
Oral Health in Leicester 2026

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Leicester
City Council

Data Headlines – Oral Health Challenges in Leicester

- Leicester has experienced and reported poorer oral health outcomes for both our adults and child population for many years.
- Over one in three (35.6%) of children examined were found to have decay experience. When accounting for enamel decay, this increases to 42.4% of five-year-olds examined (2024).
- Mapping of dentinal decay shows that, similar to the previous survey, children living in the East of the city tend to experience the most amount of decay (2024).
- Leicester reports the third highest oral cancer mortality rate in the country.

Children's Tooth Decay

Percentage of children with any decay experience

Leicester has reported poor oral health amongst children for many years.

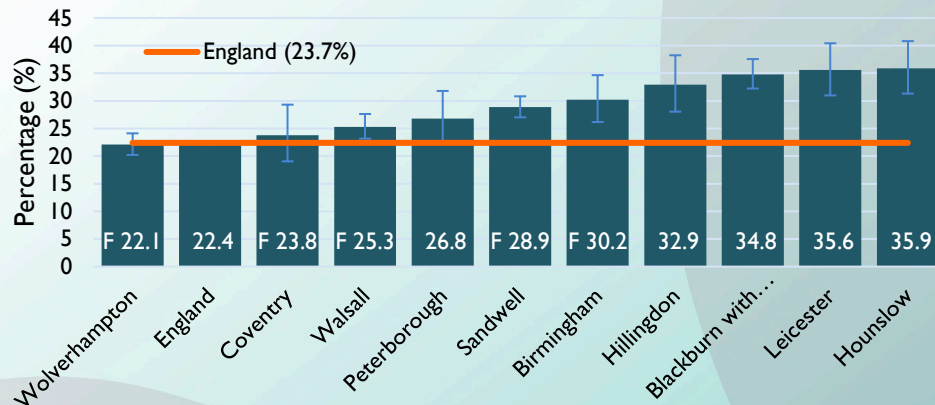
Currently, over one in three (35.6%) of children examined were found to have decay experience.

This is a fall from the 9th highest prevalence (2022) to 13th of all participating local authorities and is significantly higher than the national average (23.7%).

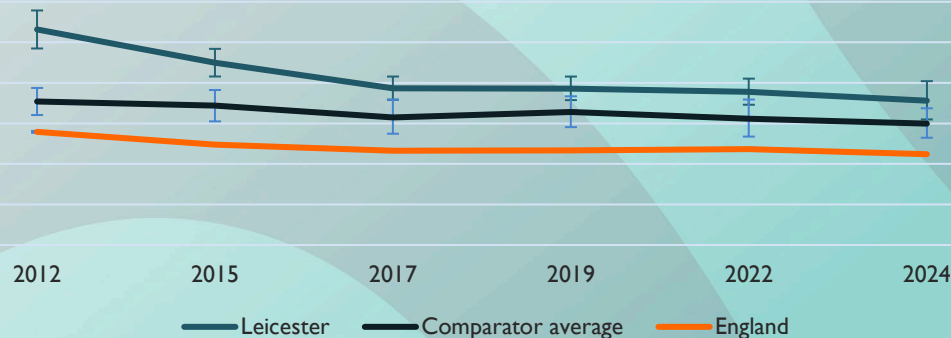
Nevertheless, this figure follows the slight decrease observed in the previous survey and is significantly lower than a decade ago (53.2% in 2012).

Further analysis shows that children in the most deprived areas are significantly more at risk.

Percentage of 5-year-olds with Dental Decay Experience (d3mft>0), 2024



Percentage of five-year-olds with decay experience 2012-24



Enamel and Dentinal Decay

Percentage of children with enamel and or dentinal decay

To understand the early signs of decay a new indicator was introduced (in 2022) looking at both enamel and dentinal decay.

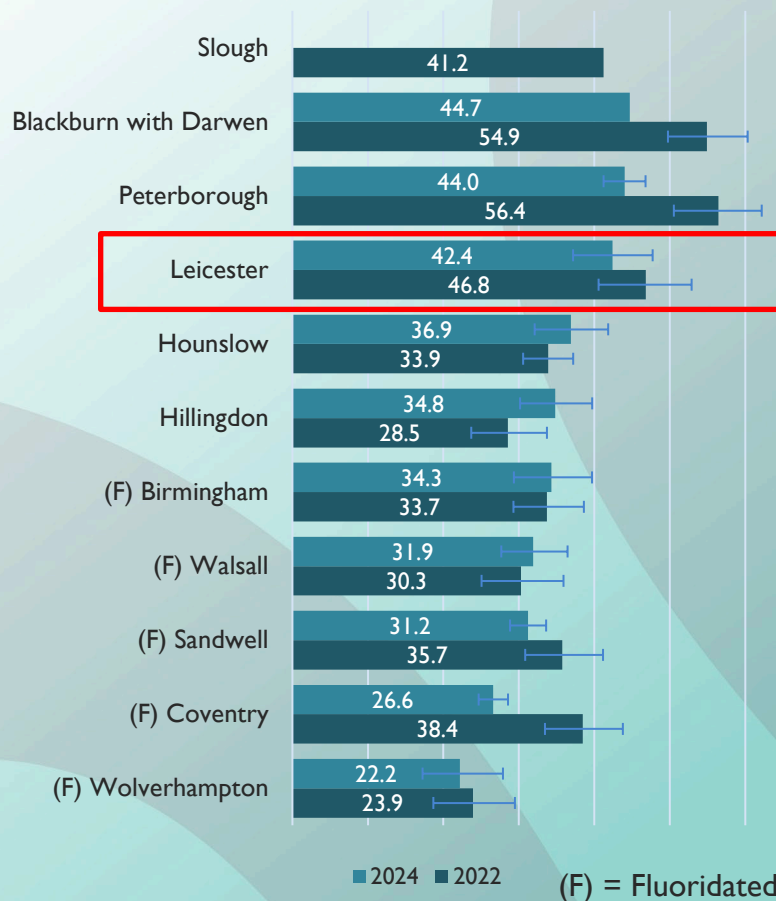
In Leicester, more than four in every ten children (42.4%) examined were found to have enamel or dentinal decay.

Amongst all participating local authorities, Leicester has the 13th highest prevalence of enamel or dentinal decay for 5-year-olds.

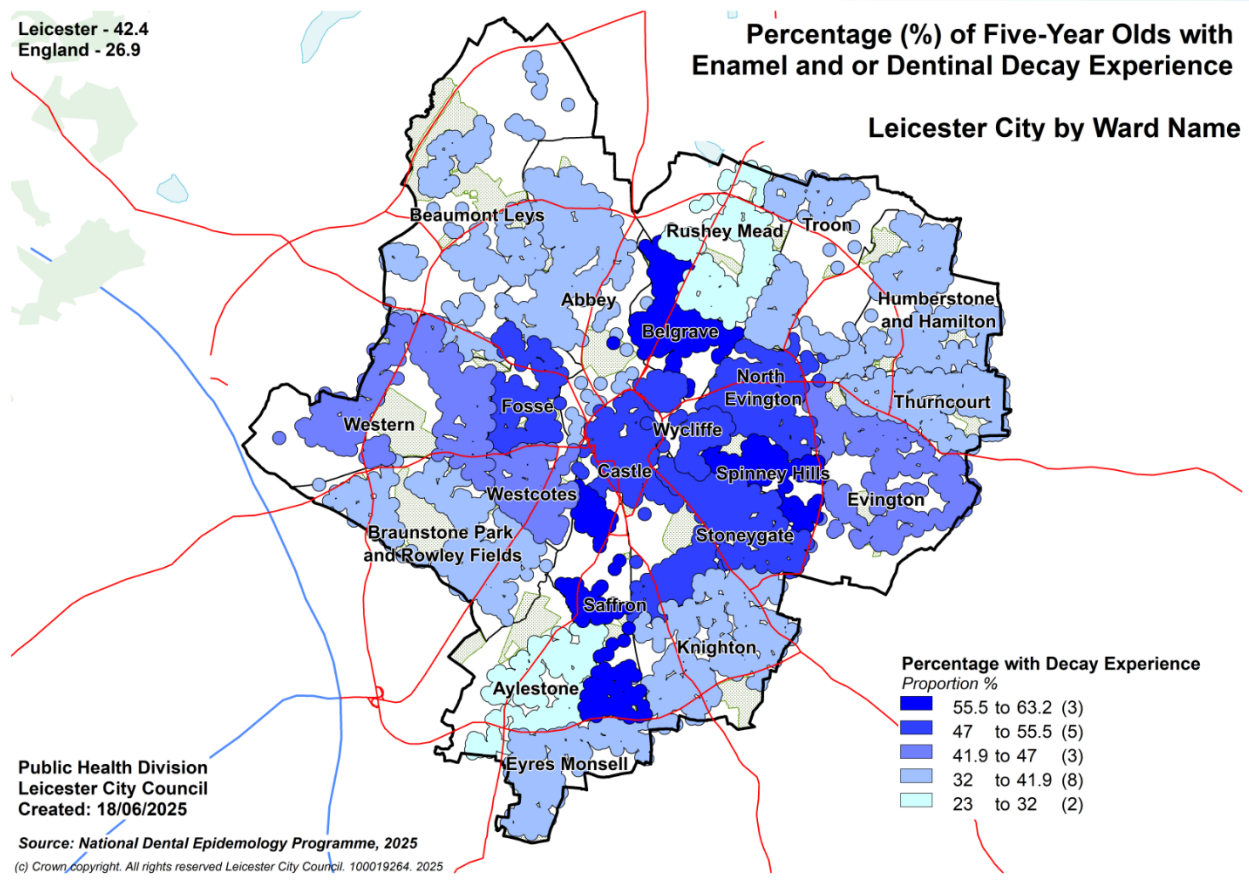
Both these indicators of child oral health show the lower prevalence reported in local authorities with fluoridated water.

Note: No participation from Slough in the 2024 survey

Prevalence of enamel and or dentinal decay 2022 & 2024



Enamel and Dentinal Decay - Mapping



Higher prevalences of enamel and decay experience by Leicester Ward are concentrated in the city's Centre and East.

Spinney Hills had the highest prevalence with nearly two thirds (63%) of 5-year-olds examined found to have visible signs of enamel or dentinal decay. Meanwhile Aylestone, the prevalence was 23%. This was the lowest of all wards.

While there are a range of values represented in this map, no Ward has been calculated as significantly different to the overall prevalence

Child tooth extractions in Leicester by MSOA:

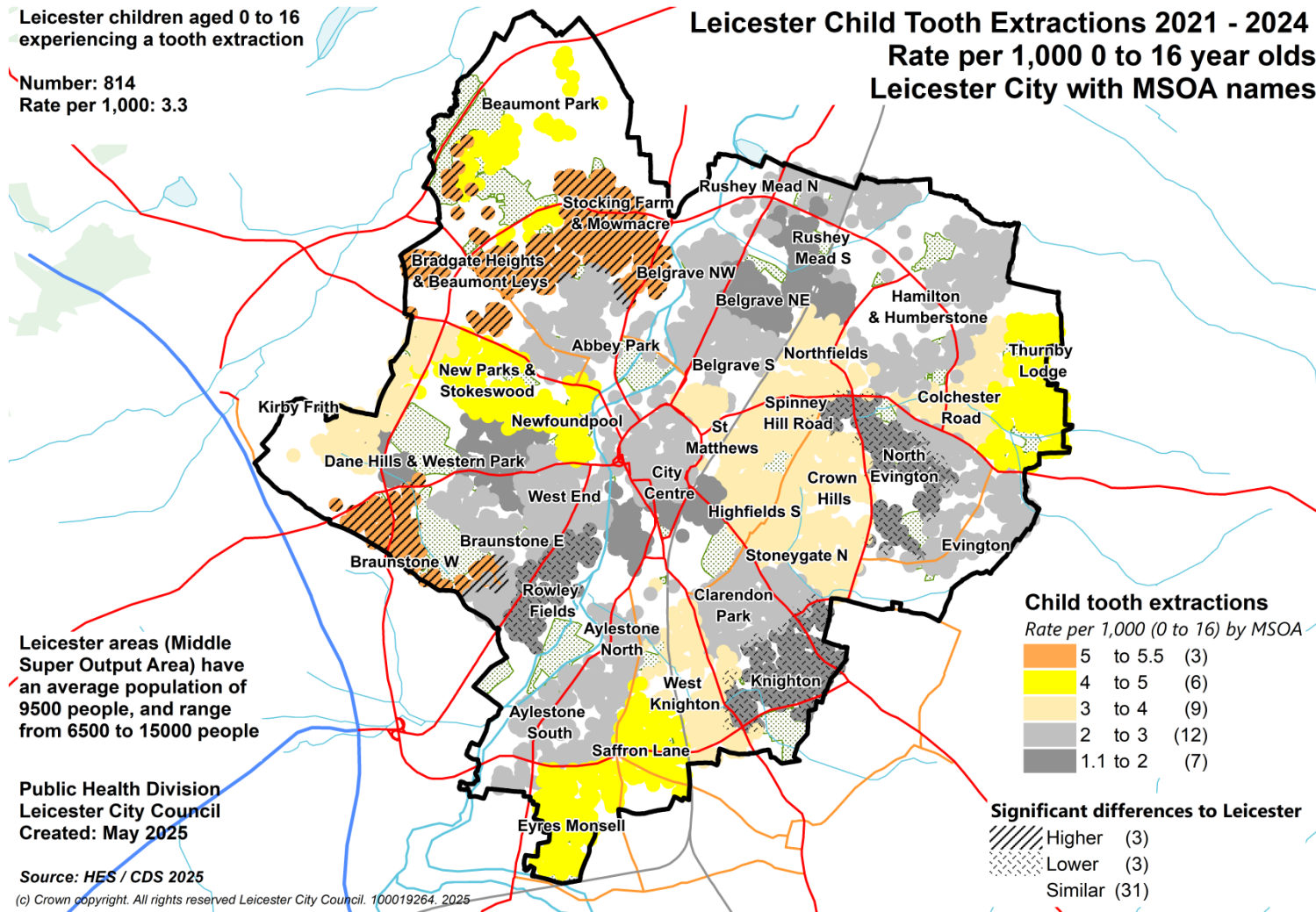
Some of the most deprived MSOAs in the city are reporting significantly higher rates of child tooth extraction including Braunstone, Stocking Farm and Mowmacre, and Beaumont Leys.

Other deprived areas including Eyres Monsell, Saffron, New Parks, and Thurnby Lodge also report high rates.

Leicester children aged 0 to 16 experiencing a tooth extraction

Number: 814
Rate per 1,000: 3.3

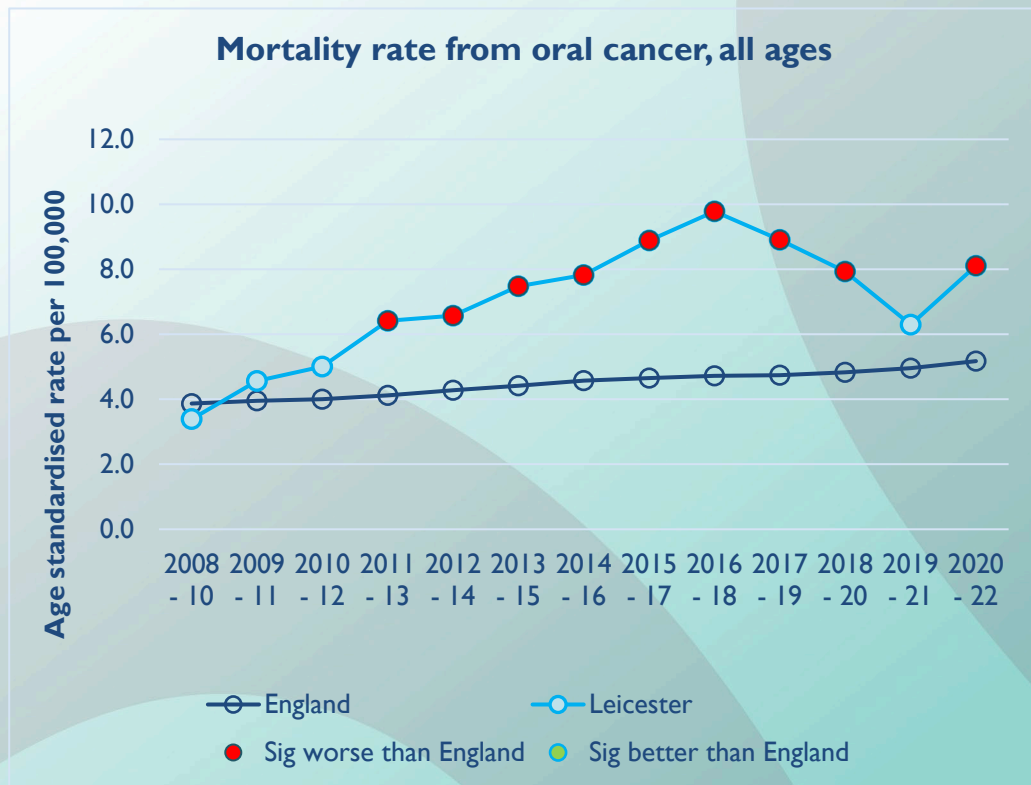
Leicester Child Tooth Extractions 2021 - 2024 Rate per 1,000 0 to 16 year olds Leicester City with MSOA names



Oral Cancer: Leicester reports the third highest oral cancer mortality rate in the country. The chart shows that Leicester has reported significantly higher rates of oral cancer compared to England for many years.

Further local analysis of admissions for Oral Cancer reveal:

- Highest among individuals aged 55-74
- Males have significantly higher oral cancer admission rates than females in most of the age groups.
- White British individuals have the highest overall admission rates, particularly between ages 55-74.
- Higher number of admissions in younger age groups (under 55) in BAME communities than in White: British populations.



Public Health Actions & Partnership

- Leicester City Council chair the Oral Health Promotion Partnership Board
 - Letter sent to Secretary of State requesting that Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) is considered for fluoridation.
- Close work with the ICB supporting their dental with data and support to access communities.
- Ongoing work with UHL to look at clinical data to better understand the risk factors that have caused oral cancer in the local communities and prevent further cases.
- Supporting efforts to increase dental access for those experiencing homelessness.
- Promotion of health improvement across all populations via the LiveWell service.
- Campaign Support
 - Mouth Cancer Action Month
 - National Smile Month
 - Fizz Free February
- Oral health resources provided for all early years children.

Public Health Actions Supporting Early Years Children

- Supervised Toothbrushing (STB) programme within nurseries, playgroups and childminders.
- Toothbrushing sessions within community organisations.
- Oral health resource distribution via Family Hubs, Healthy Together Programme, Libraries and events.
- Smile Early Years Award accreditation scheme for early years settings.
- Training for health professionals and community organisations.

Supervised Toothbrushing Programme

Evidence based programme to reduce decay amongst children, universally offered for free to all Early Years Settings and Primary Schools in Leicester.



Supervised Toothbrushing programme



Overall Uptake in Early Years Settings in Leicester City

- Positive uptake amongst early years settings contributed to a significant improvement in decay levels amongst 5-year-olds.
- Due to covid, the programme was paused resulting in reduced resumption.
- 2694 children within nurseries, pre-schools and childminders currently take part in daily STB within their educational setting.

Supervised Tooth Brushing

Programme Overview: Early Years Settings

Data as of 17th June 2026

230

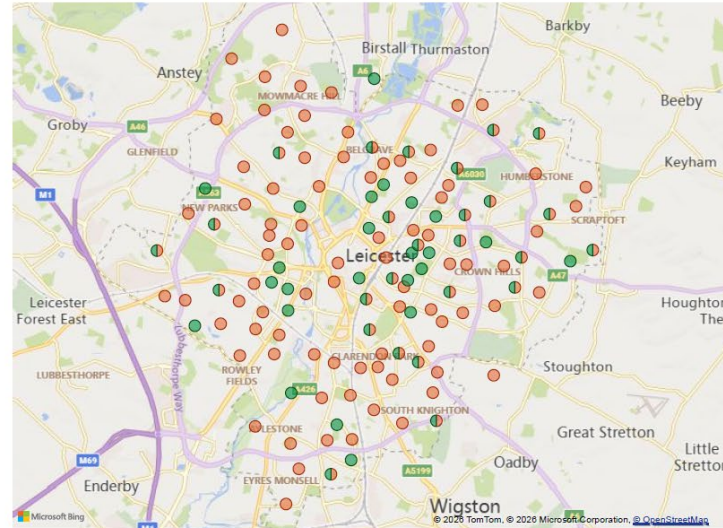
60

Map of Early Years Settings in Leicester

Total Number of EY Sites

Number Participating in STB

Offers STB ● No ● Yes

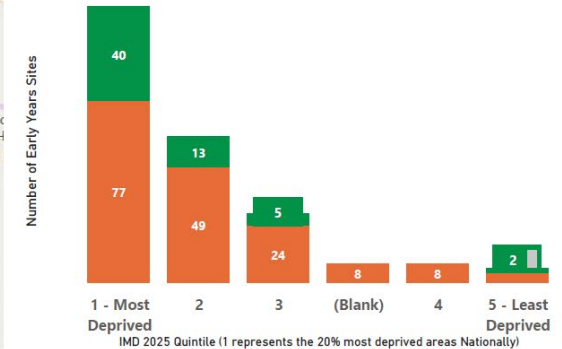


Type of EY Setting

Type of EY Setting	No	Yes	Total
Academy/Trust Preschool	28	6	34
Childminder	58	2	60
Creche	2		2
Independent school with nursery/pre-school	6	2	8
Maintained School - Preschool/Nursery	26	5	31
Nursery	37	34	71
Pre-schools Inc Playgroups	13	11	24
Total	170	60	230

STB Participation by Area Deprivation

Offers STB ● No ● Yes



Geography based graphs incl. maps and bar graph showing deprivation only account for sites for which complete postcodes are available. This means that a large proportion of Childminder settings are not captured here, but they are in the table of counts.

Overall Uptake in Primary Schools in Leicester City

- Reception aged children within primary schools are invited to participate. In the STB programme.
- Universal offer for all primary schools and SEND schools in Leicester.
- 1822 children within primary schools are currently taking part in daily STB within their educational setting.

Supervised Tooth Brushing

Programme Overview: School Settings

Data as of 17th June 2026

101

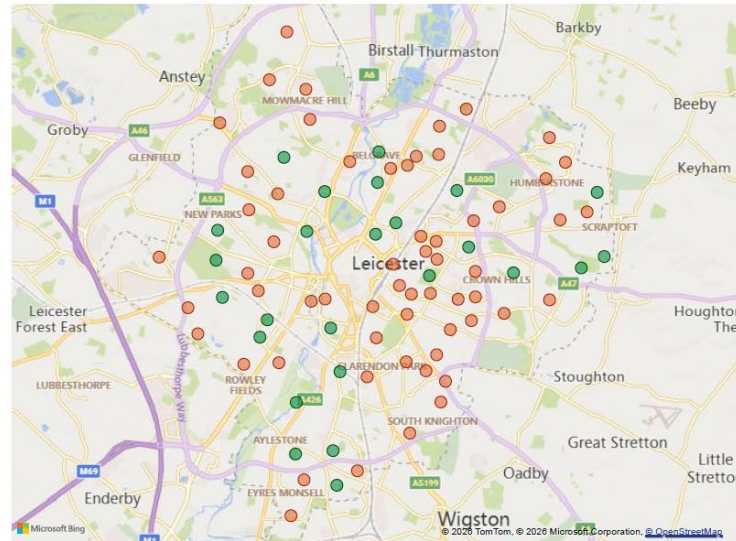
Total Number of School Settings

26

Number Participating in STB

Map of School Settings in Leicester

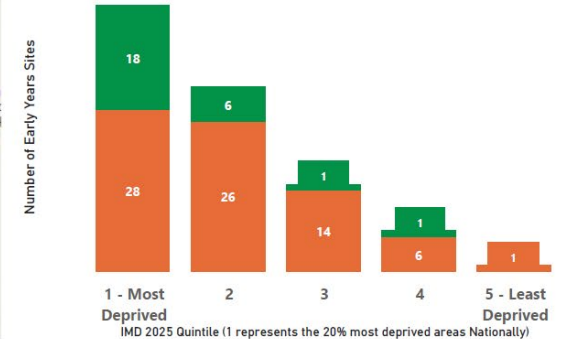
Offers STB ● No ● Yes



Type of School	No	Yes	Total
Academy/Trust	27	13	40
Maintained Primary School	25	10	35
Other independent school	12	12	24
Other independent special school	3	3	6
Primary School	1	1	2
Special School	7	3	10
Total	75	26	101

STB Participation by Area Deprivation

Offers STB ● No ● Yes



Geography based graphs incl. maps and bar graph showing deprivation only account for sites for which complete postcodes are available.

STB Programme Funding

- Leicester City Council received an additional £119,088 for 25/26 to enhance the supervised toothbrushing programme for children aged 3, 4 and 5 in the most deprived communities.
- Funding eligibility and allocations are based on the number of 3- to 5-year-old children living in the 20% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- Leicester City Council have also received toothbrushes and toothpaste through a donation from Colgate-Palmolive. This is a commitment for 5 years starting in 2025/26.

Progress

- Increase in number of early years settings and schools participating in the STB programme within IMD 1&2.
- Video resources created to support and increase participation in STB.
- Distribution of Colgate resources via Healthy Together programme, Family Hubs and Libraries.
- Increased team capacity and support to participating settings,
 - Parents evenings
 - Workshops
 - Training
- Childminders now included in the STB offer.
- Toothbrushing activity within community settings.
 - Family Hubs
 - Femina

Public Health Actions Supporting Adults

Oral Health

- Increasing knowledge of support staff.
- Distribution of oral health resources including Family Packs of toothpaste, toothbrush and literature at food aid provision, hotels for displaced families, homeless teams.
- Diet , Smoking and Alcohol consumption all affect dental health and some contribute to oral cancer .The wider Public Health team provide lifestyle and nutrition advice, stop smoking services and commission Turning Point to provide advice and support to people who consume alcohol .

Oral Cancer

- Working with University Hospital of Leicester to understand the risk factors impacting Leicester.
- Community support to improve risk factor awareness and behaviour change that are associated with mouth cancer e.g. Chewing tobacco and betel nut.
- Co-production of promotional assets for Mouth Cancer Action Month.
- Mouth Cancer Action Plan including training pharmacists to recognise oral cancers, refresh training with GPs, improved data collection across the health system, improving HPV vaccination uptake,

Public Health Actions Supporting Care Homes Residents

Maintaining good oral health throughout life and into older age improves general health and wellbeing, and plays an important part in helping people stay independent.

The Care Quality Commission report Smiling matters: oral health in care homes showed that too many people living in care homes were not being supported to maintain and improve their oral health.



Free oral health training for care homes

Leicester City Council are pleased to offer free oral health training and support to care homes in Leicester City, to enable your care team to effectively support residents with their daily oral hygiene.

Training includes:

- CQC requirements for oral health care
- Causes and prevention of dental diseases
- Practical guidance on how to assist residents with oral hygiene
- How to complete oral health assessments



To book a session:

Email us:  HealthyTeethHappySmiles@leicester.gov.uk

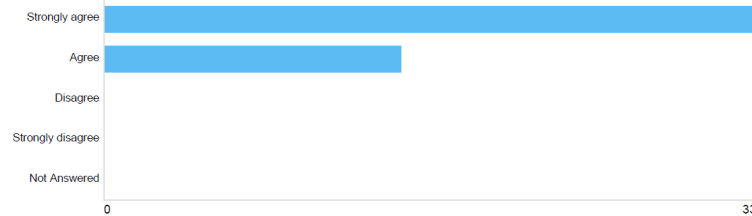


Uptake and Feedback:

Activity	Number
Total number of care homes	94
Care homes visited	21
Staff trained*	248

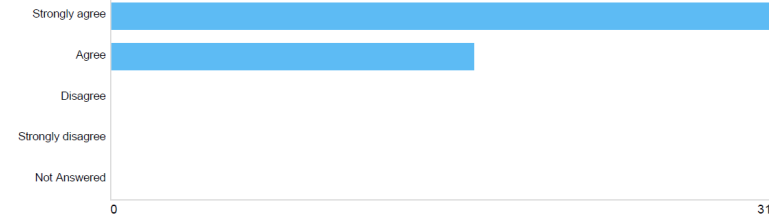


Training and course quality - I learned practical tips and guidance on how to get oral health messages into my setting



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	33	68.75%
Agree	15	31.25%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Training and course quality - I would recommend this session to a colleague



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	31	64.58%
Agree	17	35.42%
Disagree	0	0.00%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

*Staff trained include managers, deputies, care leaders and oral health champions

Further Information

1. National data and reporting is available here: [National Dental Epidemiology Programme \(NDEP\) for England: oral health survey of 5 year old children 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-dental-epidemiology-programme-ndep-for-england-oral-health-survey-of-5-year-old-children-2022)
2. Local information and oral health guidance is available here: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/get-oral-health-advice/healthy-teeth-happy-smiles/>
3. The latest oral health needs assessment (2023) for Leicester City is available here: [Oral health \(leicester.gov.uk\)](https://www.leicester.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/needs-assessment/2023-oral-health-needs-assessment/)
4. Oral cancer admissions are not published and therefore comparator data is not available.
5. Further information on published oral cancer mortality data can be found online here: [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](https://www.leicester.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/fingertips/)
6. Further information on HES admissions: [Hospital Episode Statistics \(HES\) - NHS England Digital](https://www.nhs.uk/health-episode-statistics/)



Leicester City Health Scrutiny Meeting

Dental Update – Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB

A proud partner in the:

Leicester, Leicestershire
and Rutland
Health and Wellbeing Partnership

The Current NHS Dental Contract

NHS dentistry has always operated as a capacity limited service rather than a universal one. Understanding how the contract was designed helps explain the access challenges seen today.

2006

The current contract begins. Practices are paid to deliver a fixed number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) each year.

Today

ICBs commission dental services locally, within the same fixed activity framework and a finite national budget.

Funding Covers Around Half the Population

~50%

NHS dental funding has only ever been intended to provide care for around half of the population. ICBs commission a fixed volume of activity each year; the contract has never funded universal access.

Dental Registration Does Not Exist

No Patient List

Unlike GP services, patients are not registered with a dental practice. The relationship lasts only for the duration of a course of treatment, and practices have no contractual obligation to offer ongoing care.

UDA Services — Delivery by Reporting Year

The table below reflects UDA delivery performance across the LLR contract portfolio over three reporting years. Performance has improved year-on-year, with 2025/26 showing strong recovery to 93.6% delivery.

Reporting Year	UDA Delivered %	Commentary
2024/2025	88.8%	Recovery year post-COVID — contracts rebasing underway, access improving across LLR
2025/2026	93.6%	Strong improvement — adult and child dental access surpassing national averages across LLR
2026/2027	12.8%	Year-to-date (partial year) — on track in line with seasonal delivery profile

88.8%

2024/25 Delivery

Prior year baseline

93.6%

2025/26 Delivery

Year-end outturn

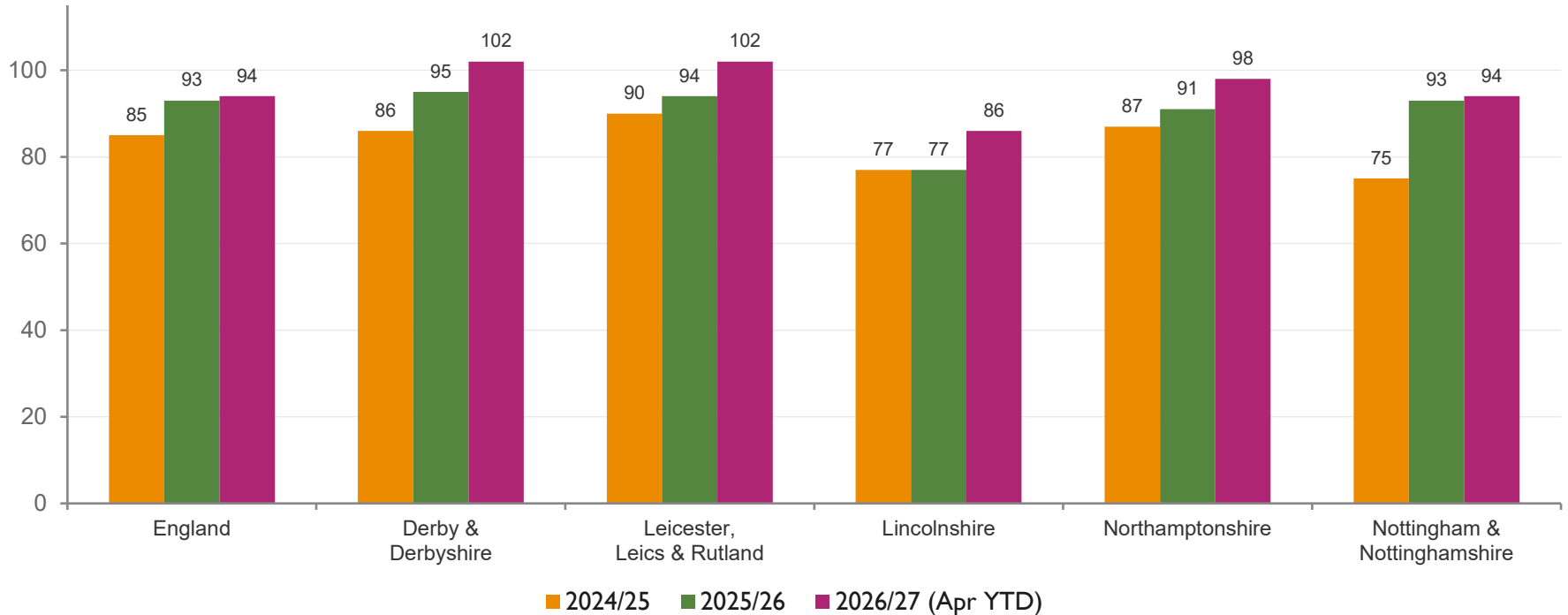
+4.8pp

Year-on-Year Improvement

Percentage point gain

UDA Delivery — Regional Comparison

Comparison of standardised UDA delivery (% of contracted activity) for LLR against England and neighbouring ICBs. LLR consistently outperforms both national and most regional benchmarks.



Patients Seen — Regional Comparison (2025/26)

Unique patients seen data for 2025/26 year-end. Children are counted over a rolling 12-month period; adults over a rolling 24-month period. All figures sourced from NHS Business Services Authority dental pack.

Area	Unique Patients (Adults 24-mth)	Unique Children (12-mth)	Total CoTs Delivered	Year-end UDA %
England	18,390,911	7,387,795	3,121,751	93%
Leicester, Leics & Rutland	394,483	167,209	66,211	94%
Derby & Derbyshire	405,931	148,689	64,538	95%
Nottingham & Nottinghamshire	425,319	164,213	73,100	93%
Northamptonshire	236,243	108,241	38,933	91%
Lincolnshire	250,685	89,608	36,345	77%

Key Takeaways

- **LLR delivered 94% of contracted UDAs in 2025/26 — above the England average of 93% and second highest among comparator ICBs**
- **LLR saw 167,209 unique children in the 12-month period, and 394,483 adults over 24 months**

Leicester City Dental — Performance Overview 2025/26

Headline UDA delivery and patient access metrics for Leicester City in 2025/26. Contract-level detail is provided in the accompanying Excel attachment.

£20.96m

UDA Financial Value

2025/26 contracted value

100.06%*

UDA Delivery

623,311 of 622,950 target

3.6 km

Average Distance

Travelled to access NHS dentistry

56

Active Contracts

Delivering across Leicester City

Latest dental access data from NHS BSA - January - June 2025.

Latest population data from ONS - Mid year 2024

Number of contracts/practices in this area = 170

Access Decile: 8 (1 = poor access, 10 = good access)

Group	Pop. Accessing NHS Dentistry (LLR)	Total Pop.	Access Rate	Comparison to National Average
Adult	222,770	929,150	23.98 %	Higher than national average of 21.40 %
Child	123,002	246,214	49.96 %	Higher than national average of 43.33 %
All	345,658	1,175,364	29.41 %	Higher than national average of 25.95 %

*Performance delivery includes additional 110% Overperformance funding

Improving Access — Urgent Care & Contract Rebasing

Urgent & Unscheduled Care (8.2% Directive)

56,736

Urgent care appointments commissioned in LLR

Specified urgent care slots have been introduced into all high street dental practices across LLR, in line with the 8.2% government directive.

Commissioned across 127 contracts, this expands timely access to unscheduled NHS dental care for patients in urgent need.

22,931 of these appointments are commissioned to Leicester City providers across 56 contracts.

Contract Rebasing

6,562

UDAs rebased from underperforming providers

Following the contract rebasing process, UDAs have been recovered from underperforming dental providers.

This activity will be redistributed into Leicester City to providers with a strong track record of delivery. The process is due to commence in July 2026.

110% Overperformance Scheme

The 110% overperformance scheme commissions additional UDAs from high performing providers. The 2026/27 round is now out to invite for expressions of interest.

54,023

**Additional UDAs Awarded in LLR.
24,726 in Leicester City**

Across the 2025/26 scheme

40

Contracts

Participated in 2025/26

£1.8m

Funding Committed

To the 2025/26 scheme

Looking Ahead — 2026/27

In 2025/26 the scheme was offered to providers in November. Because the 2026/27 round has opened earlier in the year, uptake is expected to be higher and the number of additional UDAs awarded is likely to increase.

High Needs Patient Pilot — Leicester City

A non-recurrent dental access pilot helping vulnerable, high needs patients into NHS dental care through a low barrier community referral route.

12,000

UDAs Commissioned

Non-recurrent activity

7

Providers

Within 5 miles of LE1

£36

Per UDA

Premium incentive rate

£432,000

Total Investment

Commissioned value

Why It Matters

Oral cancer incidence in Leicester City is around 22.7 per 100,000, well above the England average of 15.4, with some of the highest oral cancer mortality in the country.

Risk is heightened by habits such as shisha smoking and chewing paan or betel nut, and by deprivation.

High needs patients remain the least likely to access NHS dentistry regularly, despite having the greatest need.

How It Works

- 1 Identified at a community partner (food bank, homelessness or drug and alcohol service).
- 2 A low barrier MS Form referral is completed at the point of contact.
- 3 The ICB allocates the referral to a provider with capacity.
- 4 The provider books the appointment; family may also attend.

Modelled on the West Midlands pilot: 2,300+ referrals, reduced A&E admissions.

Procurement Update — IMOS & Orthodontics

Intermediate Minor Oral Surgery (IMOS)

What it is: IMOS provides specialist led oral surgery in a community setting, bridging the gap between general dental practice and hospital based oral and maxillofacial surgery.

Procedures include surgical extractions, removal of impacted or buried teeth and retained roots, soft tissue biopsies and the removal of cysts.

Patients are referred by their dentist, reducing pressure on hospital services and improving access to care closer to home.

Status: procurement due to be awarded imminently with 3 lots live across Leicestershire.

Orthodontics

An Orthodontic procurement is due to begin across the East Midlands in 2026.

Current Orthodontic contracts will be extended in the interim to maintain continuity of patient care.

The ICB is finalising the additional orthodontic activity to be included within the procurement.

A two stage approach will first stabilise existing providers, then new services will be commissioned in areas of high need.

Status: contract extensions in progress; scope being finalised.

NHS Dentistry Quality Improvement Programme

A new national NHS dentistry quality improvement (QI) programme began in April 2026. It is a voluntary, structured three year programme, with each year focusing on a different nationally selected topic.

58

LLR Practices Signed Up. 27 of these are based in Leicester City.

Voluntary participation, Year 1

230

Cluster Sign-ups

Across the LNR and DLN ICBs

3 years

National Programme

New topic each year from 2026

Year 1 Focus (2026/27) — Dental Recall Intervals

Year 1 focuses on assigning dental recall intervals in line with NICE guidelines, supporting consistent, evidence based and risk based decisions for each patient.

This reduces clinically unnecessary check ups for lower risk patients, protects access for those with greater need, and helps tackle health inequalities.

Practices use structured improvement (PDSA) cycles, monthly national data packs and peer review to test, measure and embed changes.

Community Dental Service (CDS) — Overview & 2025/26 Performance

About the Service

Commissioned and delivered by Community Dental Services CIC (CDS-CIC) for patients whose needs cannot be met in general dental practice due to additional medical, physical or behavioural needs.

Who it is for: severe learning disability or challenging behaviour, severe mental health needs, severe medical or physical compromise, **Looked After Children** unable to access general dental practice, and treatment resistant dental phobia.

Care provided: behavioural management, conscious sedation (inhalation and IV), general anaesthesia (paediatric and adult) and domiciliary care.

Clinics: Westcotes, Merlyn Vaz, Loughborough Hospital, Melton Mowbray Hospital and Hinckley Health Centre (under review).

2025/26 Performance

3,708

Referrals Received

+13% on 2024/25

2,068

Referrals Accepted

55% acceptance rate

28 wks

Average Wait

To first appointment

8,439

UDAs Delivered

80% of 10,500 target

309

Conscious Sedation

351% of annual target

577

Paediatric GA

Patients treated under GA

96% of Friends and Family responses rated the service Very Good or Good in 2025/26 | 538 patient compliments received

CDS Support Practice Scheme

The CDS Support Practice Scheme is a commissioned pilot whereby less complex referrals received by the Community Dental Service are onwardly referred to a designated to the Leicester City Based support practice, ensuring patients can access treatment sooner.

52

Sessions Commissioned

Across the pilot year

79

Additional Course of Treatment

Delivered in 2025/26

31 Mar 2027

Pilot End Date

Subject to recurrent procurement

How the Scheme Works

1

Referral received by CDS

2

CDS triages & identifies lower-complexity

3

Onward referral to Leicestershire Support Practice

4

Patient receives treatment sooner

5

CDS capacity preserved for high-complexity

⚠ The pilot is due to conclude on 31 March 2027. Work is currently underway to secure recurrent commissioning of the scheme beyond this date.