

GROUND-BREAKING DENTAL NEGLECT POLICY UPDATED AND PUBLISHED



The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry's (BSPD's) policy document on dental neglect in children, which was originally developed and published in 2009, has been updated and published as an open access paper in the *International Journal of Paediatric Dentistry (IJPD)*.¹ The original dental neglect policy followed 'Child protection and the dental team', which was a significant document that first raised awareness in the UK of dental neglect, and was the point at which the urgent need for guidance for dental professionals was recognised.

Importantly the recommendations are broadly unchanged: at its heart remains the use of a three-tier model for responding to concerns. However, the new policy now reflects progress since 2009 in our understanding of dental neglect. An expanded section focuses on the broader impacts of dental disease. The update also includes references to examples of good practice that have developed over the intervening 14 years. The revised version is now written with the needs of both dental professionals and non-dental healthcare professionals in mind. The changes were made in response to feedback gathered via a focus group – and then modified further after consultation with stakeholders.

Dental neglect may occur in isolation or may be an indicator of a wider picture of neglect or abuse. Dental neglect may even be the first sign of child maltreatment. Dental professionals must know what to do if they are concerned

about a child. Dental neglect is very common, so we are likely to encounter it frequently; a survey in 2016 showed that 62% of paediatric dentists come across children with neglected dentitions daily or more often. This was unchanged since the previous survey in 2005.²

The team responsible for the dental neglect policy document update was led by Miss Lucy Ridsdale, who joined the original authorship team of Mrs Jenny Harris, Dr Richard Balmer and Professor Peter Sidebotham, together with new members Dr Fiona Gilchrist and, representing the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Dr Ruth Skelton.

BSPD continues to be committed to working with the dental profession and external stakeholders to raise awareness of dental neglect. A link to the updated document is available on the BSPD website.³

Dr Jenny Harris, BSPD Past-President said: 'BSPD's mission is to uphold the overall wellbeing of children and key to this is encouraging good safeguarding practice in dentistry. Keeping our research and recommendations up to date is important to ensure that those working within the dental profession are well-informed about dental neglect and its significance as a flag to overall neglect. I am extremely grateful to the diligent team of colleagues who worked with me on this updated policy document as we all continue to campaign for a reduction in oral health inequalities.'

References

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2. Harris J C, Baker S R, Elcock C. Paediatric dentists' role in child protection practice: progress over time? *Int J Paediatr Dent* 2022; **32**: 714–723.
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Sugar levy delivering the goods in fight against decay

The British Dental Association (BDA) has said new evidence on the huge gains made in the fight against tooth decay secured by the sugar levy show how the Government must remain willing to force the hand of the food industry on reformulation.

Using data on hospital admissions for tooth extractions caused by decay, new research published in *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* suggests that 22 months after it was implemented, the Soft Drinks Industry Levy was associated with a 12% reduction in admissions amongst children aged 0 to 18 years.¹

Tooth decay is the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children, with over 42,000 extractions taking place in NHS hospitals in England last year on patients aged 18 or under.

The levy took out 47,000 tonnes of sugar from soft drinks in its first four years as it encouraged drinks manufacturers to reduce sugar levels to avoid the tax. The BDA stress its effectiveness is in sharp contrast to voluntary appeals to the food industry from the Government.

The BDA believes expansion of the levy into other product ranges – including milk-based drinks, biscuits, cakes, sweets, yoghurts and cereals – would drive widespread reformulation of high sugar foods and need not raise costs for consumers.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'The sugar levy is delivering the goods in the fight against decay, so it's time to double down.'

'This isn't about adding to the cost of living. When voluntary action has clearly failed, this shows government must force industry's hand on cutting sugar.'

References

1. Rogers N T, Conway D I, Mytton O *et al*. Estimated impact of the UK soft drinks industry levy on childhood hospital admissions for carious tooth extractions: interrupted time series analysis. *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* 2023; doi: 10.1136/bmjnp-2023-000714.



WOMEN MUST GRIT THEIR TEETH AND BEAR IT WHEN IT COMES TO ORAL HEALTH

Women face heightened oral health risks compared to men, thanks to the hormonal fluctuations associated with menstruation, birth control, and menopause.¹

Now, recently released data from the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme's 'Oral Health Index', a survey of 6,000 national representatives, has shown that more women (48%) believe there has been no improvement to accessing dental services since the pandemic, compared to men (32%).

The Index also found that nearly a third (32%) of women report they are less likely to visit a dentist due to the cost-of-living-crisis.

The findings precede the publication of the Government's Dental Recovery Plan, which is due to be released ahead of the new year in an effort to tackle the UK's NHS dental crisis.

Unaffordable dentistry is also hitting young people hard. Fifty-six percent of people aged 25 to 34-years-old believe their dental health will suffer amidst soaring living costs, and one in three would consider exploring overseas treatment options for affordability.

Separate research from Frontier Economics has shown the value preventative oral health measures could deliver, by avoiding the need for urgent treatments and making the need for check-ups less frequent.²

Introducing supervised toothbrushing programmes for children, expanding water fluoridation schemes, and encouraging the public to chew sugar-free gum could together save the NHS over £50 million per year, and save NHS dental patients £95.9 million.²

British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Cost of living and access crises are creating a perfect storm. Millions are thinking twice about needed care if they're lucky enough to find an appointment, while others are looking abroad.

'Every day that passes our patients are making choices that put their oral health at risk. The government cannot remain asleep at the wheel.'

Michael Dodds, BDS PhD, Senior Principal Scientist with the Wrigley Oral Healthcare Programme said: 'The Oral

Health Index's worrying findings show us that people risk missing out on much-needed dental treatment, due to pressures on services and the rising cost of living. Maintaining good oral health should not be a luxury – it is an essential part of our overall well-being. It helps people to boost their self-confidence and enables them to carry out day-to-day activities like eating and speaking without discomfort or pain.'

References

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2. Woolley N, Camplejohn A. The economic value of good oral health. *Frontier Economics*, 25 May 2023. Available at: <https://www.frontier-economics.com/uk/en/news-and-articles/news/news-article-i10334-the-economic-value-of-good-oral-health/#> (accessed November 2023).

BADN AGM: JOAN HATCHARD BECOMES HONORARY PRESIDENT AND REBECCA SILVER RECEIVES FELLOWSHIP



Some of the AGM attendees outside the Wellington Hotel. Left to right: Neni Irvanipour, Maja Marsh, Sherilee Bannerjee, Rebecca Silver, Anifa Stanforth, June Longdon, Preetee Hylton

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN) in November in London and via Zoom, Joan Hatchard became Honorary President.

Joan gained her National Certificate in 1988, and went on to gain post qualification certificates in Oral Health Education, Radiography, and Conscious Sedation. She became the practice manager of two busy

private general dental practices and started teaching the National Certificate course in 1989. She also gained the FAETC and the Certificate in Education (FE), and holds the City and Guilds Licentiate in Dental Nursing. Joan was an examiner on the NEBDN Panel of Examiners for the National Diploma and the Certificate in Oral Health Education. In recent years Joan has held positions on Council, first as the Chair of BADN Practice Managers' and Receptionists' National Group, and then Acting Chairman, and Treasurer. Joan is a BADN Fellow and received the 2013 BADN Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dental Nursing.

Also at the AGM, Rebecca Silver received her certificate of BADN Fellowship, and her ten-year membership badge. Rebecca was also presented with her FMC Dental Nurse of the Year London Award by President-elect Preetee Hylton. The Honorary President also presented retiring Past President Jacqui Elsdon with a bracelet from members of the Executive

Committee and Panel of Representatives.

In addition, Ruth Garrity was welcomed to the BADN Executive Committee as Treasurer and former Treasurer Michelle Brand became Chairman.

The AGM was followed by an Afternoon Tea at the Wellington Hotel for those who had attended in person.



Members of the BADN Executive Committee. Left to right: Chairman Michelle Brand, retiring Past President Jacqui Elsdon, Honorary President Joan Hatchard, Education Representative Anifa Stanforth, President-elect Preetee Hylton