

## NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES 'STRESSFUL FOR TEETH'

Negative experiences in childhood have been labelled a 'toxic stress' on dental health, according to a new report.

Research published in the *Journal of Community Dentistry Oral and Epidemiology* has provided strong evidence for reinforcing claims that



socioeconomic factors have a divisive role to play in the health of children.

Children exposed to adverse experiences were more than twice as likely to develop tooth decay and gum disease and suffer from conditions such as unfilled cavities, missing teeth and toothache, all of which can have serious implications for overall health.

Some of the factors measured by researchers included the child being subject to a parental divorce, a parent spending time in jail, household income and education of the parent. Exposure to domestic violence, witness to drug and alcohol abuse, and living with someone who suffers from mental illness, suicidal tendencies or depression were also evaluated in relation to dental health.

Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF), Dr Nigel Carter OBE, said: 'the effects of such childhood experiences should remain in the foreground of dental professionals, public health advocates and the government's social support networks.'

## 'SAFEGUARDING' BECOMES RECOMMENDED CPD

The General Dental Council (GDC) has confirmed that safeguarding children and young people and safeguarding vulnerable adults are to be included as recommended continuing professional development (CPD) topics for dental professionals.

The aim is to increase awareness about these important topics so that all dental professionals feel confident and equipped to raise any concerns about abuse or neglect of vulnerable people.

The GDC's *'Standards for the Dental Team'* states:

### 8.5.1

'You must raise any concerns you may have about the possible abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults. You must know who to contact for further advice and how to refer concerns to an appropriate authority such as your local social services department.'

### 8.5.2

'You must find out about local procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. You must follow these procedures if you suspect that a child or vulnerable adult might be at risk because of abuse or neglect.'

The GDC makes recommendations as regularly keeping up to date in these topics can make an important contribution to patient safety.

Safeguarding children and young people and safeguarding vulnerable adults now join the GDC's list of recommended topics, including oral cancer: improving early detection, complaints handling and legal and ethical issues.

The GDC already lists medical emergencies, disinfection and decontamination and radiography and radiation protection (or materials and equipment for dental technicians) as part of verifiable CPD.

