appointment in the last 2 years varied. The most popular response in Walsall was 29% of residents felt they haven't needed to visit a dentist. Further work needs to be carried out in Walsall to encourage residents to have regular checkups and communicate the importance of doing this as a means of preventing possible problems from developing later in life. If adults were to do this, this would set precedence for their children and would positively encourage them to visit the dentist regularly as well.



Gum disease (predominantly caused by a major build up of plaque on the teeth) is the primary cause of tooth loss in adults. 54% of the English population have a significant level of gum disease and child oral health surveys suggest that this will be higher in Walsall.

In terms of general oral health, there are two issues, the impact of poor oral health on the general health of people with long term conditions and vice versa, the impairment from the long term conditions directly affecting that persons oral health. An example being a person who has had a stroke may have difficulty in brushing their teeth and gums. Gum disease has been evidenced to systemic health including coronary heart disease, strokes. People with diabetes are at a higher risk of developing oral health problems and it appears that there is a correlation between levels of gum disease and glycemic levels.

Using synthetic analysis it is possible to determine that approximately 65% of adults currently over the age of 75 living in Walsall will have lost all their teeth. Communicating the message of good oral health is vitally important to help prevent gum disease developing.

Across the UK, 6,500 people are diagnosed each year and without early detection half of those will die, early detection can improve survival rates by up to 90%. Locally, this would equate to approximately 27 people. The groups of people at risk of mouth cancer are more diverse than they have ever been. It has traditionally been a risk for older people but new research shows a younger population are increasingly at risk. Smoking, alcohol and a poor diet are the main risk factors for mouth cancer and people who smoke and drink alcohol excessively are up to 35 times more likely to develop the disease.

Figure 1 below show a downward trend in oesophagus incidence for males and females. Rates are considerably higher amongst men (16.9) compared to 4.8 in women and further work needs to be done to reduce the gap between Walsall and England, particularly amongst men.

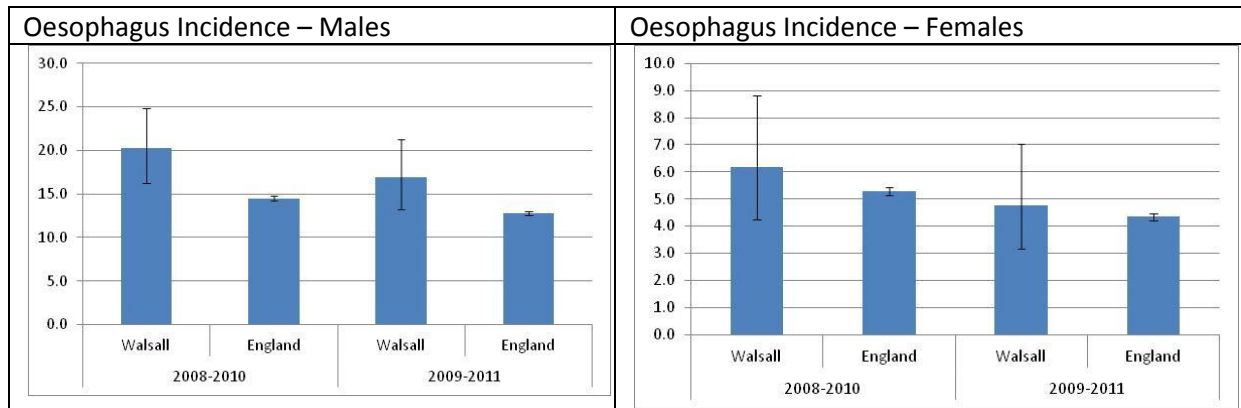


Figure 1 Source: National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN), UK Cancer Information Service (UKCIS), Accessed: June 2013

Those in long term institutional care can be vulnerable. This includes older people in residential homes who are often dependant on others for their diet, personal care and access to health services. As more older people retain their teeth for longer, their dental needs increase with root decay being a particular problem for this section of the community and can be difficult to treat.

Care home residents are not included in the National Adult Dental Health Survey, however in Walsall, the 2011 Survey of Care Homes took place in 73 care homes across Walsall of which 44 responded (60%) and have a combined number of 1,039 beds. The care homes cover a number of self declared categories, but the most common include dementia, learning disability, old age only and physical disability. The key points from the survey include:

- In relation to dental issues within the 44 care homes who responded, 30 report that an oral health assessment is included in their admission process – Walsall has the highest proportion of care homes that include such an assessment amongst all Local Authorities across the West Midlands.
- Access to dental services varies with 45.5% (20) having a dentist visit the care home, 32% (14) residents visit the dentist and 23% (10) combine both.
- 77% (34) of care home residents reported having access to urgent dental care
- Only 7 of the responding care homes reported a problem in accessing dental services, the remaining 36 had no problems at all.
- 39 care home managers reported no issues or concerns with dental providers; with 3 reporting an issue or concern.

The results from this survey will help shape and guide dental needs amongst older people and those within care homes.

Priorities for action:

- *Concentrate our oral health promotion activities on the elderly, both in the community and care homes*
- *Building on the strengths of current oral health promotion and link these messages to general health and wellbeing so that oral health improves and contributes to overall health improvement*
- *Building community and dental practice capacity to promote oral health, through training and development of members of the community and dental practice teams*
- *To lead oral health promotion efforts so that self care messages are understood and reinforced by all*
- *Utilise the provision in the existing general dental services contract, to commission services that are preventive in nature. This approach could help reduce the burden of treatment for Walsall residents. By intelligent contract monitoring evaluation it may be possible to assess the impact of this preventive approach*
- *Identify and help Walsall residents who still cannot gain access to dental services by monitoring calls to Customer Care Services.*
- *Ensure that no one in Walsall endures chronic or acute dental pain and those experiencing pain are seen within the current national target time of 24 hours*
- *Target evidenced based treatments that can prevent dental decay and periodontal disease who need them most*
- *Make use of the findings from the 2011 West Midlands Dental Epidemiology Programme – Survey of Care Homes*
- *To review the release of planned 3 year old epidemiology data expected summer 2014*