



Hygienists

opportunity

to develop innovative projects

Children, homeless people and dementia sufferers are all benefiting from the commitment and passion of dental hygienists and dental therapists who have won grants for their innovative schemes to improve oral health. The British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) teamed up with the Wrigley Company Foundation to offer its members the opportunity to win grants of up to £1500 to improve oral health in their local area. Here is an overview of the winning three projects:



Dental Buddies

Ruth Potterton, a lecturer in Community Based Dentistry at the Peninsula Dental School impressed

the judges with her idea to create a buddy system among children to encourage good oral health.

Working in partnership with Well Connected, an organisation with extensive expertise in facilitating oral health initiatives in local communities, the concept is to group children together in teams of 'Dental Buddies' where they will learn about oral health and how it impacts their general health and self-esteem. Children participating will be able to join workshops that will combine exciting educational activities with examples about how to share this information with their peers.

When asked about her win Ruth responded: 'It is fantastic to have been successful with the application and we have been delighted with the response from the organisations we are working with to deliver 'Dental Buddies: One Step Beyond'. Teamwork is really important to

us and this is a brilliant opportunity to work with colleagues across the dental team to encourage children to really take an interest in and look after their oral health.'



Healthy Smiles

Melanie Smith, a dental hygienist at The Bay Dental Practice in Penzance is hoping to increase awareness and

improve the oral health of local children.

'I had already visited schools to provide oral health education. Wanting to make a difference, I realised that with the grant I could achieve a lot more. I could ensure that the children and their carers had all the information they needed to improve their oral health.'

The project is focused primarily on two local primary schools, one of which was particularly concerned with the poor dental health of students, often resulting in absence from school due to dental pain.

The project will involve classroom-based workshops helping children understand the importance of oral health, effective plaque



control and a healthy, low sugar frequency diet. All the children will receive a new toothbrush and toothpaste, as well as a parent/carer information leaflet with advice on plaque control, diet and registering with a dentist. The funding will provide each school with dental teaching aids to support the children's continued learning, alongside the introduction of a dedicated school oral health champion.

'With the remaining money I am working with Breadline in Penzance, a charity committed to helping homeless people in the area. I am hosting workshops within the centre and providing oral health packs to the homeless.'

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Oral Health Within the Dementia Discovery Zone

The third winner was Frances Marriott, a dental hygienist working as an independent oral health educator. Frances provides an evidence-informed oral health education and information service. In support of widening access, her service acts as an additional entry

point for citizens to meet a registered dental professional for dental public health-related information, support and signposting. She also has many years' experience working in special care dental services, supporting people living with complex health and social care needs and their carers.

Frances applied for the BSDHT and Wrigley Company Foundation grant in partnership with Memory Matters South West CIC – a community based organisation that

provides services for people living with dementia and their carers. She provides public oral health drop in sessions and supports the 'Dementia Discovery Zone' for those with dementia and their carers.

The grant will enable her to provide oral health awareness sessions for the volunteers and carers so that oral health promotion can be sustained on site. The funding will allow the centre to spread key dental public health messages, plus explore the provision of sugar free alternatives in the on-site café and facilitate the sale of some assistive oral hygiene items.

Frances adds: 'We were thrilled to be

supported with this grant, which will help us embed oral health within the dementia care pathway. Oral health is a right, not a privilege.'

Fantastic support

The chance to win this grant is just one of the many benefits afforded by being a member of the BSDHT. Those who join the society also have access to year round information and advice, and other perks such as indemnity and tax relief. Ruth Potterton commented about BSDHT membership:

'I believe BSDHT membership is invaluable to both students and qualified dental hygienists and dental therapists for multiple reasons. It offers a reliable source of information, allows opportunity to keep up to date with rapid changes within the profession, provides continued professional development and the chance to learn from and network with colleagues at both local and national levels. As well as providing support and guidance on contractual matters, legal issues and seeking employment, the BSDHT works hard to support its members and develop a profession we feel so passionately about.'

President of BSDHT, Helen Minnerly, commented:

'We are delighted to partner with the Wrigley Company Foundation to support our members. These grant applications reflect the wonderful things our members are doing in their communities. We look forward to receiving more insights in next year's opportunity to apply for grants.'

