



Oral Health
Promotion
manager
Joanne
Purvis

describes her involvement in a project improving the oral health of children and young people with learning disabilities and/ or autism.

Tell us more about your current role

Joanne: I am currently on secondment to the Office of the Chief Dental Officer (OCDO) for England. I was recruited as project manager of a pilot rolling out the Mini Mouth Care Matters (Mini MCM) training programme to residential homes for children and young people (CYP). The aim is for non-dental staff who work in special educational settings (SES) to learn how to support the young residents with their mouth care. For the pilot, we are working with a residential home in the Greater Manchester area run by the Seashell Trust and we are supported by the Managed Clinical Network and the Local Dental Network.

Tell us more about the project you are working on

Joanne: It was developed as a result of the NHS Long Term Plan¹ which committed to 'work with partners to bring hearing, sight and dental checks to children and young people with a learning disability and autism or both in special residential schools'. Mini MCM, originally created as a training programme for

allied health care professionals on paediatric hospital wards, was adapted for this project by the national lead for Mini MCM, Dr Urshla (Oosh) Devalia. Oosh and her colleague Claire Stevens were recruited as co-clinical leads by OCDO to roll the Mini MCM project out to SES, empowering care staff to deliver effective, daily mouth care alongside ensuring dental checks are completed by an oral health care team. If Mini MCM hasn't come to a home or hospital near you yet, it soon will!

What is your background?

Joanne: Until I was seconded, I was an Oral Health Promotion manager lead with South Tyneside and Sunderland Foundation Trust. I have worked in oral health promotion for 22 years.

How did you progress the project during the pandemic?

Joanne: It's been an awful time. We could not visit the school of course but we managed to work our way around this by providing the Mini MCM training as an e-learning programme. All the children have been sent their own mouth care pack and we have been learning about their needs and how they like to communicate. We have been working towards the point where the Seashell Trust staff can support a 'check-in' with a member of the oral health care team via a remote video call. We have just undertaken our first remote check-in with Dr Mohsan Ahmad, Chair of the Greater Manchester Local Dental Network.

How did this go?

Joanne: I think it would be fair to say that it was a validating experience and reinforced how important this project is. For instance, we learned that one of the young people was drinking a lot of carbonated diet drinks, because their carer thought low or no sugar drinks are 'healthy'.

What has been your experience of working on the pilot?

Joanne: The project is fantastic. Everyone is so passionate about the work and determined to do their best in support of the children and young people. The concept is important, making sure that everyone who cares for the children and young people has the confidence to look inside a mouth. The staff at the Seashell Trust are totally on board.

What happens next?

Joanne: We had put in a lot of work to prepare for the first check-in, including the development of a questionnaire so that Dr Ahmad knew as much as possible about the young people who had appointments. This initial check-in does not replace a dental appointment; it's a stepping stone to almost prioritise those with the most need. Eventually, all the residents will be escorted to an appointment at a dental setting most appropriate to meet their needs. Next, it is our ambition that the programme will be rolled out to other settings including hospices and secure institutions for children and young people.

My secondment role in the project is due to end in September, however the pilot is due to continue until March 2022. I have had so much responsibility and it has been so interesting to work in the big picture and as part of such an enthusiastic and committed team.

Mini MCM resources can be found on the website of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD): https:// www.bspd.co.uk/Professionals/Resources/ mini-mouth-care-matters.

Reference

 NHS. NHS Long Term Plan. Available at: https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk (accessed June 2021).

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-021-0652-6