



Care Home Manager's Knowledge and Experience Accessing Dental Services

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Background

COVID-19 has increased oral health inequalities faced by older people living in care homes. It is vital that care home managers are confident in supporting residents to access appropriate dental services. 'Smiling Matters', a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report identified the oral health of people living in care homes as very poor and requiring improvement. The report highlighted that access to dental care especially domiciliary and urgent care is a significant problem.

Introduction

A previous project showed a relatively low number of referrals for domiciliary dental care from care home managers in the Surrey region. When compared to other sources of referrals.

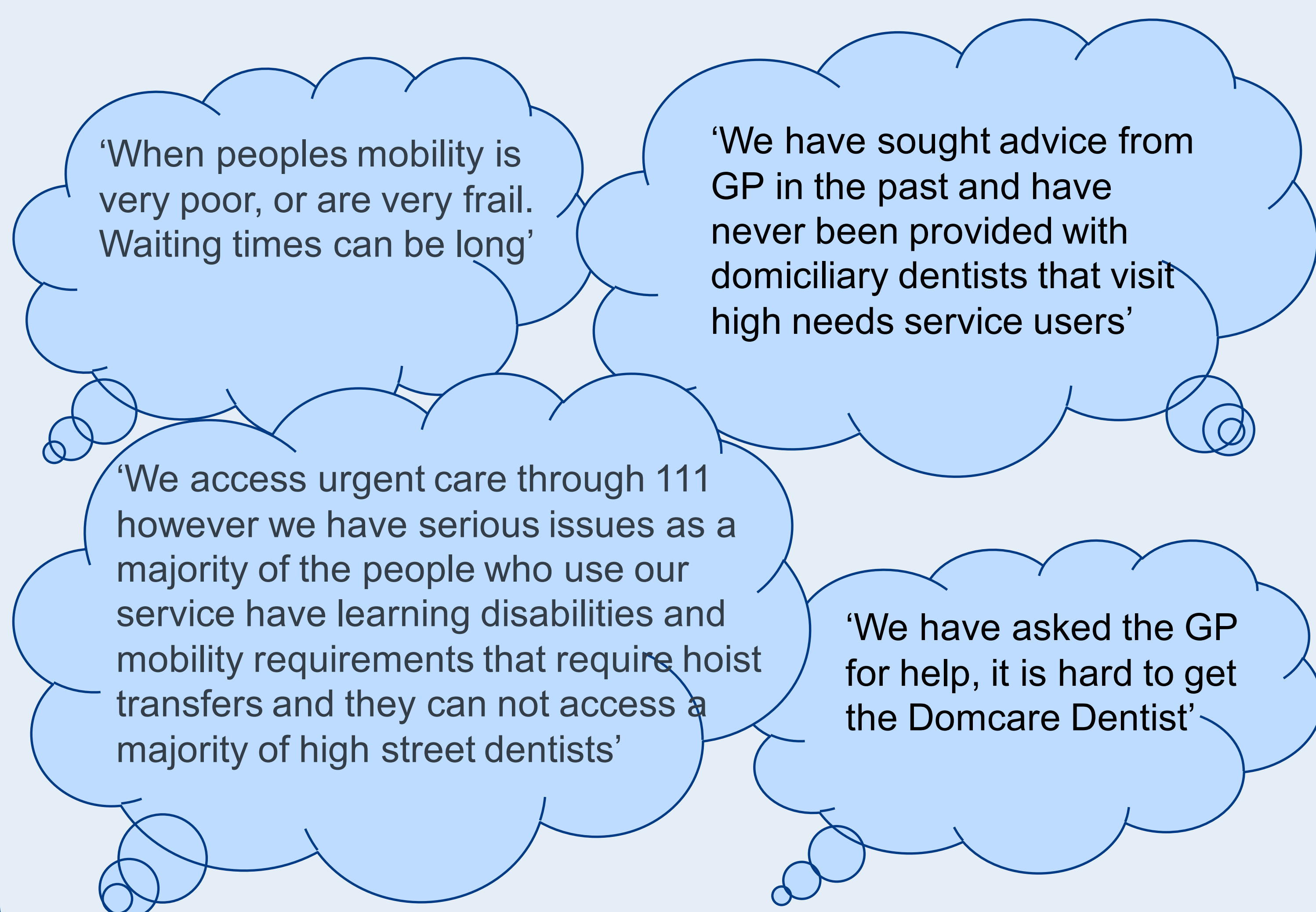
Aim

- Investigate current knowledge of care home managers in supporting their residents to access dental services and how this can be improved

Method

- Questionnaire to care home managers via survey monkey in the Surrey region identified through the local care home forum and lead nurse for care homes January 2020
- Data collection and care homes offered training
- Teaching and networking sessions at local care home managers forum and GP training

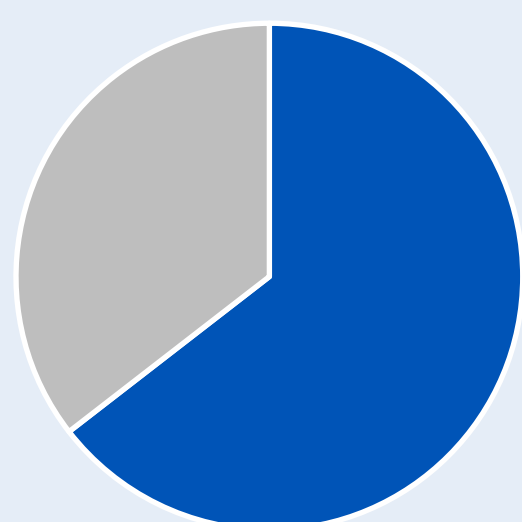
Figure 1. Examples of care home manager's comments on dental services. A recurring issue was uncertainty with how to refer complex patients



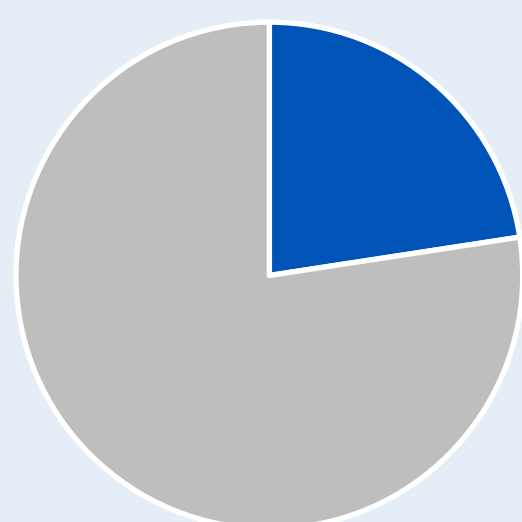
Results

Completed Questionnaires were received from 31 care home managers. Key findings include:

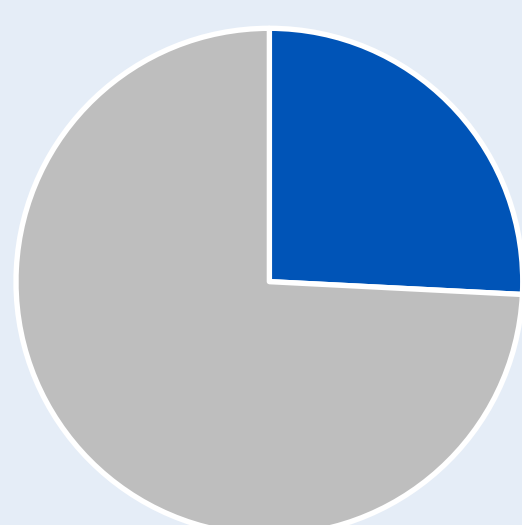
- 65%** (n=20) were aware of domiciliary dental services



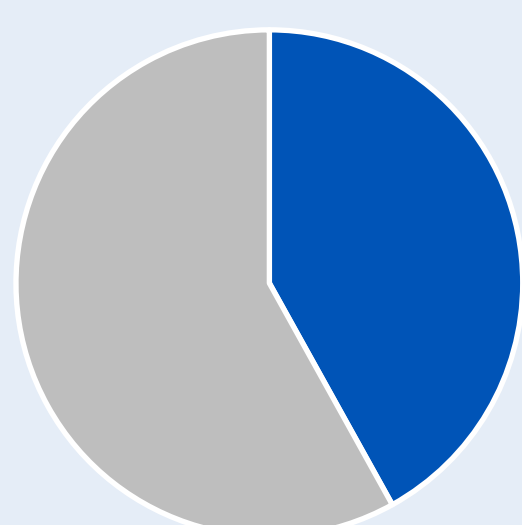
- 23%** (n=7) have guidance on how to refer residents to a dentist



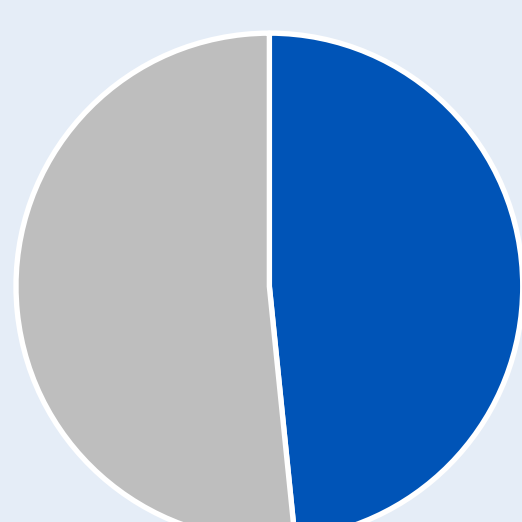
- 26%** (n=8) report residents could access dental care in a timely manner (6 weeks)



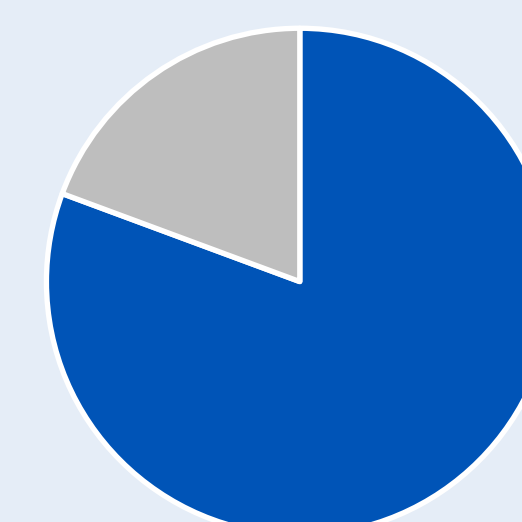
- 42%** (n=13) report residents are not able to access urgent dental treatment



- 48%** (n=15) could refer residents for dental care who need a home visit



- 81%** (n=25) felt barriers exist to accessing dental care: Reasons include cost, availability and long waits. Multiple comments that care homes ask GPs to refer which is unsuccessful



Discussion and Action Plan

It is clear prior to COVID-19 care home managers felt barriers exist to accessing dental care for their residents and they felt under confident in referring patients when required. Oral health inequalities have increased due to the pandemic and care home managers should feel confident referring their most complex and vulnerable patients to the most appropriate service. In order to address these issues:

- Attendance at care home managers forum
- Networking with key referrers and PCNs
- Regular attendance at MDT care home meetings
- Attendance at local GP forum



Figure 2. A 'pre-Covid' care home forum meeting.

References

- British Society for Disability & Oral Health Working Group (2009) Guidelines for the delivery of domiciliary oral health care service
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Smiling Matters 2018
- Scottish Dental Care Needs Assessment Report, NHS Scotland (2010)

