



British Society of Paediatric Dentistry

Improving children's oral health

January 2021

Delivery of sensory dentistry to children with learning disabilities

The healthy child programme (HCP) developed by Health Education England now includes advice on dental issues thanks to the input of BSPD's secretary and Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry, Urshla (Oosh)Devalia as well as Wendy Bellis, Honorary Clinical Senior Teaching Fellow at the Eastman Dental Institute. The new programme (1) is for all healthcare providers who treat children with learning disabilities and autism in special residential schools and colleges.

Some children and young people can have sensory difficulties coping with dental treatment. They do not like the dentist to touch them and the noise and lights of dental practices can make them fearful. The new resource provides carers with advice and techniques for helping children cope with a dental appointment.

The Healthy Child e-learning programme was first developed in 2017 (2) for all health professionals working with pregnant women and children in the first five years of life. The new programme focuses on sensory health services.

Dr Devalia said the programme highlights the adjustments that need to be made to help young people with sensory issues manage in a dental environment. She commented: "Of all the healthcare appointments delivered to children with disabilities, dentistry is probably the most challenging. I am delighted that there is now advice for everyone involved in the care of this cohort of young people which will help them manage a dental appointment."

Claire Stevens, spokesperson for BSPD, commented: "This is a first and important step towards reducing the inequality experienced by this group of patients who have struggled to get access to treatment in the past. I am delighted that aided by the contribution of Oosh and Wendy, the oral health of young patients with sensory challenges should now be addressed."

(1) <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/delivering-sensory-health-services/>

(2) <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/e-learning-programme-launched-for-professionals-working-with-children-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/>