

IMPROVING CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH WITH AND THROUGH EDUCATION SETTINGS

Guide for Local Authority Colleagues

The problem

- Tooth decay causes toothache, sleepless nights, and altered eating habits in children and young people (CYP). It is the most common reason for hospital admissions in 5-9-year-olds.
- Tooth decay negatively affects the wider family, causing a lack of sleep and time off work.
- It can lower confidence, have a negative impact on speech and language development, and lead to poor school attendance and attainment.

What you can do at a local level

- Develop a **local oral health strategy** which links with other local strategies, such as healthy weight and nutrition plans that will have similar goals (e.g., reducing sugar intake). It should be based on local context and underpinned by assessments of need.
- Ensure **oral health is a core part of local service delivery** such as the Healthy Child Programme, Family Hubs, and Healthy Schools Programmes.
- Develop **ward-level partnerships across services** to leverage shared resources, expertise, and support flexible commissioning.
- Work with **local communities to understand barriers and facilitators** to good oral health and develop programmes in community settings where possible.
- Support **local schools to extend and enhance** supervised toothbrushing programmes and training of staff.

Evidence-based insights

61% of children in the UK have poor oral health.

The likelihood of tooth decay is **2.5x** higher in the most deprived areas of England.

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

Sheffield's Sweet Enough

A programme which educated and informed families to support a reduction in sugar consumption. Initiatives used advertisements with assets developed based on requests from the community and used partnerships with local businesses to enhance reach.

ToothPASTE

An intervention which focused on the barriers that autistic CYP face, co-designing a support package which includes resources such as websites, and training for early years practitioners.

BRIGHT (Brushing RemInder 4 Good oral HealTh)

A secondary school-based intervention to promote toothbrushing and reduce the prevalence of oral decay. CYP take part in classroom-based lessons which promote behaviour change and have the option to receive two daily toothbrushing reminders.

BRUSH

A toolkit which supports the implementation, uptake, and success of evidence-based toothbrushing programmes. Resources provide information for parents, early years settings, service providers, and commissioners.

Check out the creative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider implementing these innovations into your local area/constituency.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion in your organisation about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.