

BSPD launches 'Rights from the Start' initiative

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry has launched a new 'Rights from the Start' initiative designed to shine a spotlight on children and young people's rights.

At the centre of this initiative, is a fact sheet outlining these rights according to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Carrying endorsements from the British Dental Association (BDA) and the NSPCC, the fact sheet, which can also be used as a poster, was co-developed with support from the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme.

The aim is to bring clarity for professional colleagues in dentistry, and beyond - to anyone who works with children and young people - so that they can feel confident in their understanding of the rights that they must uphold for the youngest in our society.

Jenny Harris, President of BSPD and Consultant in Community Paediatric Dentistry, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, who conceived the Rights from the Start initiative said: 'It's crucial that inequalities in children's oral health at a population level are tackled and tackled fast. Change is needed soon. Children desperately need far-reaching solutions to uphold their right to the best dental care possible. We are, as yet, a long way off that.'

'But there are also things we can do in our day-to-day clinical practice to respect and uphold individual children's rights. That's what I have focused on in my article in the *British Dental Journal* - things like providing information children can understand, listening to their views and supporting them to make decisions.'

Dr Fiona Gilchrist, Senior Lecturer in

Paediatric Dentistry at The University of Sheffield, who chaired the organising committee for BSPD's 2022 children's rights-themed conference in Sheffield said: 'We have a duty to advocate for children to have equitable access to dental services - including specialist care if required and treatment under general anaesthesia when that is the best option. It is a child's right, but at the moment it is little more than a postcode lottery whether these things are available locally.'

Eddie Crouch, Chair, BDA said: 'A healthy start in life is a fundamental right for all young people, and oral health is too often the missing piece. From the outset, the British Dental Association (BDA) have supported BSPD's important work on Rights from the Start. This profession has a key role to play, to come together to support and uphold these rights.'

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FROM THE START



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that adults should know about children's rights and should help children learn about them (Article 42).

There are four overarching general principles:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interest of the child (Article 3)
- Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- Right to be heard (Article 12)



CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- A name, nationality and identity (Articles 7 & 8)
- Live with their parents, if possible, or with a family that cares for them (Article 9 & 18)
- Extra help and special care if they cannot live with their parents (Article 20), if they are seeking refuge (Article 22) or if they have a disability (Article 23)
- Give their opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously (Article 12)
- Choose their own religion and beliefs (Articles 14 & 20) and choose their own friends (Article 15)
- Information that they can understand, especially information for their health and wellbeing (Article 17)
- Protection from harm, including all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, and harm from drugs, sexual exploitation, trafficking and cruel punishment (Articles 19, 33, 34, 35, 37)
- Help for recovery if they have been hurt, neglected or badly treated (Article 39)
- The best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment (Article 24)
- A good education and encouragement to develop their talents and abilities (Articles 28 & 29)

All children under 18 have these rights, without discrimination (Articles 1 & 2)

Rights from the Start aims to increase dental professionals' awareness of children's rights and to encourage thinking what difference this makes when working with children. Children's rights are interdependent and indivisible, but here we highlight those of particular relevance to dental professionals.



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