



## Jo's Raisin Awareness campaign builds strength

In 2020 dental nurse **Jo Dawson**<sup>1</sup> launched a campaign to eliminate dried fruit from the free fruit snack selection at primary schools. This November she describes how the campaign has picked up momentum and gained wide support.

BDJ Team *previously covered Jo's campaign in 2020<sup>1</sup> and 2021.<sup>2,3,4</sup>*

No matter where we work we are all part of a brilliant team – the wider dental community. I'm absolutely honoured to be involved in this dental nurse themed issue of *BDJ Team*. I've always been proud to say I'm a dental nurse as it is such an important job. I've worked in many practices over the 30 years of my dental nurse career, and I am fortunate to have been employed at Devonshire House Dental Practice (DH) since 2008. It is one of the top practices in the country in patient care, technical experience of clinicians, high standards in cross infection control, latest technology and our own laboratory. It's high

pressure but very rewarding knowing that we're all aiming for that gold standard and our patients are getting the best possible care.

Not only were DH very quick to agree to sponsor the Raisin Swap in my local primary school when I found out that dried fruits were being given out as snacks as part of the SFVS (School Fruit and Vegetable scheme) and that the snack policy allowed cariogenic foods every day, but also when I suggested we could have a greater impact by supplying OHE (oral health education) literature to all families too. Raisin Awareness in primary schools was born, aiming to make all playground snacks tooth-friendly by 2024.

This month I will have the pleasure of

attending an awards ceremony because the practice is a finalist. Whether we win or lose it's a great accolade to be part of such a fabulous team.

### Making a difference

As dental nurses we have the knowledge and skills to make a difference. In the summer, following all the wonderful support I have received from within the dental community, I set up the Raisin Awareness Advisory Board. It is made up of a panel of highly-regarded dental professionals with an incredible breadth and depth of experience to offer input on steering the project forward. I was honoured when Pam Swain (BADN), Nigel Carter OBE (Oral Health Foundation), Ingrid Perry MBE (Founder of Teeth Team, Practice Manager), Simon Hearnshaw (North Yorkshire & Humber LDN), Caroline Holland (BSPD) and Melanie Pomfrett (Philips healthcare) accepted the offer to get involved.

After giving an update on the project and future plans, I listened to the ideas floated and have been working through the suggestions ever since. It has been quite a rollercoaster, with moments of anticipated rejection amidst real momentum. Throughout, I've been meeting new people and expanding the network. I have discovered amazing things happening in different areas which overlap (from school food initiatives to growing projects and environmental/sustainability activities) run through a myriad of councils, social enterprises and charities. Also, I've personally had to learn new skills outside my dental nurse experience (those of you who've seen me on social media will agree that some of my technical abilities require further input!).

### Are you engaged in your local community?

As part of this continued reaching out, I have now been offered opportunities to contribute to developing resources aimed at Out of School settings (OOS), preschools, nurseries, childminders and reception teachers (EYFS) and the Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) in my local area, thereby extending the positive oral health messages deep into the community.

Not long before the publication of Version 4 of the *Delivering better oral health* toolkit,<sup>5</sup> the EYFS statutory guidance *Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework* became effective in September.<sup>6</sup> So now all of these settings have an increased awareness of the need to promote oral health to their children and families. This means that

they are more receptive than ever to dental professionals offering involvement. For example, as an extension of Raisin Awareness in primary schools, the associated early years settings could easily and for very little cost be incorporated to receive digital versions of oral health educational literature and any staff linked to the sponsoring practice would have further opportunities.

here: <https://smilerevolutiongrowthhub.com/who-we-work-with/>.

### Why should your practice get involved?

For all these reasons:

- Helping to improve the oral health of your local community
- Staff personal development and a way to expand your DCP role

*'I've always been proud to say I'm a dental nurse as it's such an important job. Dental nurses have the knowledge and skills to make a difference.'*

### What does this mean to you as a DCP?

Are you passionate about improving children's oral health in your community? Would you like to expand your role to extend beyond the surgery? Would you like your practice to link up with a local primary school and get personally involved in classroom education? Are you already connected to a local school or preschool and feel that being part of a national project would bring extra benefits? For more information, register your interest

- An exceptional marketing opportunity to demonstrate caring and promote trust
- For a very small financial investment
- Minimal time commitment as we understand how busy practices are.

What I've learned over the last six months is the power of collaboration and how rewarding developing partnerships is, both personally and for oral health outcomes. By working together, we not only have wider reach, but we save time and money in avoiding duplication. This could also offer additional opportunities for those precious funding pots to be used for greater impact. So what are you waiting for? Email me directly on [info@awesome-oral-health.com](mailto:info@awesome-oral-health.com).

### Primary schools not your thing?

As dental professionals we have the ability and a positive attitude that we can use to input into existing schemes as well as creating our own new projects. By the time this goes to press Victoria Wilson's Smile Revolution 5th Oral Health Promotion course will have started. The first four courses have helped develop oral health projects in unlimited topics/areas including prison, pregnancy, lip cancer, performing arts, and nutrition. It is a wonderful opportunity for any dental professional to investigate and develop any ideas they may not even have had yet. Philips generously sponsored my place last year and I can't recommend it highly enough. As well as five weeks of intensive learning, the course is followed up with ongoing mentoring and additional support. In my case, it is thanks

to this support that Raisin Awareness has a page hosted on the Smile Revolution website: <https://smilerevolutiongrowthhub.com/who-we-work-with/>.

### Exciting news

Watch out for my own website launching soon - where dental practices and schools will be able to sign up for my newsletter and understand further the many benefits of collaboration by partnering a social enterprise with integrity and purpose. If you'd like to be the first to see it, register your interest (as above) and I'll let you know as soon as the launch date is announced.

The cycle of project development continues with the next Raisin Awareness Advisory Board meeting fast approaching...

### References

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### Author information

<sup>1</sup>Jo Dawson is a dental nurse and oral health educator. Since 2008 she has been working at Devonshire House Dental Practice in Cambridge. As a mum she is passionate about improving children's oral health and refuses to let her own technical inability get in her way... Since beginning the Raisin Awareness project she has somewhat haphazardly braved Facebook, Instagram and Twitter but realised she must get serious and get onto LinkedIn! In the meantime, her allotment continues to be relegated to almost total neglect but luckily Mother Nature is even more determined than Jo is and has provided wonderful harvests and colourful displays of inspiration this year.