

**Somerset Council Public Health: Oral Health Improvement Service position statement**

<b>From:</b>	<b>Patsy Temple; Consultant in Public Health</b>
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<b>Relevant ELT Director and sign-off date:</b>	<b>Trudi Grant; Executive Director of Public and Population Health</b> <b>13/10/2023</b>
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<b>Date:</b>	<b>13/10/23</b>
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<b>To:</b>	<b>The Chair and members of the Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee – Children and Families</b>
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## Background

### Dental Service provision

NHS England have previously held the commissioning responsibility for dental services in Somerset, a responsibility that has recently been delegated to the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) from April 2023. This change is part of a national policy shift which ensures delegation of all primary care commissioning of GP, pharmacy, ophthalmology, and dental services to local ICB. This is a very significant shift in responsibilities and will take a lot of work.

### Oral Health promotion programme

Oral health refers to the health of people's teeth, gums, supporting bone, and soft tissue of the mouth tongue and lips. Poor oral health can exacerbate existing health conditions, impact on wellbeing by causing pain, difficulties with speaking, eating, and socialising as well as being an indicator of neglect or difficult social circumstance. Poor oral health is also entirely preventable.

Oral health improvement is a public health priority and reflected in the Public Health Outcome Framework through indicator: percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dentinal decay.

## **Public Health Somerset Council Oral Health Improvement position statement October 2023**

Local Authority Public Health have a statutory responsibility to improve the health and health and well-being of our local population and tackle inequalities. With respect to oral health Somerset needs to provide or commission oral health promotion programmes to improve the health of the local population to the extent they consider appropriate in their areas.

Somerset Council secured a small amount of money from NHS England some years ago to meet this statutory responsibility.

Somerset Council Public Health have commissioned Roderick's Dental Partners to provide the all-age 'Oral Health Improvement Service' incorporating universal health promotion and to provide targeted oral health improvement to groups at risk of poor oral health.

The contract value is £90,000 per year, over 3 years. It commenced in October 2021 and runs to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The service specification includes the delivery of:

- a countywide fluoride varnish scheme in early years
- a supervised toothbrushing programme,
- a workforce development package
- and targeted support packages

This offer aligns to several policy drivers including OFSTED, CQC and Safeguarding.

### **Fluoride varnish schemes**

Fluoride varnish professionally applied to teeth twice a year produce a significant reduction in dental caries in young children [Delivering Better Oral Health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention](#). Somerset has focused delivery to children in areas of higher deprivation where we see a greater proportion of poor oral health and by association tooth extractions.

Somerset has two Fluoride varnish protocols;

- early years settings
- community programme delivered in Public Health Nursing (PHN) bases.

Most fluoride varnish applications will occur in early years settings, this scheme includes all consenting 3–4 year-old children in the setting. The 'early years eligibility

tool' devised by Somerset Council supports the prioritisation of settings based on several indicators of deprivation.

For children identified as higher need during mandated health visitor contacts, targeted fluoride varnish sessions are planned using PHN bases in the community. These include displaced children (unaccompanied asylum seekers/refugees) of eligible age. A review of the protocol is currently underway with NHS England (NHSE) Dental Public Health, aiming to consent the delivery of fluoride varnish sessions within the asylum hotel.

Service Activity:

Activity against the contract is monitored by the public health (PH) commissioner and arrangements regarding safety and governance is monitored by the Somerset Council Public Health Clinical Governance Committee alongside other PH contracts and services.

During the pandemic fluoride varnishing was not a health care activity that was identified as essential and had to be put on hold. It did then take some time to re-establish. A focus on delivery against the fluoride varnishing aspect of the contract in early 2023 means delivery against this aspect is now back on track.

### **Supervised Tooth Brushing (STB) Scheme**

STB schemes are evidenced as highly effective in oral health improvement and provide the greatest return on investment across all oral health interventions. STB schemes target children in the early years.

Service Activity :

Rodericks started to recruit settings in summer 2023 and will continue to through the autumn. Supervised tooth brushing scheme is to be offered to children in those Early Years (EY) settings identified through the 'early years eligibility tool' for the fluoride varnish scheme. This delivery commenced in September 2023.

### **Workforce development**

The service is currently consulting with partners to launch a comprehensive training and development offer. The consultation process is engaging multiagency and partners across adult and children services. The offer aligns to several drivers including OFSTED, CQC and Safeguarding and will be delivered, in part, alongside Health Education England.

## **National Dental Epidemiology Survey**

Local Authorities commission oral health surveys as a mandated responsibility. This is delivered through the national dental epidemiology survey which is currently embedded within the commissioning of the community dental service.

Somerset Council Public Health is seeking assurance for this to continue in future contracts with the NHS Somerset ICB who have the commissioning responsibility since April 2023.

The epidemiology surveys:

- inform local and regional health needs assessments
- provide comparisons over time and monitoring of the Public Health Outcome Framework indicator: percentage of 5 year olds with experience of visually obvious dentinal decay
- provide standardised information for comparison locally, regionally, between countries of the UK and internationally
- local oral health improvement strategies
- engages education in oral health improvement

## **Healthy Child Programme**

Local Authority Public Health have the commissioning responsibility for Public Health Nursing (PHN) service and this is also delivered through the Local Authority Public Health Team with the service sitting as an 'inhouse' service. The Public Health Nursing Service lead the delivery of the health Child Programme (HCP) and oral health is identified as an area in which health visitors can have an impact as part of the HCP.

Service Activity:

Oral health information and advice is provided as part of the PHN mandated contacts. This is delivered alongside infant feeding and nutrition / healthy eating advice which is also essential for good oral health. PHN support the universal distribution of oral hygiene products (tooth brush and toothpaste) through the 6-8 week health review and access to the community fluoride varnish scheme for children identified during the 2 year review.

## **Additional oral health improvement activity: NHSE funded through Community Dental Service contracts 2023/24**

NHSE have commissioned oral health improvement and prevention interventions as part of the Southwest dental reform to reduce need across the population, improve outcomes in oral health and reduce pressures on dental services. NHSE have commissioned:

### **Regional supervised toothbrushing scheme (STB).**

STB schemes are evidenced as highly effective in oral health improvement and provide the greatest return on investment across all oral health interventions. STB schemes target children in the early years. The regional scheme will deliver a proportionate allocation of consumables for target settings. A provider has been awarded the contract by NHSE and steps are being taken to align the local oral health improvement service and Somerset Council education with the regional provider. The new provision is expected to commence this autumn. Somerset Council are liaising with the provider to align the method of identification and prioritisation of early years and school reception class settings.

**First Dental Steps (FDS)**, a prevention intervention, with aspiration to be delivered collaboratively with Public Health Nursing Health Visiting in 2024.

The community dental service (CDS) role in FDS builds capacity in dentistry for children aged under 12 months to be seen. Children can be referred by PHN Health Visitor for dental surveillance/provision. The other key element is the universal provision of consumables (toothbrush/toothpaste/Sippy cup packs) designed to be delivered during PHN HV contacts, along with health education and CDS consideration.

NHSE have agreed to provide the grant for consumables for this programme to commence in 2024. There is currently no referral pathway in place or built capacity in Somersets CDS. The NHSE regional dental public health consultant is currently working through the referral CDS element.

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