

It's normal to be nervous about the dentist – being clear about your health and what you want will take away some of the stress. **Fill in your answers and take it with you!**

3 The fill-in sections help you record relevant details for when you see a dentist.

2 Helps you to spot early warning signs that a problem might be developing.

1 It offers steps you can take to look after your teeth and mouth better.

This Action Guide can help you improve your health!

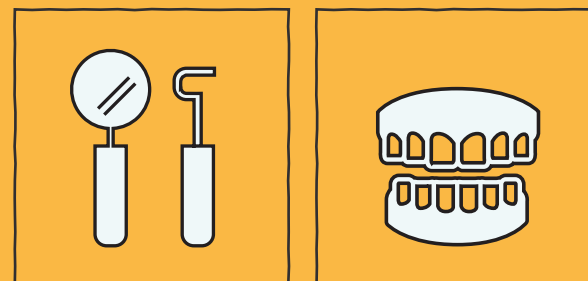
What is an Action Guide?

Looking after your teeth and mouth can help you feel positive about yourself and prevents health issues to developing. Cleaning your teeth and regular visits to the dentist is key to this.

Introduction

Groundswell

Out of homelessness



Healthy Mouths

Action Guide

3: Do I smoke tobacco? How much a day?

2: Where in my mouth am I experiencing difficulties? E.g. which teeth?

- Bleeding or Swollen Gums
- Bad breath
- Pain in your teeth or mouth
- Loose teeth
- Sensitive Teeth

6: What other health conditions do I have?

5: What medication am I on?

4: Do I drink alcohol? How much a day?

- 8: Do I have any of the following?**
- Mouth ulcers that don't heal in 3 weeks
 - Red and white patches in your mouth
 - Lumps or swellings in your mouth
 - Difficulties swallowing, speaking or moving your jaw
- These can be warning signs of mouth cancer. It's better to get it checked quickly so that you know it's not a problem for you.

7: Is there anything I want the dentist to know about me and how I like to be treated?

Why see a dentist?

You should see a dentist at least once a year. Lots of people get nervous about this and put it off especially if it doesn't feel like much is wrong. But dentists are there to help and its best to get things sorted before you're in pain.

If you're worried speak to the dentist and agree on a sign you can make at any time in your treatment to say STOP!

Finding a dentist

If you don't have a dentist, the easiest way to find one is to call 111. They will ask your name, date of birth and the postcode for the area you are in. They can search for local dentists who are taking NHS patients. Make sure it's a dentist that is happy to work with you. Details of the dentist I can sign up with:

Cost and access to treatment

If you're on most benefits you can get NHS dentistry for free. You need to fill out an HC1 form which is easy to get online and most dentists and homelessness services can help. Having proof of your benefits may help when signing up.

“

When I got my teeth sorted it was amazing. It took me ages to stop putting my hand over my mouth. Even just seeing the look in peoples' eyes. I don't know if they sensed that I was more at ease with myself when I smiled. They could smile with me. I actually feel that getting my teeth sorted has helped me to turn a corner. They don't hurt anymore and I'm not drinking now. I'm not embarrassed. I can start looking to the future.

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Find more info and advice at:

Oral Health Foundation: 01788 539780

www.dentalhealth.org

NHS 111 Call: 111

www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth

Healthy Mouths Action Guide

This is a Groundswell Action Guide – using it to improve your health! We spoke to over 260 people experiencing homelessness in London. We found that problems with teeth and mouth health was a serious issue for many. This Action Guide includes our finding and gives practical steps you can take to improve your health.

Groundswell

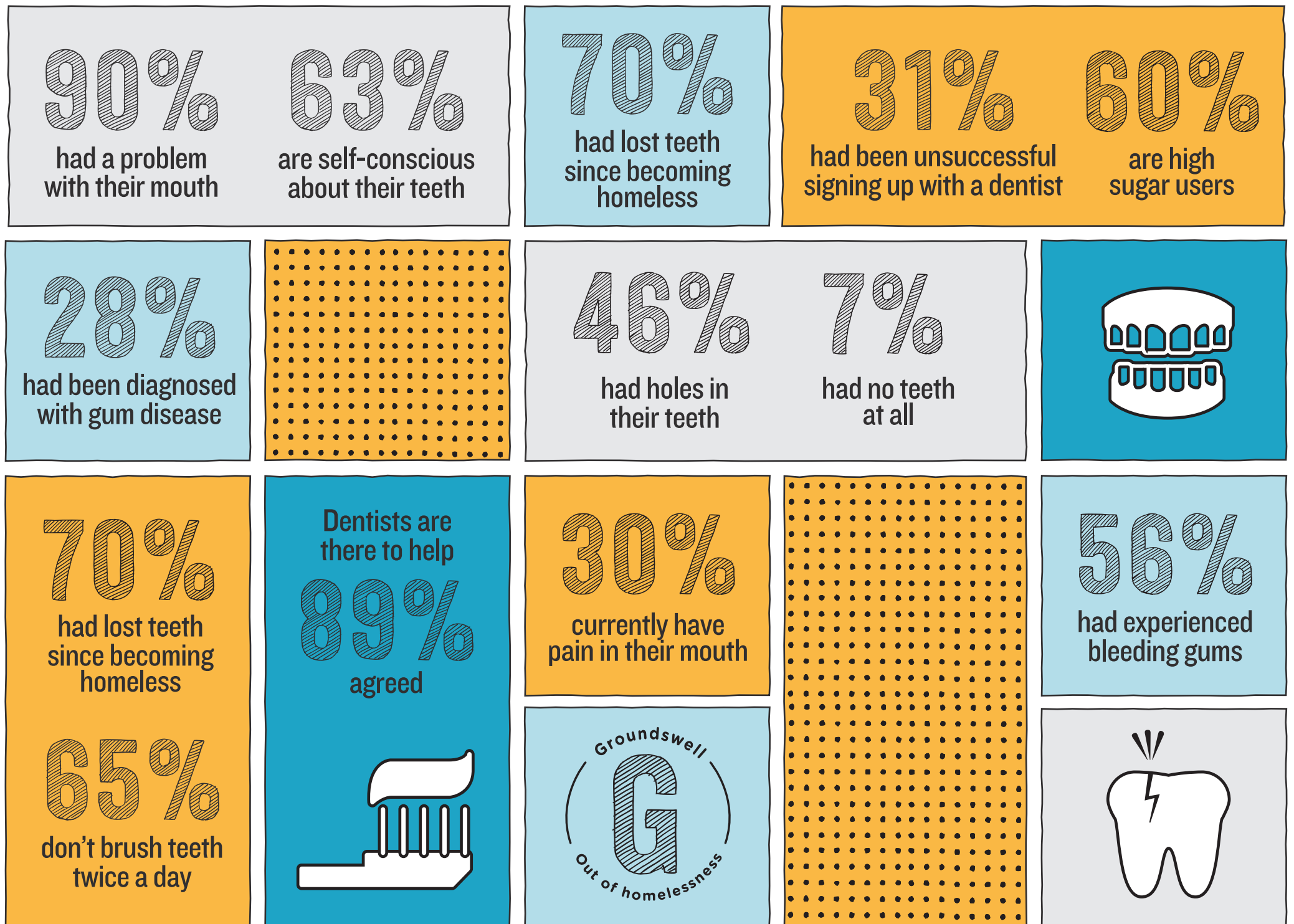
Groundswell is a charity that involves homeless people in creating solutions to homelessness. Our Peer Advocates support homeless people to get to health appointments and address health issues – Peer Advocates have all been homeless themselves.

- 0300 039 600
- www.groundswell.org.uk
- @ItsGroundswell



Groundswell

Groundswell spoke to over 260 people experiencing homelessness about their health. We found:



Taking Care of Your Mouth

- Brush your teeth twice a day. Brushing last thing at night is really important.
- Do not rinse your mouth with water after you brush your teeth. Rinsing your mouth with water washes away the toothpaste.
- Toothpaste must have fluoride in it. Only use the one meant for adults.
- Visit the dentist regularly to check that both your teeth and mouth are healthy, even if you don't have any natural teeth left.
- Clean between your teeth every day using floss or small brushes.
- If you use methadone, brush your teeth before and rinse your mouth with water after you take your methadone.
- If you smoke or drink alcohol going to the dentist is even more important.
- If your gums bleed brush again.
- Cut down on sugary food and drinks and try to have them only with meals.