

Oral Health

Summary

HALE works with parent and carers of children in schools, nurseries and toddler groups. This is to improve knowledge and encourage behaviour change around oral health via a 4 week 'Teethtastic' course and larger scale community events using the MOV. We also train workers and volunteers in delivery of this information. The 4 week course addresses key issues around oral hygiene and tooth-friendly diets, engaging adults and children by being as fun and as interactive as possible.

This work is set in the context that we work in areas where the condition of children's teeth is amongst the poorest in the country (as outlined in Bradford and Airedale Oral Health Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2010, p8-11).

- 100% of those attending felt that they knew more about the damage done to their teeth by sugary drinks and snacks
- 89% of attendees have increased the amount of time brushing their teeth
- 93% of the attendees feel that they know about healthy snacks and how to prepare them

Our impact

All participants on the Teethtastic courses are provided with a tooth timer, brush, recipe book and tooth-friendly snack planner which gives details of meals and snacks that are both good for teeth and appropriately nutritious. Practical sessions run during each course, introducing new snacks and recipes, good teeth brushing, role play of going to the dentist and discussion of what causes tooth decay and simple ways of preventing this. The recipe books include simple recipes from relevant cultures. Being able to refer back to the recipes and snack ideas encourages participants to make them in their own homes. We actively encourage and support people to find a NHS dentist as they are very hard to access.

Case Study

A child minder from BME background, who looks after 20 children from BME backgrounds was very interested in Teethtastic, having teeth damage herself as a result of bulimia. She attended one of our groups where oral health sessions were being run and invited HALE to run training for other child minders so that they could support children in looking after their teeth and pass on knowledge to parents.

The lady has reported that the oral health training has had a big impact on her both personally and professionally; "You do not realize how much we learnt from you. Whenever we get together now we only talk about teeth!" She also stated that her family's oral health has positively been impacted by attending these courses. She now gives the children she works with less juice and more water and milk when they have drinks. Importantly, she understands the reasons for doing this.

She now understands the reasons why teeth get decayed and has taken part in practical snack preparation sessions that really reinforce the messages that sugar and acid attack teeth and that treats should be kept for meal times. She now provides healthier snacks for her charges. The child minder knows now that she needs to encourage dentist attendance twice a year and to get all her charges and children to brush their teeth twice a day and for two minutes.

In conclusion she feedback that she had learn a lot and made a number of changes. She feels more equipped to support parents fulfil their role.