

**BSPD President, Professor Paula Waterhouse**

**Inaugural Address**

**14 September 2023**

For those who don't know me...I am a Prof and honorary consultant based in Newcastle School of Dental Sciences. I graduated in 1990, and when I look at some of you – you bright young things, I fear I am getting really rather old! I am, however, excited, honoured and humbled to be incoming President for 2023-24.

My first task is important both personally and on behalf of BSPD, and that is to thank Jenny for her leadership, advice and services to the society; not only being our champion in the field of children's safeguarding as BSPD's Safeguarding Representative for many years, but for her formidable presidential year captaining 'The Great Ship BSPD,' working so hard and producing the vitally important resources around 'The Rights of the Child'. BSPD is proud of your achievements, and everyone wishes to thank you for an excellent, productive and meaningful presidential year. I would like to add my own thanks for your wisdom, help and well-considered advice during my time on Executive Committee.

Jenny, please accept this gift as a token of both the Society's and my own personal thanks.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends in northern branch BSPD for nominating me, was it really four years ago? It is a privilege to work with so many inspirational and kind people; undergraduates, postgraduates, dentists, therapists, nurses, scientists, medics, reception staff...I could go on.

After convincing myself as a student that I wanted to be a periodontist, this worm turned one fateful day... in 1991 as a House Officer in Child Dental Health (CDH), Professor John Murray came to have a chat; asking me "What do you think about becoming a children's dentist?" I wonder now if he remembered me from when I cried in his office because I failed my year 3 child dental health class exam, or whether he

recalled that failing invigorated me to work hard - passing CDH finals getting the Joan Weyman clinical case prize. He kept a close eye on me whilst I was revising for my numerous fellowship exams (my tears were present then too!) Years later when I suffered personal tragedy, he was the first to give me a kindly hug on my return to work. He remains an inspiration.

Professor Andrew Rugg Gunn is a similar inspirational figure and one of the brightest minds I have ever met in dentistry; he taught me how to talk with young children, he gave me precious time away from the clinic to complete my PhD thesis after returning from maternity leave, and he was at the end of a telephone when I was panicking about an obscure statistical test during the first morning of my ISFE exams in Dublin in 2000. Thank you, Prof!

Professor June Nunn; was my PhD supervisor, mentor and a listening ear. I learnt so much from observing June's gentle and inherent ability to manage people. Her patience with me in GA theatre knew no bounds. June was my 'mother hen' protecting my time, ensuring balance for me as a new mum, juggling work and a young family, a true female role model. She gave me so many opportunities to progress.

Last but certainly never least, Professor Richard Welbury; the most gifted clinician I know. Always willing to support and guide me on clinic, very patient and generous with his time but a bit scary when I first met him! He supported my first ever dental publication and made sure that, as a clinical academic, my clinical specialty training programme was as robust as my NHS peers. Richard, thank you – he is not in the least bit scary now!

I have been immensely lucky to learn and develop with guidance from 4 megastars of children's dentistry. But I want to add that I have also learnt so much across the years working with my patients and colleagues - students and staff.

I have some very hard presidential acts to follow... inspirational teachers and mentors of mine already mentioned; John Murray, Andrew Rugg Gunn and Richard Welbury – and more recently, Elizabeth Roebuck, Claire Stevens, Sarah McKaig, Sondos Al-Badri and Jenny Harris – wow! All great leaders, but I like to think I can count them all as friends.

My first Children's dentistry conference was when I was a fresh-faced house officer based in Newcastle Dental Hospital's Child Dental Health Department in 1991 – the conference was hosted by Northern Branch (the President that year was Peter Gordon, an orthodontist!) and my job

was to collect the voting papers (paper – I told you I am old) for the society's name change – it was felt that the 'British Paedodontic Society' was no longer appropriate – so I witnessed a democratic change in name to our current BSPD...this illustrated to me that here was a Society willing to take stock, and make change for the better. Who knew that 32 years later I might be President myself?

BSPD, our society, is an inclusive group, providing care for all children and young people. Our 2023 mission statement highlights that we wish to champion diversity and inclusion for all those wishing to work in the specialty; to strengthen our key messages, so they reach a diverse audience; to continue campaigning, to reduce oral health inequalities, and continue to develop inclusive and accessible public resources.

I was asked for a theme for my presidential year 'what did I want to champion and achieve?' Over the last 8 years I have been actively involved in EDI within my school, faculty and wider university. It means a great deal to me personally... I was raised from the age of 6-years-old in a multicultural family in Lancashire. Sadly, sometimes I was a bystander observing how my loved ones were subject to racism, Islamophobia (even before that word was coined) and many barriers, that I did not experience myself. My theme is based upon inclusivity and equity in all its guises within healthcare and education.

This year's conference tagline is 'Tipping the scales – making a better, fairer world for children in the future' a good fit with my personal theme. Looking to the immediate future, I hope to lead the society during my presidential year towards those strategic goals around equity and inclusivity. Change and improvements take time and a great deal of team effort. I hope you all as members of BSPD will recognise and help to champion this theme. I know many of you are already doing so!

One of the projects I have taken on from Sondos is working with colleagues at NHS England in the Children and Young People's Transformation Programme to improve the inclusivity of clinical images used in the NHS public-facing website. So, if you would like to support this task by providing clinical images with consent, please get in touch! Early warning too, I will be asking for the help of numerous clinical colleagues and friends in the quest to make the NHS website reflect the rich diversity of the UK.

So, to wrap up – I am really very honoured to take on the task of National President of a society that has a long and fabulous history, and a society that has been an integral part of my career as a children's dentist.

Thank you.