

# National Oral Health Action Plan for Wales

14 March 2008

## Edwina Hart, Minister for Health and Social Services

On 13 November 2007 I announced the development of a National Oral Health Action Plan for Wales, setting out a range of actions designed to improve oral health and meet the dental targets set out in the strategy *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*.

Central to a National Oral Health Action Plan is the need for a Child Oral Health Improvement Programme which will be delivered through a strengthened public dentistry role for the Community Dental Service.

This written statement informs Assembly Members of the launch of a National Child Oral Health Improvement Programme. The programme “Designed to Smile” has two main parts: a supervised toothbrushing scheme, using fluoride toothpaste, for 3 to 5 year olds, and a promotional programme for 6 to 11 year olds. In the longer term the Programme signals the development of a third component, promoting oral health from birth.

Dental decay is a disease of lifestyle with multiple causes. Improvements in oral hygiene and fluoride availability are needed to make progress towards our dental health targets. It is clear that more direct and also more innovative methods of delivering preventive care are necessary if advances in child oral health are to be made. In the absence of fluoridation of water supplies in Wales we need to get more teeth in contact with fluoride via alternative methods. The “Designed to Smile” Programme sets out to achieve that objective in Wales by targeting young children in areas of greatest need.

“Designed to Smile” will build on the foundation of the current Fissure Sealant Programme and initially be rolled out in selected areas e.g. Flying Start areas, and cover the North Wales region and a substantial part of South Wales.

The Programme’s aim is to have every child in Wales provided with free toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste. Sustainable nursery and school based tooth-brushing programmes are a key priority. Effective programmes will need to involve health and local authority partnerships and be accepted as an integral part of health promoting activity in nursery and school settings.

“Designed to Smile” will be developed over the next three years and delivered by the Community Dental Service. The CDS has significant experience of providing oral health promotion and their additional role in this initiative will focus on the delivery of fluoride supplementation programmes and improving care for children with chronic tooth decay. Funding totalling at least £4.6 million will be made available for the programme to 2010/11. Within the provider services there will be specific “Designed to Smile” teams. One of the vital elements of the Programme will be its integration into wider local and national health promotional initiatives and by those involved in delivering the general health promotional messages to children and schools.

Subject to evaluation and additional resources the National Child Oral Health Improvement Programme will be developed to embrace younger and older children, the oral health promotion contacts being synchronised with key points in child development.