

Learning from Lives and Deaths of People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People (LeDeR)

Learning Brief no 2 - Oral Health



The LeDeR programme aims to improve care, reduce health inequalities and prevent early deaths of people with a learning disability and autistic people. Email us at somicb.leder@nhs.net for further information.

Why mouthcare?

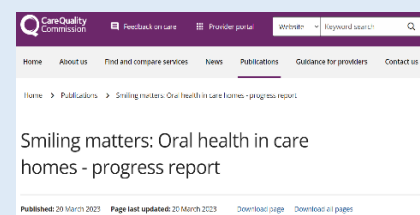
In 2019 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out a review of oral health in care homes. One outcome from the review is that a CQC inspection now includes mandatory questions about oral health training and care planning.

Poor mouth care impacts on general health and is significantly linked to major health diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and stroke. It also impacts on wellbeing, ability to socialise, communication, chewing and eating and enjoyment of life. It can cause pain and risk of infection. Many people with learning disabilities or autistic people may find it difficult to communicate this to carers or may not know how to get help without support.

CQC Update March 2023

This report:

- Reviews progress on the six recommendations made in 2019
- Gives further recommendations and actions
- Gives examples of how quality of life is reduced when oral care is not prioritised.
- Read the full report here [Smiling matters: Oral health in care homes - progress report - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/smiling-matters-oral-health-in-care-homes-progress-report)



Learning from LeDeR

Ensuring people with learning disabilities and autistic people have access to good mouth care is key to supporting good health outcomes. It's important to remember people with no teeth and people who do not eat and drink orally must still be supported to have good mouthcare and should still visit the dentist to support them to be as healthy as possible.

People with Down's Syndrome and people who find it hard to co-operate with routine dental care are particularly at risk from poor mouth care (Public Health England 2019). Because of this, *reasonable adjustments* may need to be made. All health professionals have a legal requirement to adapt how they work to support the needs of people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Good practice in action

Will is a young man with learning disabilities and autism. He is sociable and keen to engage but can be shy and become anxious at times. When Will is anxious it can be difficult for him to have his dental treatment. Will needed some dental treatment that required him to have a general anaesthetic. With Will's family it was agreed Will did not have capacity to make decisions about his dental treatment but that the treatment was in his best interest. Because of his complex needs the dental team identified it would be helpful to work proactively with the Learning Disability Acute Liaison nurse to support them with making reasonable adjustments for Will. A plan was made for Will to visit the hospital and meet the dental team before the appointment. It was agreed he would use the side entrance of the hospital and that staff greeting him would not wear uniforms as this increased his anxiety. An activity was organised for Will to take part in which involved him having a drink. It had been agreed to add sedation covertly to his drink in his best interest. This enabled Will and the dental team to complete the necessary dental work thus improving Will's health and well-being.

Reflections for Health

During the Covid-19 pandemic accessing a dentist for routine work was difficult for many people. It is really important now to support service users to get back into the routine of visiting their dentist. This will help to keep them healthy and well.

Learning from Deaths

LeDeR has found that it is essential to establish good standards of oral care early in life and to maintain them into adulthood and old age.

Maintaining good mouth care towards the end of life is also important for the dignity and quality of life of the person who is dying. This link to Marie Curie has lots of information about all aspects of supporting good mouthcare including advice about dry mouth, saliva management, pain management, dentures and when to ask for help.

[Mouth care at the end of life | Information for professionals \(mariecurie.org.uk\)](https://mariecurie.org.uk/mouth-care-at-the-end-of-life-information-for-professionals)

Making a Referral

For all **URGENT** care: Call 111

For **NON-URGENT** care: The first stop for someone needing dental treatment is to make an appointment with the dental practice with whom they are registered.

If someone requires non-urgent dental treatment but is not registered with a dentist, the first stop would be their nearest dental practice who will be able to advise on next steps.

Dental treatment at hospital: A small number of people may need to go to hospital for their dental treatment. For these people the dental team may refer to the Learning Disability (LD) Acute Liaison nurse team for support. The LD liaison acute nurses support referrals from the dental service with best interest decision making and discussions about future treatment.

Resources for Practice Managers, care providers, etc

- CQC recommend having a care plan in place for mouthcare for every service user. Their report advises on how to put this into practice : [Smiling matters: oral health care in care homes - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications-reports/Smiling-matters-oral-health-care-in-care-homes)
- CQC progress report (2023): [Smiling matters: Oral health in care homes - progress report - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications-reports/Smiling-matters-Oral-health-in-care-homes-progress-report)
- This webinar from NICE addresses operational matters : [Webinar recording: Improving oral health in care homes - YouTube](https://www.nice.org.uk/webinars/webinar-recording-improving-oral-health-in-care-homes)
- Useful background and advice from Public Health England about the importance of good oral health: [Oral care and people with learning disabilities - www.gov.uk/government/publications/](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oral-care-and-people-with-learning-disabilities)
- Promoting a more inclusive society (PAMIS) has produced the leaflet *"Oral Health Care for People with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities"* which has some helpful practical advice: [Oral health leaflet.pdf \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/pamis/Oral%20health%20leaflet.pdf)
- A new video has been launched - [Supporting Patients Who Are Resistant to Mouth Care - Mouth Care Matters \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/supporting-patients-who-are-resistant-to-mouth-care)
- Find links to useful resources for a wide range of conditions here, including information about special toothpastes and brushes from the British Society of Special Care Dentistry: [Oral Health Resources \(bsdh.org\)](https://www.bsscd.org.uk/oral-health-resources)
- And for the special toothbrush: [Shop — Collis Curve](https://www.colliscurve.com/shop)

Resources for service users : videos and easy read documents to support service users

- Engaging 13 minute video made in Somerset with service users about the importance of mouthcare: [Teeth - the musical on Vimeo](https://www.vimeo.com/681111111)
- Short videos made by a dentist with a person with a learning disability: [Mouth care for people with learning disabilities | Healthwatch Sheffield](https://www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk/healthwatch-sheffield/mouth-care-for-people-with-learning-disabilities)
- *"What to expect at the Dentist"* (made by service users): [Health Films - Inclusion Gloucestershire](https://www.healthfilms.co.uk/inclusion-gloucestershire)
- [Top tips for healthy teeth and a healthy mouth \(Easy read\) \(torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk\)](https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/health-top-tips-for-healthy-teeth-and-a-healthy-mouth-easy-read)
- This document includes some easy read sections: [Oral-Health-for-people-with-a-Learning-Disability-2021](https://www.nhs.uk/publications/oral-health-for-people-with-a-learning-disability-2021)