CHILD PROTECTION

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CPDT

18 May 2016 marks an important anniversary: ten years since the launch of the safeguarding guidance '*Child protection and the dental team*' (CPDT). Dentistry is gradually becoming more integrated with organisations beyond healthcare and CPDT has definitely played a role in this. An example is the long-lasting relationship between the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

The CPDT document and its associated website <http://www.cpd.org.uk/> were launched at the British Dental Conference by the then Health Minister Rosie Winterton. It represented a year of intense work for project lead Jenny Harris and the expert team she recruited.

Prior to 2006, child protection wasn't a familiar topic in the dental world. At that time, Jenny was a specialist paediatric dentist in a community clinic in Rotherham and she and her team had received training from the local safeguarding children nurse. This was in the aftermath of the death of Victoria Climbié and Lord Laming's Inquiry report.

Jenny said: 'From previous training we knew how to identify physical abuse but neglect had rarely been discussed. Working in such a deprived area, we were seeing lots of neglected teeth. We were doing the dentistry, but not thinking of the child as a whole. The question arose: "were we doing enough?"'

A mother of two young children herself, Jenny was asked to set up a dental neglect working group for Rotherham. Her job was to define best practice and come up with guidance so that children in her area would not slip through the net. By knowing when to report to health visitors and school nurses, dentists could make sure vulnerable children were getting the intervention they needed.

The only nationwide guidance that existed was a generic flowchart emanating from the Department of Health which briefly outlined what to do if you suspected a child was being abused. Jenny became convinced that dentists had a bigger role to play in child protection.

'Unless you hear it from your own profession, it's easy to be deaf. In other words, to know in theory what needs to be done but to think it can't apply to me. I asked myself: If a child like Victoria walked into my surgery, would I recognise her? Would I know what to do and would I have done it? For months I checked the dental press but there was nothing new about child protection. It seemed bizarre.'

The guidance came about as the result of a letter from Jenny to the Chief Dental Officer Raman Bedi pointing out the absence of guidance for the profession. After being invited to meet him, she was given the role of chairing an expert group to produce an educational resource. She had a generous budget but just a year to complete the guidance.

How did she know where to start? 'I simply set out to write something that answered my own questions, produced in a format that every member of our own team would find useful.'

Her first task was to recruit a team who would bring all the different skills required. These included: Professor Richard Welbury, who was already raising awareness of child abuse as the issue for dentists; Peter Sidebotham, a paediatrician; Raneé Townsend, a CDS clinical director; Martyn Green, a dentist and vocational trainer in Devon; Janet Goodwin, a dental nurse representative; and Chris Franklin, her local postgraduate Dean. There was a small body of knowledge, she said, but 80% of the information they gathered was new to the dental world and had to be written from scratch.

The input of Jenny's paediatric colleagues proved invaluable. She sent out a questionnaire to BSPD members who were asked about their knowledge and experience of safeguarding as well as to share examples of good practice.^{1,2} This research is being repeated for the 10th anniversary to see how much has changed.

Just two years after the launch, in 2008, a survey of GDPs³ showed that dentists had taken on board the new guidance and it was influencing knowledge, training and policies in the practice.

'We have got better at recognising signs of child maltreatment and at referring it but it does make a huge extra workload for clinicians and that hasn't yet been recognised.'

Jenny also believes the dental profession needs to have someone in every region who is identified as being responsible for safeguarding children leadership.

Now working as a community-based consultant in paediatric dentistry in Sheffield, hardly a week goes by without someone somewhere in the world contacting Jenny for information or advice and she helps where

she can. CPDT has already been translated into Croatian and Greek, with work on Spanish and Arabic versions.

The course of Jenny's life has been changed immeasurably by her role as Project Lead of CPDT, for which she has ongoing responsibility. Her achievements include being:

- BSPD's representative on the NSPCC's Health Liaison Committee
- A contributor to the development of a NICE clinical guideline: When to suspect child maltreatment
- Lead author of the first BSPD policy document on dental neglect in children
- The initiator for BSPD of a working group involving the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the NSPCC and the Advanced Life Support Group (ALSG) to adapt standardised child protection training for the paediatric dentistry specialty trainees
- Course convenor with Sue Gregory of a Faculty of Dental Surgery study day at the Royal College of Surgeons of England on Safeguarding children in dentistry

What a difference a decade of CPDT has made. A letter fired off as a shot in the dark to the Chief Dental Officer has had, and continues to have, an expansive legacy for all involved in providing dental care for children.

1. Harris J C, Elcock C, Sidebotham P D, Welbury R R. Safeguarding children in dentistry: 1. Child protection training, experience and practice of dental professionals with an interest in paediatric dentistry. *Br Dent J* 2009; **206**: 409-414.
2. Harris J C, Elcock C, Sidebotham P D, Welbury R R. Safeguarding children in dentistry: 2. Do paediatric dentists neglect child dental neglect? *Br Dent J* 2009; **206**: 465-470.
3. Harris J C, Bradbury J, Porritt J, Nilchian F, Franklin C D. NHS dental professionals' evaluation of a child protection learning resource. *Br Dent J* 2011; **210**: 75-79.

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