

## THREE NEW PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE THE ORAL HEALTH OF CORNISH CHILDREN



Children receiving dental hygiene tips from Smile Together and mascot Dylan the Dragon

Cornwall Council, Smile Together Dental CIC and Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise have teamed up to improve the oral health of children across the county with three new programmes.

It comes as figures reveal an 83% increase in the number of caries-related tooth extractions in hospital for 0-to-19-year-olds compared to the previous year 2020/2011.<sup>1</sup>

The first programme, Smarter Smiles, will provide oral health education and a fluoride varnish programme as well as an accreditation scheme for schools and nurseries in areas of high decay across Cornwall, championing a ‘whole-school’ approach to oral health promotion and prevention.

Smarter Smiles builds on the legacy of the successful Brighter Smiles oral health programme which delivered toothbrushing clubs, fluoride varnishing and oral health education to around 6,500 children each year.

The Smarter Smiles combined oral health promotion team will not only continue this work with young children but complement it by making a sustainable difference to the oral health of children and adults with additional needs.

The second new programme, named First Dental Steps, will see the council’s

Smarter Smiles oral health programme will positively influence the oral health of thousands more children and adults most in need across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.’

The new First Dental Steps scheme is a national Health Visitor-led infant oral health improvement programme in collaboration with NHS England.

There are approximately 5,000 births a year in the county and Smile Together dental experts have been sharing information for Health Visitors to support families with effective toothbrushing of children aged 9–12 months at their Health Visitor review.

Families will benefit from oral health packs including age-appropriate toothbrushes, sippy cups designed for toddlers to prevent or reduce spills, and oral health advice and guidance, preventative advice and prevention clinics, and onward referrals where needed for specialist dental treatment for more complex dental cases.

In addition to all this, Smile Together and

*‘Delivering this expanded Smarter Smiles oral health programme will positively influence the oral health of thousands more children and adults most in need across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.’*

Health Visitors support families with toothbrushing for 9–12-month-old babies.

The third will see free oral health packs distributed to every two-year-old in the county, estimated to be around 7,500 children, thanks to the generous support of Smile Together and Go Cornwall Bus Company.

The three schemes combine to form an integrated oral health pathway to give children the best possible start in life.

Alison Cane, Outreach Manager at Smile Together said: ‘Since 2015, Cornwall Council and Smile Together have co-funded the delivery of Brighter Smiles, Cornwall’s oral health programme, which has seen our outreach team engaging with thousands of children each year. Delivering this expanded

Go Cornwall Bus are jointly funding free oral health packs to every two-year-old in Cornwall with distribution once again via the Health Visitor network.

These packs will contain age-appropriate toothpaste, toothbrushes and a ‘top tips’ leaflet for the family giving oral health advice and guidance.

### References

1. Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. Hospital tooth extractions in 0 to 19 year olds 2022. 23 February 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2022/hospital-tooth-extractions-in-0-to-19-year-olds-2022> (accessed May 2024).