



Lancashire  
Children and Young People's  
Trust



# Smile 4 Life

## Improving Oral Health for Children and Young People in Lancashire

A strategic framework to reduce dental caries and lay  
solid foundations for good oral health throughout life



## A strategic framework has been designed to support coordinated activity across Lancashire with the aim of:

Reducing dental caries (tooth decay) in children and laying solid foundations for good oral health throughout life

People living in England currently enjoy a standard of oral health that is amongst the best in the world. Overall, older children and young people's oral health has been steadily improving with the number of decayed, missing and filled (dmf/DMF) teeth falling since 1973. However, considering the districts in Lancashire there has been little improvement since the mid 1990s, with approx 50% of five-year-old children living in Lancashire still having one or more decayed teeth.

As this continued level of disease has been of concern to Lancashire County Council and its NHS partners, a Local Indicator for dental health has been agreed as part of the Local Area Agreement with a target being set for a 4% reduction in the prevalence of dental caries in five-year-old children by 2012.

To enable this target to be reached, improving oral health must be seen as the responsibility of everyone who has a role in the development of children and young people. This includes people working at all levels in both NHS and non-NHS organisations such as education, social services and the voluntary sector.

In addition, many of the factors associated with poor oral health are common to other conditions affecting children and young people such as obesity. There are also other diseases which occur in adulthood that share common risks with tooth decay or other oral conditions such as diabetes and heart disease and these risks include smoking and binge drinking. Therefore placing oral health within an integrated health agenda increases the opportunity for wider health influences. This also allows oral health improvement to be addressed more effectively and in a more sustainable way.

A strategic framework has been compiled to support everyone who has a role in the development of children and young people to:

- Ensure environments minimise the risks for children getting tooth decay and support behaviours which will promote good oral and general health
- Ensure evidence-based self care behaviours are adopted which will prevent tooth decay. This will be achieved through the delivery of consistent oral health information and improvement activities
- Ensure children and young people have access to appropriate and accessible NHS dental services for prevention and, if necessary, treatment

To ensure this strategic framework and the supporting resources are widely and easily available, it has been

designed in an electronic format. This also ensures that the information it contains is kept up to date as new information becomes available.

The evidence-based resources will be provided electronically to maximise the goodwill across the Children and Young People workforce.

The most effective ways of achieving the strategic aim is for all to adopt current evidence-based best oral health practice as outlined in the following four consistent messages:

The **consistent messages** that need to be owned by all professionals and disseminated to the people they come into contact with including parents, carers and young people are:

## Reducing the consumption of both the amount and frequency of sugar sweetened foods and drinks

Interventions that support healthy eating and drinking at home, in the places where children and young people spend their time and in the workplace need to be undertaken. These interventions should to be underpinned by the main message to reduce consumption of both the amount and frequency of sugar-sweetened foods and drinks.

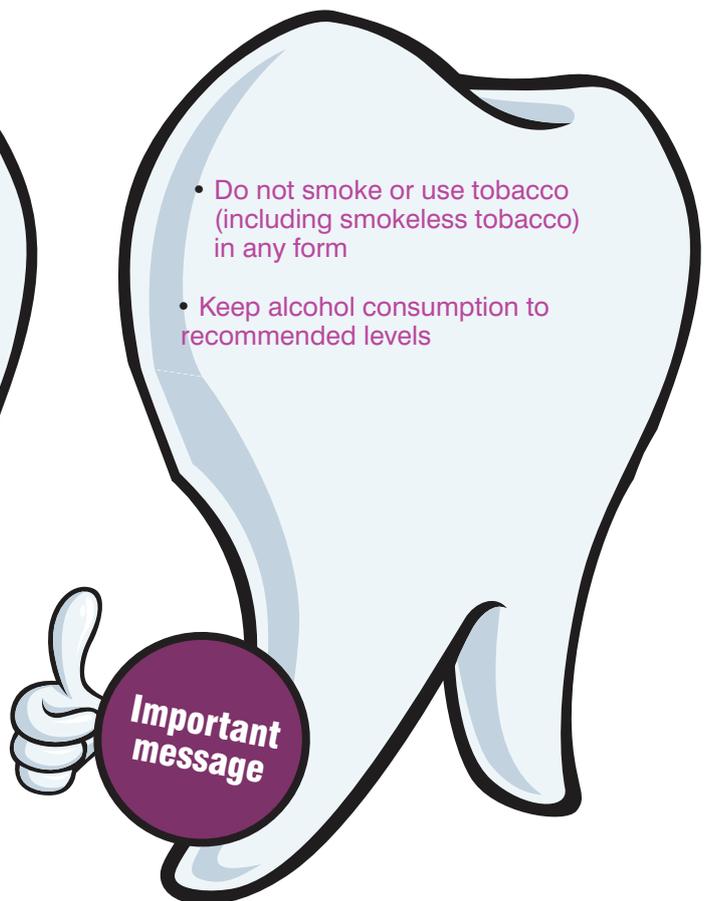


## Brushing regularly with family fluoride toothpaste and having fluoride treatments, such as fluoride varnish, applied professionally as required

Interventions that promote regular toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste and the delivery of professionally prescribed fluoride treatments such as fluoride varnish need to be undertaken.

## Adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours

Interventions that promote the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviours such as not taking up/stopping smoking or using other forms of tobacco and sensible drinking need to be undertaken.



## Visiting dental services regularly

Initiatives that facilitate easy and timely access to child-friendly preventively focussed dental services commissioned by the NHS need to be undertaken.

The **consistent messages** that need to be owned by all professionals and disseminated to the people they come into contact with including parents, carers and the young people themselves are:

- Children should visit a dentist from birth
- Children should be seen regularly at intervals of between 3 and 12 months
- Young people and adults should be seen at regular intervals as determined by their dentist
- For help in accessing an NHS dentist for routine or emergency care call your local PCT dental helpline number

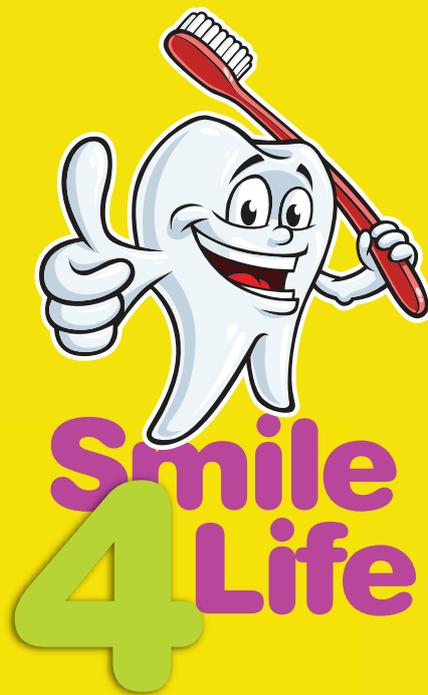


Although tooth decay is the most common oral disease in children, gum disease and damage to teeth as a result of wear and accidents does occur. Although some of the risks for these are controlled by the actions outlined above, initiatives also need to be undertaken to reduce facial injuries, such as the promotion of mouth guard use, and, where necessary, provide appropriate first aid.

All these interventions, when implemented, will tackle the underlying causes of poor oral health and address the current low use of dental services in a way which promotes long-term sustainable change and closes the inequalities gap.

Allowing for local flexibility in delivery within the multitude of local partnerships and relationships which exist, focussing on these four key areas and providing consistent messages for parents, carers and the young people themselves, provides the best chance of success and a good return on investments.





**Need further information and resources?**

**For resources and information:  
[www.lancashire.gov.uk/childrenstrusts](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/childrenstrusts)**