



Dental Health Foundation
Ireland

Promoting Oral Health in Ireland



April 2008

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The Dental Health Foundation, Ireland

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Chairman's Address

Dr Brendan Pigott

Chairman, Dental Health Foundation, Ireland

It gives me great pleasure to present a report on the achievements of the first Strategic Initiative of the Dental Health Foundation. The Foundation was established as an independent Trust as a result of a consultation process conducted by the Department of Health and Children in 1997. In 2001 the Foundation launched a Strategic Initiative to provide clarity and focus for the work of the organization and to enable it to work in a more effective way with stakeholders.

The Strategic Initiative marked a new era for the Foundation and the contribution of this initiative in advancing oral health at National level is formerly recorded in the Department of Health and Children's Commissioned Report, the Review of the National Health Promotion Strategy 2004. The Foundation also achieved considerable recognition internationally by the World Health Organisation, the National Institute for Health USA, the Oral Health Promotion Research Group UK and Council of European Chief Dental Officers for its work as described in this Report's details.

Also, during this period, the Foundation responded positively to a request from the Minister for Health and Children to provide support to the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health by way of secretariat. Substantial work has been accomplished since 2004 and is ongoing. More recently, we have been pleased to broaden our support role to the Department of Health and Children.

The Foundation's achievements would not have been possible without the support and involvement of the dental profession. We received co-operation and support from the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive, including its public dental service, Population Health and Primary Care Directorates, the Cork and Dublin Dental Schools and Hospitals, the WHO Oral Health Services Research Centre, University College, Cork and the Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway, consumers, relevant agencies and the Oral Health Care Industry.

Substantial changes in Irish Health Policy and Health Service Reform have presented further challenges and opportunities to the promotion of oral health and I wish to express my gratitude to the newly appointed Advisory Committee, established in 2007, which is chaired by Professor John Clarkson. This Committee will endeavor to ensure that the Foundation's role is consolidated and supported more widely within the proposed national oral health policy.

I am grateful to the dedicated staff of the Foundation guided by the vision, commitment and leadership of our Executive Director, Deirdre Sadlier. Their accomplishment of significant outcomes is commendable.

Introduction



Deirdre Sadlier
Executive Director

This report sets out the work and accomplishments of the Dental Health Foundation since the launch of its Strategic Initiative in 2001.

The Strategic Initiative set out 5 main goals for the Foundation:

- Strengthening the Foundation's advocacy role,
- Providing information and education on oral health,
- Developing programmes and information for people with special needs,
- Taking a multi-sectoral approach to the promotion of oral health,
- Providing support for health professionals in pursuit of these objectives.

These goals informed the activities and outcomes of the work of the Foundation and are described in some detail in this report. The approach adopted by the Foundation to its work has, at all times been socially inclusive, independent, evidence-based, and a common risk factor approach to oral health promotion is used.

The achievements which are set out in the following chapters are the result of the dedicated work of the staff of the Dental Health Foundation, the support of the Department of Health and Children and the Health Services Executive, the professionalism and academic excellence of researchers and thought leaders from the third-level bodies and research institutes, and the unremunerated dedication and commitment of our Advisors and Trustees.

As Executive Director of the Dental Health Foundation I would like to thank all those who contributed to our success in the past and I look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

Executive Summary

The Dental Health Foundation (DHF), established in 1997, is an independent charitable trust, governed by a Declaration of Trust. The DHF has emerged as a unifying voice in the field of oral health promotion, working with a wide variety of interested parties to champion change. The DHF (in partnership with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive) has acted as a central facilitator and strategist in placing oral health issues and solutions on the national health agenda. It has also become a valuable resource within the healthcare sector for advice and tools to promote best oral health practices.

The Dental Health Foundation 2001-2007:

The Foundations activities in the period 2001-2007 were guided by the Strategic objectives:

- Strengthening the Foundation's advocacy role,
- Providing information and education on oral health,
- Developing programmes and information for people with special needs,
- Taking a multisectoral approach to the promotion of oral health,

- Providing support for health professionals in pursuit of these objectives.

Advocacy:

The role of advocacy has been a cornerstone of the Foundation's work throughout the 2001-2007 period. This has involved informing and educating government and community leaders and decision makers about specific issues that will have an impact on the oral health and well being of Irish people. In fulfillment of this role the Foundation has pursued a range of measures and actions.

The Foundation used its first partnership policy document on *Promoting Oral Health in Ireland* to drive this agenda; additionally it contributed the oral health component of the *National Health Promotion Strategy 2000 – 2005*. The DHF contributed to a range of other relevant public policies including *Health Literacy Policy and Strategy Report* (2002), *Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) Children's Advertising Code* (2003), *Smoking in the Workplace Ban* (2004), *The Disability Act* (2005), *The National Nutrition Policy Consultation* (2005), *Obesity: The Policy Challenges* (2005), *Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity* (2005), *The Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland* (2006) and the *OECD Review of the Irish Public Service* (2007).

Public Information and Education:

The Foundation has led on the development of a range of evidence-based public information programmes and educational resources with a broad range of collaborative partners. These resources include schools programmes; *Cool Water Cool Smiles* (2003), the *Mighty Mouth Schools-Programme* (2004), the *Winning Smiles Schools-Programme North/South (Ireland) Initiative* (2005), *Better Oral Health* (2005) a programmes for children with disabilities. General oral health information for parents of young children and a general *Oral Health Information Programme for the Traveller Community*. These programmes have been formally evaluated and are ‘**models of best practice**’ and have been made available to the system for roll out. The Foundation has provided continued advice and expertise in oral health promotion materials development to a wide range of stakeholders concerned with improving oral health.

Support for Special Needs Groups:

The Foundation placed a special emphasis on driving the agenda for change in oral health policy and practice for adults and children with disabilities.

Arising from the Foundations partnership document *Promoting the Oral Health of People with Disabilities* (2000) and subsequently *Oral Health and Disability: The Way Forward* (2005). The Foundation has mobilised substantial effort, methods and evidence for bringing about improvements in the oral health of people with disabilities, their family members and carers. It successfully identified a need for oral health to become a fundamental strand specifically within disability policies and the **DHF** partnered by the **National Disability Authority** and the **School of Dental Science; Trinity College Dublin** played a role in recommending measures arising from the *Disability Act* (2005).

Taking a Multi-Sectoral Approach:

The Foundation provided leadership in establishing a multi-sectoral way of working which has proven very beneficial and has lent itself well to the range of actions undertaken in the intervening period. The Foundation’s approach has enabled a coordinated approach to oral health promotion, reduced duplication of effort and lessened the possibilities of conflicting and contradictory messages being delivered to the public. The **Mighty Mouth Schools Programme** is an example of this approach; it recognised that multisectoral collaboration is needed in order to tackle the physical, economic and cultural determinants of health. The primary aim of the programme was to focus attention on the importance of oral health for children from disadvantaged backgrounds within the context of overall general health and wellbeing. **The programmes’ evaluation made recommendations both for future schools initiatives and policy development in Ireland.** The Foundation used the research results from the programme to inform the guidelines development on food and nutrition of pre schools, primary and post primary schools. **The DHF made recommendations from the research results which were accepted concerning the consumption of drinks in pre schools and school settings in Ireland.**

Oral Health Promotion and Professional Development:

The Foundation in its Strategic Initiative set out to put in place support mechanisms for the preparation and training of health professionals, and also to increase an evidenced based approach to oral health promotion programme development. To encourage uptake of this approach, the DHF has pursued these aspects through programme provision, award schemes, and conferences which

have been supported by publications disseminated widely through the DHF website.

The Dental Health Foundation was one of the main architects of the first Irish accredited training programme for oral care professionals in Oral Health Promotion. **The Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health)** was established as a partnership programme with the Dental Health Foundation, **The Department of Health Promotion, National University of Ireland, Galway and supported by The Department of Health and Children.** The DHF brought the programme from concept to fruition and undertook its formal evaluation which was recently published. Over 120 dental services personnel are successful graduates of this programme.

Support to the Department of Health and Children:

The DHF accepted an invitation by the Minister for Health and Children in 2004, to bring “its experience and expertise” to the establishment, development and on-going support to the **Irish Expert Body and Fluorides and Health** arising from the **Forum on Fluoridation Report (2002)**. The DHF holds responsibility for the delivery of key support services to the Expert Body, including assistance in the development of quality standards and revised regulations, assistance in the formulation of fluoridation policy, oral health promotion and communication to a range of stakeholders in line with the Expert Body Action Plan 2005. In 2007 we increased our level of support to the Department of Health and Children.

Dental Health Foundations’ Role – Evidence of Effectiveness:

The effectiveness of the DHF role has been reviewed and its positive contribution acknowledged in the Department of Health and Children’s commissioned reports as follows:

- Forum on Fluoridation (2002),
- A Review of Oral Health Promotion in Ireland, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2003,
- Review of the National Health Promotion Strategy 2004.

The DHF’s reputation has grown internationally, and its personnel have addressed the **World Dental Federation’s International Meeting** as well as the **United Kingdom’s Oral Health Promotion Research Meeting**. The Foundation’s work on the schools oral health promotion programme in Ireland has informed the considerations of the **World Health Organization** in relation to oral health promotion for children in school settings.



Advocacy

The role of advocacy has been a cornerstone of the Foundation's work throughout the 2001-2007 period. This has involved informing and educating government and community leaders and decision makers about specific issues that will have an impact on the oral health and well being of Irish people. In fulfillment of this role the Foundation has pursued a range of measures and actions.

OECD Review of the Irish Public Service:

The DHF used the Government's commissioned review of the Irish Public Service to call for a fully integrated system of oral health care delivery for Ireland. Irish research has shown that, while policies have been developed, the implementation of these policies falls short of policy makers' expectations. Underpinning the DHF's submission is the **WHO World Health Assembly's Oral Health: Action Plan for Promotion and Integrated Disease Prevention (May 2007)**. This document specifically advises and urges Member States to develop integrated national health policies with oral health as a key component. The DHF's view is that adopting the WHO recommendations would significantly advance national oral health policies to have a practical impact on enhancing oral health in Irish society.

The Liverpool Declaration "Promoting Oral Health in the 21st Century":

In 2005, the DHF participated in the 8th World Congress on Preventative Dentistry which was

held in Liverpool and organised jointly by **The International Association for Dental Research (IADR)**, **The World Health Organization (WHO)**, **The European Association of Dental Public Health (EADPH)** and **the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD)**. Participants from 43 countries, including the DHF Ireland, were signatories to a call for action on a range of issues related to oral health by 2012.

National Guidelines for Food Safety and Nutrition in Schools:

The DHF participated in the consultation process which produced these guidelines in 2001. Using information gleaned through its research programme, *Oral Health in Disadvantaged Schools in the Eastern Region*, the DHF made new recommendations which were accepted concerning the consumption of drinks in pre-school, primary and post primary school settings in Ireland.

EU School Milk Scheme:

The school milk scheme was reintroduced into Irish schools after a long period of absence. And to encourage greater uptake and consumption of the milk under this EU funded scheme, flavoured milk was introduced as part of the product range. While recognising the importance of the increase in calcium intake to the general health needs and bone health of young children, and teenage girls in particular, the DHF raised concerns in relation to flavoured milk.

The Food Safety Authority upheld the scheme, including flavoured milk, because of the potential nutritional benefits for school children in Ireland.

World Health Organisation, Bangkok Charter:

The Dental Health Foundation participated in a collaborative meeting led by the Centre for Health Promotion at the National University of Ireland, Galway in the summer of 2005 at the request of the Department of Health and Children. Its purpose was to coordinate Ireland's input into the **WHO Bangkok Charter on Health Promotion in a Globalized World**. The Charter was finalised in 2005 by the World Health Organisation.

Oral Health and Cancers:

The DHF made a submission to a national forum in 2002 with a particular focus on oral cancers and the preparation of a national cancer strategy taking full account of head and neck cancers. A Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland published in 2006 sets out recommendations in this regard and this Strategy has been followed swiftly by the Health Service Executive announcement of the establishment of a National Cancer Control implementation programme.

Oral Health and TV Advertising:

Arising out of concerns about fat, sugar and salt on health, a consultation process was undertaken by the **Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI)** on a draft **Advertising Code for Children**. With its partners, the DHF successfully worked to achieve a number of inclusions in the advertising code for children, in particular **the use of a toothbrush symbol** in confectionary advertising and TV messaging, **'Snacking on sugary foods and drinks can be harmful**

to teeth'. This work is a major accomplishment that the DHF is proud to be associated with. This code is currently under review by the BCI.

Oral Health and Obesity:

The DHF made an input to the Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity (2005), our work in this area continues as a member of the National Heart Alliance which advocates for an advertising ban on 'Marketing of Food Products to Children', to the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) Children's Advertising Code.

Oral Health and Tobacco:

The Foundation has played an active role in developing the oral care professionals' anti-smoking agenda in Ireland through its membership of the Department of Health and Children's National Smoking Cessation Steering Committee and at Regional Health Services level, where it engaged in a pilot smoking cessation training programme for dental staff. The Foundation also advocated for oral health issues to be included in the National Cancer Forum.

Consumers and Oral Care Information:

The DHF responded to the **Competition Authority's** call for submission on its Study of the Professions. The DHF's submission focused on the evidence base available for identifying consumer concerns in relation to oral health. These concerns highlight obstacles for accessing oral health including cost and consumer information on dental procedures and treatments. The submission was supported by evidence from the First Oral Health Survey of Irish Adults (1989-1990) which identified cost of dentistry as a key barrier for Irish people seeking dental care

and **Well Read - Developing Consumer Health Information in Ireland**, which highlights a lack of published dental information from independent sources. The success of our submission is reflected in the recently published report of the Authority which has made its recommendations for action in this area by the Health Service Executive and The Dental Health Foundation.

Oral Health and Older People:

The Foundation welcomed the opportunity to input into the development of a national oral health policy for older people commissioned by the **National Council on Aging and Older People** and was informed by research undertaken by the **Oral Health Services University College Cork** and funded jointly by the **Health Research Board**. Our major emphasis was on the need to put in place adequate and effective oral health promotion services for the elderly, and the need for new approaches to make dental services more accessible to older people.

World Dental Congress (FDI), Vienna:

The DHF was represented at this important Congress, at which the Foundation's Executive Director, Ms Deirdre Sadlier presented a paper as part of the oral health in practice component of the Scientific Programme. Ms Sadlier was nominated to speak at the Congress by Dr. Lois Cohen, **Associate Director of the Office of International Health, National Institutes of Health in the US**, on the topic of **Oral Health Promotion – Policies and Strategies**.

National Oral Health Promotion Research Group (UK) 10th Annual Scientific Conference:

The Executive Director of the Foundation was invited to present at this prestigious UK scientific meeting. Ms Sadlier's presentation was **Making Change Happen – Promoting Oral Health in Ireland**.



Public Information and Education

Information on Fluorides:

Water fluoridation and the appropriate use of fluoride toothpaste has been a major piece of evidence based public health policy in Ireland. The Foundation initiated the development of a range of public information and education programmes nationally and also a North/South (Ireland) programme based on the use of fluoride toothpaste as a common objective in both jurisdictions. The Foundation's work in this area was strengthened by the Sixtieth World Health Assembly (2007) resolution entitled Oral Health: action plan for promotion and integrated disease prevention to include their ongoing commitment to the use of fluorides including water fluoridation for oral health improvement programmes. The Expert Body on Fluorides and Health is an advisory body to the Minister for Health and Children and their work is available on the internet at www.fluoridesandhealth.ie

Forum on Fluoridation:

The DHF responded to the Forum Report Recommendations when it was published in 2002 by calling for the development of an effective and sustained public information campaign aimed at parents of young children about the proper use of fluoride toothpaste for those under seven years old. It also developed, as an interim measure, advice and

information on oral health for parents of 0 to 2 year olds and parents of 2 to 7 year olds. This information was distributed through the Health Service Executive (HSE). The Forum Report fully acknowledged the contribution made by the Foundation to the promotion of oral health in Ireland.

National Research Programme:

The DHF was a member of the Oral Health Services Research Centre's project team established in 2003 to undertake a consultancy research project on behalf of the Department of Health and Children in collaboration with the Health Boards. Led by Professor Denis O'Mullane, the team investigated the **Use of Fluorides in the Promotion of Oral Health in the Republic of Ireland** and made recommendations on its future use.

Schools Programmes:

A key component of all schools programmes development by the Foundation has been education about the appropriate use of fluoride toothpaste. These messages are incorporated into the **Mighty Mouth Programme** for 5 to 6 year olds and in **Oral Health Matters**, a programme for children with disabilities aged 0 to 6 years old and are described in more detail in this review.

Winning Smiles – Oral Health Promotion Programme:

The DHF developed this high profile and highly popular **All Ireland Schools Programme** for 7 to 8 year olds in conjunction with the Oral Health Services Research Centre, University College Cork, Dental Public Health and Behavioural Sciences, Queen’s University Belfast, the HSE Population Health Directorate, Dental Services, HSE Dublin North East and the Dental Services of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, Northern Ireland.

A detailed evaluation of the programme was published by the DHF in 2006 and launched by **An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D.** Following feedback from the partners involved, the programme is being refined and is being recommended for inclusion in the Schools curricula in the Republic and Northern Ireland. By recognising excellence in dental health care standards achieved by primary school children, it encourages children to brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. **The DHF’s work in this area has informed the considerations of the World Health Organisation guidance in respect of child oral health promotion (WHO Bulletin, Vol. 83 No. 9).**

The Winning Smiles report further research recommendations include the ‘use of equilibrium salivary fluoride levels to measure compliance with advocated frequency of tooth brushing’. This is the subject of a new research project and involves the conduct of controlled clinical trials. The aim of study 1 is to estimate the impact of frequency and timing of brushing with the 1450 ppm fluoride tooth paste on equilibrium salivary fluoride levels (ESFL). The aim of study 2 is to evaluate the use of the Equilibrium Salivary Fluoride Level (ESFL) in monitoring the effectiveness of oral health promotion among primary school children.

Cool Water – Cool Smiles:

The Cool Water – Cool Smiles project was developed by the Dental Services Department and the Health Promotion Service of the former North Western Health Board and was funded by the Dental Health Foundation, Ireland. The project targeted first year students in post-primary schools. Statistics comparing primary and post-primary children’s dentition showed significant deterioration after school transfer.

The project’s aim was to reduce the consumption of soft drinks during the school day. This was achieved by a three-point approach:

- Provision of a healthier alternative i.e. water cooler installed in the school, making drinking water accessible to students.
- Raising awareness of damage caused by frequent consumption of soft drinks – participating classes received 3 Oral Health Education lessons.
- Positive peer influence – “Water is cool in school” challenge, participating classes were rewarded for remaining soft drinks free for a specified number of weeks.

The Magic Tooth:

The DHF, along with the **National Council for the Blind of Ireland** and **Gael Linn**, supported the publication of this “tooth fairy” story and ABC Guide for Children written by Irish dentist John Hackett, illustrated by Paul Bolger and produced by **Yokeybob Publications (2001)**. It was launched by the Minister for Health and Children and made available in English, Irish, Braille and A3 versions and distributed widely throughout the country.

Healthy Teeth for Life:

Healthy Teeth for Life – A Guide to your Child's Dental Health, (2nd edition) aims to provide factual, appropriate information for parents relating to their children's dental health from birth to adulthood. The second edition was published in 2005; it is authored by Dr. John S. Walsh.

Resource contents:

The booklet contains detailed factual information on **Your child's teeth:** *before birth, infancy, teething, thumb sucking, soothers, nursing bottle mouth, diet and snacks; the food pyramid, primary teeth matter, cleaning, sealants, injuries and traumas, mouth guards, your child's first dental visit, orthodontic, fluoride, and 8 rules for a cavity free child.*

Tooth Tips Posters:

These posters are aimed at parents and caregivers of young children in the 0 to 2 year-olds and 2 to 7 year-old age groups. The aim of the posters is to establish good tooth brushing habits from the outset. By providing clear, evidence based messages; the posters are designed to promote the most effective brushing practices amongst children. Available in both English and Irish, the posters have been literacy proofed in line with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) Guidelines and have clear visual instructions where appropriate. The posters are available directly from the Dental Health Foundation, and can be downloaded from the website. They are freely available for GP and Dental practices, health centres, crèches, schools etc.

Public Information:

The Dental Health Foundation's website, which can be found under www.dentalhealth.ie was developed and redesigned in September 2002 with the aim

of ensuring that users have access to a site that is rich in content, informative, easily accessible and navigation friendly. With the aid of the Foundation's database driven site all sections are quickly modified and new sections can be added providing a fast and efficient service for users. This type of website design facilitates a full website search, and in an effort to ensure ease of navigation throughout, drop down menus are included on the main navigation bar. In line with the National Disability Authority's guidelines on website accessibility for people with disabilities a text only version of the Foundation's site was developed which is automatically updated in conjunction with the graphical site.

The Dental Health Foundation's website is recognised as a reliable source of information by the Department of Health and Children. The Department provides a direct link to the Foundation's website under their link to 'agencies' on their home page. Visitors to the Foundation's website are welcome to explore fully all aspects of the site, while comments and suggestions are greatly welcomed and can be forwarded to the Foundation via the 'contact us' section.

Among the information available on the Foundation's website there is a dedicated section for the public on the use of fluorides and oral health. This is constantly updated in line with the findings and recommendations of evidence based reviews of the use of fluorides both nationally and internationally.

Support for Special Needs Groups

The Foundation placed a special emphasis on driving the agenda for change in oral health policy and practice for adults and children with disabilities. We used a series of measures to ensure that oral health for this group of people in Irish society was built into national policy developments and professional practices using a range of actions.

National Survey of Practice and Perception of Dental Health Service Providers in relation to Special Needs Groups:

Underpinning any action plan is the need to establish baseline data and a review was undertaken by the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI Galway in 2003 commissioned by the Department of Health and Children. The DHF provided an input to this body of work. The research also explored the attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of special needs groups, identified the perceived availability, accessibility and acceptability of service providers to these groups and sought to explore the attitudes, knowledge and behaviours of dental service providers to clients with special needs.

Chair in Special Care Dentistry at TCD:

For the first time a new Chair of Special Care in Dentistry was established in 2003 at Trinity College

Dublin. This was achieved as a direct outcome of a forum held on *Promoting the Oral Health of People with Disabilities* in March 2000, in which the DHF was closely partnered with the School of Dental Science, TCD, the Centre for Disability Studies UCD and supported by the Department of Health and Children.

Oral Health and Disability: The Way Forward:

This joint initiative between the DHF, the Dublin Dental School and Hospital and the National Disability Authority, makes 10 key recommendations for improving the current ad hoc and unsatisfactory provision of oral health care services to people with disabilities. The report '*Oral Health and Disability: The Way Forward*' (2005) draws on contributions from the Republic and Northern Ireland made at an Oral Health and Disability Roundtable held in 2004.

Disability Legislation 2005:

In response to the *Sectoral Plan Development of the Department of Health and Children: Disability Act 2005*, a comprehensive document was prepared and submitted to inform policy makers of the substantial need to address deficiencies in oral health care provision for the 325,000 people with disabilities in Ireland.

It captured the effort, methods and evidence used by a variety of stakeholders seeking to improve the oral health of this special group. It outlined a number of measures to improve access to oral health services for people with disabilities.

National Advisory Committee to the Minister for Health and Children:

The Dental Health Foundation sought representation on the proposed National Disability Advisory Committee in 2006 arising from the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Health and Children. The Foundation in partnership with the National Disability Authority, proposed Professor June Nunn, Chairperson of Special Care Dentistry, Trinity College Dublin, to provide oral health representation on this committee. We are delighted to report Professor June Nunn's appointment to this important committee and we continue to pursue our agenda as set out in *Disability and Oral Health: The Way Forward*.

Children with Congenital Heart Disease:

About one baby in every hundred born in Ireland has congenital heart disease and is at risk of developing a serious infection as a result of certain dental procedures and chronic oral health. In association with the Dental and Cardiology Departments at Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, the DHF introduced an ID card which informs the child's dentist about the heart condition and recommends an antibiotic prophylaxis regime to be undertaken before procedures which may result in bleeding. The card featured prominently in *Surgeons*, a 2007 TV series made by Mint Productions for RTÉ, in an episode which focused on the work of the Mater Hospital cardiac surgeon Mr. Freddie Woods.

Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health:

In 2002, the Dental Health Foundation agreed with the newly formed Society for Disability and Oral Health to fund a research award to encourage evidence based practices in the area of oral health for people with special needs. Now in its 5th year, the bursary has assisted specialists in the field to carry out specific research on establishing information on the oral and dental status of people with special needs and the required treatment options. It has, over the years funded studies of the oral health of people with diabetes and oral health awareness of parents of children with cardiac conditions.

European Year for People with Disabilities:

To mark 2003 as the European Year for People with Disabilities the DHF initiated a number of specific small research projects in the area of oral health. These were in line with the Department of Health and Children's public policy requirements and encompassed feasibility studies, information and educational resource initiatives.

Oral Health Matters:

This programme was introduced in 2005, as a partnership between the Health Service Executive Dental Services, Early Intervention and Enable Ireland Teams and Oral/Health Promotion Departments with the leadership of Dr. Mary O'Farrell. It was supported by the Dental Health Foundation.

There are two strands to the programme:

I.

An Individual Oral Health Care Programme

Primary Care Team Members are in a key position to help children and their parents access this individual care programme, the steps involve:

1. Initial Assessment with the Early Intervention/ Enable Ireland Teams.
2. Referral from the Early Intervention Team/ Enable Ireland Team to the Senior Dental Surgeon for oral health assessment.
3. Joint healthcare assessments working with the multidisciplinary teams to ensure optimal care is offered to children and their families.
4. Ongoing individual preventative oral health care plan, with dental team.
5. Continuing links and liaising with all primary health care staff to support children with special needs.

II.

A Community Based Programme

This Community based programme aims to teach Primary/Community Healthcare staff about oral health issues. Special Teaching Resources, including flipcharts and folders have been designed and developed for this programme. In addition, leaflets and posters will be made available for distribution via Primary/Community Care Teams. Children and their parents will be offered an Oral Health Care Pack, free of charge.

This initiative now forms part of a major research project by the HSE North East, Trinity College Dublin and is supported by the DHF. It is funded by the Health Research Board.



Taking a Multi-Sectoral Approach

The Foundation has been to the forefront in pursuit of oral health promotion as set out in its Strategic Initiative 2001. This way of working has proven very beneficial and has lent itself well to the range of actions undertaken in the intervening period. The Foundation's approach has enabled a coordinated approach to oral health promotion, reduced duplication of effort and lessened the possibilities of conflicting and contradictory messages being delivered to the public. The common risk factor approach recognizes that chronic non-communicable diseases such as obesity, heart disease, stroke, cancers, diabetes, mental illness and oral diseases share a set of common risk conditions and factors.

Oral Health in Disadvantaged Schools in the Eastern Region:

This major research programme commencing in 2001 was funded by the DHF, the North Eastern Area, East Coast Area and South Western Area Health Boards and the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children.

The research highlighted the need for oral health promotion to be set in the broader context of general health promotion. An oral health school intervention programme, **Mighty Mouth**, was developed and objective measures were employed to determine the dental

health status of children attending those schools. A dental services information leaflet was also prepared, targeted at socially disadvantaged groups.

The programme had a positive affect on oral health behaviour in the participating schools and the researchers concluded there was a pressing need for a comprehensive oral health promotion strategy/programme for more disadvantaged groups, particularly amongst young children. Significant lessons were learnt for future school initiatives, including the importance of supervised brushing, the benefit of providing audio visual aids and the value of partnership approaches, while broader recommendations inform future policy development in relation to public dental service and a food and nutrition policy.

Reflecting the success of the **Mighty Mouth** pilot project, in 2003 the DHF was asked by the Department of Health and Children to submit a proposal for funding to facilitate the proposed national rollout of the programme.

Oral Health Promotion/Education in Ireland – Research:

The DHF made a significant contribution to this National Survey commissioned by the Department

of Health and Children. It was undertaken by the Department of Health Promotion, and NUI Galway (2003) at the same time as its review of dental health services for special needs groups. It gathered information on the structures, processes and outcomes of oral health promotion and education in Ireland, identified suitable performance indicators and success factors and made a major contribution to the development of a framework for future action.

Crucially it identified a number of deficiencies, including the treatment focused nature of oral health services, the *ad hoc* nature of efforts in the area, inadequacies in current services and shortcomings in policy co-ordination.

Health Literacy – Policy and Strategy Report:

The DHF was a member of the Steering Committee for the National Adult Literacy Agency Health and Literacy Project. This project addressed the health issues and needs of Ireland’s low literacy population and provided valuable recommendations for the future health information policy development nationally. Arising out of this involvement, the DHF commenced a series of one-day “master classes” on literacy awareness training for oral health promoters. This has led to literacy policy proofing of all literature published at HSE levels.

Best Health for Children:

The DHF was invited to present a parallel session on oral health during this conference in Galway in 2001 attended by key stakeholders and policy makers in the area of adolescent health. The DHF made submissions to the report on *Adolescent Health – Get connected – Developing an Adolescent*

Friendly Service, ensuring the inclusion of oral health within the wider context.

The DHF collaborated with Best Health for Children in identifying child health and well-being indicators as part of the 2002 EU Children’s Quality of Life Indicators initiative. The Foundation also contributed to the consultation on “Best Health for Children Revisited” – Report from the National Core Child Health Programme Review Group to the Health Service Executive 2005.

Oral Health and Tobacco:

The Foundation has played an active role in developing the oral care professionals’ anti-smoking agenda in Ireland through its membership of the Department of Health and Children’s National Smoking Cessation Steering Committee and at Regional Health Services level, where it engaged in a pilot smoking cessation training programme for dental staff. The Foundation also advocated for oral health issues to be included in the National Cancer Forum.

National Survey of Lifestyles, Attitude and Nutrition (SLÁN):

The 2003 *SLÁN* survey, which involved 10,000 people over the age of 18, incorporated a significant component on oral health and now provides an immense resource for identifying key issues impacting on oral health. *SLÁN* is an invaluable resource to underpin and influence the strategic plans and actions of the DHF. The 2006 survey ensured an appropriate oral health component in light of recent policy and research developments. The results of this survey due in 2008 will provide a basis for further strategic planning.

Bone and Oral Health Promotion:

The DHF collaborated with the National Dairy Council in 2005 on a schools programme pack to help teachers promote **bone health and dental health**. Basic nutritional principles were introduced to children in the classroom by incorporating them into the **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)** areas of the primary school curriculum.

A 'teacher's toolkit' was designed to complement the SPHE classes, the lesson plans can be incorporated into science lessons under the 'Living things' and 'Human life' strands of the lesson. It is also useful for the preparation of SPHE lessons under the 'Myself' strand and 'Taking care of my body'.



The Food Pyramid

Oral Health Promotion and Professional Development

The Foundation set out under its Strategic Initiative to put in place support mechanisms for the preparation and training of health professionals, and also to increase an evidenced based approach to oral health promotion programme development. To encourage uptake of this approach, the DHF have pursued work in this area through programme provision, award schemes and attendance at conferences which are supported by publications disseminated widely through its website.

Training for Professionals in Oral Health Promotion:

The Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health) has been in existence since 1999. It was initiated by the Dental Health Foundation in response to the Department of Health and Children's 1994 Dental Health Action Plan. It was developed in collaboration with the Department of Health Promotion, National University of Ireland, Galway, and the Society of Chief and Principal Dental Surgeons in Ireland. Funding support was provided by the Department of Health and Children, to establish the development and inaugural year of the programme. The course is provided by NUI, Galway and the Dental Health Foundation. The 12-month part-time course aims to provide participants with

professional education and training in the principles and practice of oral health promotion. Since the course was established more than six years ago, more than one hundred and twenty students have successfully completed the course with a number of graduates going on to complete higher training in Health Promotion. The Dental Health Foundation commissioned an evaluation of the course to determine its effectiveness at providing participants with the training required for the practice of oral health promotion. This evaluation was carried out by Dr. Margaret Hodgins, Dr. Claire Connolly and Ms. Therese Costello at National University of Ireland, Galway.

Overall, there have been positive and encouraging comments made in relation to the effect that the course has had on graduates' oral health promotion knowledge and practices. However, applying their learning from the course to practice seems to be influenced by structures and resources. From the findings of this evaluation, it is suggested that the determinants of oral health promotion within individual workplaces, settings and population groups are looked at and addressed where deficits are identified. Graduates are working to greatest effect when applying their skills in the delivery of dental services for people with disabilities and also

working as part of multidisciplinary teams in health services delivery. The Minister for Health Promotion and Food Safety, Mr. Pat the Cope Gallagher T.D., launched the report on the '*Evaluation of the Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health)*' in December 2007.

The course material is currently being updated by author Dr. Mary O'Farrell (Principal Dental Surgeon) with the support of an editorial team.

E-Learning Programme in Special Care Dentistry:

The DHF has supported the development of modules for this web-based programme designed to deliver education at different levels and which is offered by the Dublin Dental School and Hospital.

The Oral Health Managers Society of Ireland, North/South (Ireland):

The inaugural seminar was organised in 2002 by the Society of Chief and Principal Dental Surgeons with its counterpart in Northern Ireland, with a view to putting in place a structure for ongoing collaboration. The DHF was asked to contribute its support and expertise. Following the success of the first meeting, the Second Annual All Island Symposium on the Public Dental Services was held jointly under the auspices of the Oral Health Managers Society of Ireland and the DHF. The DHF has played an important role in organising and resourcing this now annual event.

Promoting Oral Health in the 21st Century:

In 2001 the DHF published the proceedings of this international meeting in 2000 which is co-hosted in association with University College Cork

and the Department of Health and Children. The meeting was attended by leading academics and practitioners, including experts from the National Institutes for Health in the U.S. It helped inform the Foundation's *Five Year Strategic Initiative*.

Research in Primary Dental Care Award:

The DHF established this award in collaboration with the International Association for Dental Research – Irish Division in support of the Department of Health and Children's Primary Care Strategy. It is presented to support research by investigators in primary care.

The Moloney Award:

This annual award was inaugurated in 2003 to recognise the contribution to oral health promotion in Ireland of the late Dr Joe Moloney, a founding member of the DHF. It is awarded to the best table demonstration entry on the basis of originality, usefulness and presentation at the Irish Dental Association annual conference.

Master Classes in the UCC Postgraduate Programme:

On an annual basis, the Dental Health Foundation's Executive Director, Deirdre Sadlier, provides post-graduates in UCC with an insight into the workings of the DHF. In practice, this takes the form of a detailed lecture outlining the strategic policies underpinning oral health promotion in Ireland and the platforms in place to affect positive change.

UCC/HRB Guidelines Development Group:

The DHF was invited to participate in a new project to develop evidence-based clinical practice guidelines

for the Public Dental Service. This Health Research Board funded project is a collaboration between the Public Dental Service, the Oral Health Services Research Centre in Cork and the UK Cochrane Centre and has the support of the National Directorates of the Health Service Executive.

Research carried out on behalf of the Department of Health and Children, as part of the Contracts for epidemiology, oral health services research and specified consultancy services for the dental services, highlighted widespread variation in the delivery of core public dental services such as school screening and the use of preventive therapies. The development and implementation of evidence-based guidelines has the potential to reduce such variation and improve health

outcomes for patients by facilitating more consistent, effective and efficient practice.

Oral Health Promotion Research Group – Irish Link:

An Irish branch of the internationally influential group, Oral Health Promotion Research Group (UK) was established and a Steering Committee formed at its inaugural meeting in 2002 with the support of the Foundation. The meeting was attended by approximately 100 delegates from the Republic and Northern Ireland. The first joint meeting is scheduled to take place in May 2008, and the Foundation congratulates the dedicated membership for the growth and developments since the group's inception. The DHF provide an annual bursary to the group in support of its objectives.



Support to the Department of Health and Children

The Minister for Health and Children in 2004 invited the DHF to provide secretariat services to the Irish Expert Body and Fluorides and Health. In this role it has been responsible for the delivery of key support services to the Expert Body, including assistance in the development of quality standards and revised regulations, and assistance in the formulation of fluoridation policy advice on fluorides and public health. In addition, the DHF has responsibility for communications with the wide range of stakeholders, including the public, government departments, politicians, local authorities, the health and wider professions, industry and the media.

The Body's terms of reference are:

- To oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum on Fluoridation.
- To advise the Minister and evaluate ongoing research – including new emerging issues – on all aspects of fluoride, its delivery methods as an established health technology.
- To report to the Minister on matters of concern at his/her request or on the Body's own initiative.

The DHF also welcomed the invitation to participate in the major national programme of dental research in Ireland commissioned by the Department of Health and Children between 2001 and 2006. This enabled the Foundation to use its considerable experience and expertise in oral health promotion to inform and influence relevant aspects of the *National Survey of Children Attending Schools Designated as Special Needs* by the Department of Education and Children Attending Day Care Centres, *Oral Health of Irish Adults 2000-2002*, *North South (Ireland) Survey of Children's Oral Health*, *Oral Health of Adults with an Intellectual Disability in Residential Care in Ireland*, *Oral Health in Ireland- A Review of Oral Health Promotion/ Education Activity in the Republic of Ireland and a Study of Attitudes, Knowledge and Behaviour Towards Special Needs Groups Regarding Oral Health, Use of Fluorides in the Promotion of Oral Health in the Republic of Ireland*.

The Foundation has been very pleased to give effect to the Department of Health and Children's policy decisions in Oral Health Promotion. Over the 7 year period, the Foundation has initiated, developed and tested programmes to create solutions for priority groups. These programmes are models of good practice which have been

formally evaluated and made available to the health and education systems. These programmes have been described in detail earlier in this report and they are *Oral Health in Ireland, Mighty Mouth Schools-Programme, the Winning Smiles Schools Programme, Cool Water Cool Smiles, Better Oral Health for Children with Disabilities and the Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health)* – a professional development programme.

The DHF contributed to a further range of public policy initiatives such as Social Inclusion and Health Inequalities, and the DHF offered a range of oral health promotion advice to the Department of Health and Children arising from changes under the 2004 Health Act.

The Dental Health Foundation was delighted to be a **collaborative partner for the Council of European Chief Dental Officials meeting in Belfast, 2003. It was at the invitation of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland, Department of Health and Children, Republic of Ireland** and it was supported by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland. The Irish partners created the vision and purpose for the Belfast meeting in consultation with the CECDO membership.

CECDO is a richly diverse organisation. The members sit in different structures in their member states, but share common aims. The Belfast event offered a timely opportunity to explore strategic development and a detailed report on the proceeding and the evaluation of the meeting itself was prepared for the CECDO membership by the DHF.

Conclusions

The effectiveness of the DHF's role has been reviewed and its positive contribution acknowledged in the Department of Health and Children's commissioned reports as follows:

- Forum on Fluoridation (2002),
- A Review of Oral Health Promotion in Ireland, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2003,
- Review of the National Health Promotion Strategy 2004.

The DHF's reputation has grown internationally, and its personnel have addressed the **World Dental Federation's International Meeting** as well as the **United Kingdom's Oral Health Promotion Research Meeting**. The Foundation's work on the schools oral health promotion programme in Ireland has informed the considerations on the **World Health Organization** in relation to oral health promotion for children in school settings.

Future Plans

The DHF has developed a new strategy for the period 2008-2012, the Dental Health Foundation recognises:

- the benefit which the promotion of oral health can bring to the people of Ireland,
- the value for money which it represents in helping to obviate the necessity for expensive treatments,
- the need for an approach which is coordinated with other health promotion activities to focus on common risk factors,
- the particular challenges presented by groups with special needs.

Against this background, and building on the achievements of 2001 to 2007, DHF sets out its strategy for continuing to promote oral health in the period 2008 to 2012. The DHF Strategic Plan 2008-2012 is based on WHO's guidance models for Health Promotion Development and this strategy proposes five goals appropriate to the Foundation's role as follows: *Development of an Independent Voice, Support to the Department of Health and Children, Oral Health Promotion for Groups with Special Needs, Awareness of Good Personal Oral Health Practices, Promoting Excellence in Oral Care*. The Foundation is confident that its Strategic Plan will make a positive contribution to the development and implementation of the **new oral health policy**. The Foundation's Strategic plan is evidence based and the plan can be modified in light of changing priorities for oral health promotion as they emerge.

Governance

The Foundation is a charitable trust and its 'declaration of trust' outlines the governance and management requirements for the organisation. Membership of the board is as follows:

DHF Board of Trustees

Dr. Brendan Pigott (*Chairman*), *B.D.S, F.F.D., R.C.S.I.*

Mr. Stephen McDermott, *B. Dent. Sc., MSc.*

Dr. John Walsh, *M.S.D. (Paed), Indiana Uni.*

Dr. Paddy Crotty, *B.Dent.Sc. F.D.S., R.C.S. (Edin)*

The Board of Trustees of the Dental Health Foundation ensures that:

- An Annual Report and Set of Audited Accounts are submitted to the grant authority in line with the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.
- An annual 'Tax Clearance' Certificate issued to the Dental Health Foundation by the Revenue Commissioners is also submitted.
- A Service level agreement is agreed and submitted annually to the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health and Children.

In 2006 the Board of Trustees put in place an Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor John Clarkson, former Dean of the Dublin Dental School and Hospital.

Its membership comprises of:

Professor June Nunn *Public Health/Disability*

Dr. Helen Whelton *Oral Health Services Research*

Professor Gerry Linden *Oral and Systemic Diseases*

Professor Brian O'Connell *Restorative Dentistry and Behavioral Sciences*

Dr. Dymphna Daly *Pediatrics*

Dr. Eamon Croke *General Dental Practitioner*

Dr. Mary O'Farrell *Public Dental Service*

The Advisory Committee's inaugural meeting took place in August 2007 and it signed off on a Five Year Strategic Plan. This plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees in September 2007 and forms the basis for discussions with the Foundation's stakeholders for 2007 and beyond.

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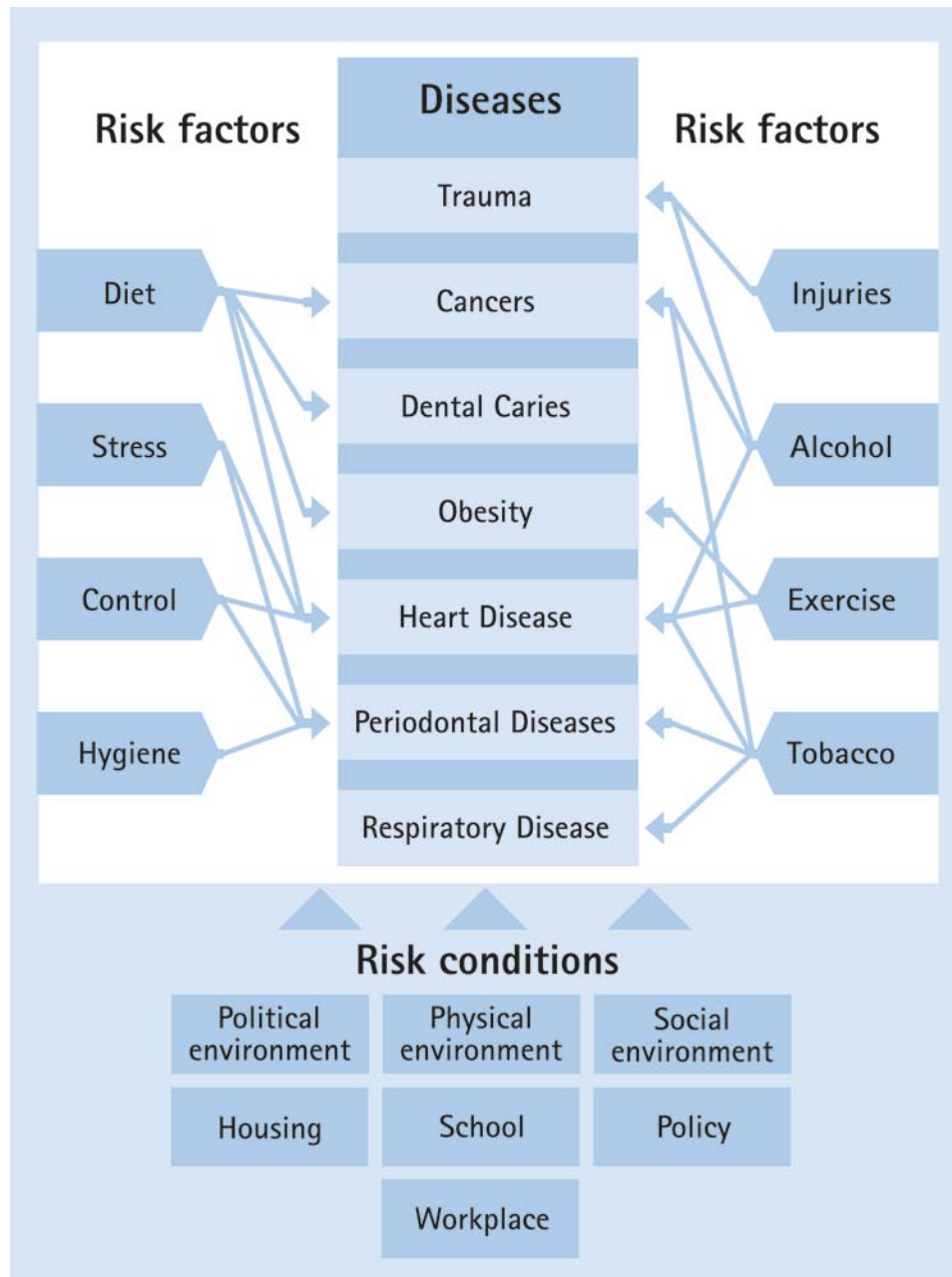
The Foundation's website is:

www.dentalhealth.ie

Report written by Ms. Deirdre Sadlier with the administrative support of DHF staff.

Appendix 1 - Oral Health Common Risk Factors

Common Risk Approach. Modified by Sheiham & Watt, 2000.¹



¹Watt, R.G. (2005) Strategies and Approaches in Oral Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Bulletin of the World Health Organisation. **The International Journal of Public Health**. 83 (9), 641-720.

Appendix 2- Summary of Resources



Resources

1. Every Child Can Have a Winning Smile
2. The Mighty Mouth Schools Programme
3. Healthy Teeth for Life
4. Winning Smiles – Schools Oral Health Promotion Programme for 7-8 year olds
5. Dental Health Awareness Campaign for the Traveller Community
6. Tooth Tips Posters
7. Endocarditis Prophylaxis Identity Card
8. Cool Water, Cool Smiles
9. Oral Health Matters
10. Teachers Toolkit for Healthy Teeth and Bones

Appendix 3- Publications

Summary of Publications



1. **Evaluation of the Specialist Certificate in Health Promotion (Oral Health)**
Published by: National University of Ireland, Galway, in collaboration with the Dental Health Foundation
Editors: Thérèse Costello, Margaret Hodgins, Claire Connolly
October 2006, ISBN: 0-9450263-9-X
Oral Health Modules: Oral Health Promotion and Causes of Oral Ill Health.
2. **The Inaugural All Island Meeting on the Public Dental Services, Proceedings of a symposium February 2002**
The Society of Chief and Principal Dental Surgeons of Ireland, The Dental Directors Northern Ireland Public Dental Service, Dental Health Foundation.
Authors : J. McGaffin, J. Mullen & D. Sadlier
ISBN 0-9540263-3-0
3. **Oral Health and Disability: The Way Forward**
Published by: National Disability Authority
Editors: I. Elliott, J. Nunn, D. Sadlier, March 2005
4. **The Second Annual All Island Meeting on the Public Dental Services, Proceedings of a Symposium - February 2003**
Oral Health Manager Society of Ireland. Dental Health Foundation.
J. McGaffin, J. Mullen, D. Sadlier, B. Maher.
ISBN 0-9540263-5-7
5. **"Winning Smiles" – Report of Schools Oral Health Promotion Programme for 7 to 8-year-olds**
Editors D.Sadlier, H. Whelton, R. Freeman et al
September 2006, ISBN 0-9540263-7-3
6. **Oral Health in Disadvantaged Schools in the Eastern Region, December 2001.**
Dental Health Foundation, in association with the Northern Area Health Board, the East Coast Area Health Board, the South Western Area Health Board and the Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children.
ISBN 0-9540263-2-2
7. **Promoting the Oral Health of People with Disabilities, Proceedings of a forum held on 3rd March 2000, Dental School and Hospital Trinity College Dublin, Dental Health Foundation, 2000**
Editor : Jacinta McLoughlin
8. **Oral Health in Ireland**
Department of Health, Oral Health Services Research Centre, University College Cork, Dental Health Foundation, Ireland
Editors: D. O'Mullane, H. Whelton, D. Sadlier
First Edition, 1999
9. **Promoting Oral Health in the 21st Century – Proceedings of a forum held on 13th September 2000, University College Cork. Dental Health Foundation, University College Cork, and the Department of Health and Children.**
Editors: Sadlier, D. and Whelton, H., September 2001
ISBN 0-9540263-1-4
10. **Strategic 5 Year Initiative,**
Published by the Dental Health Foundation 2001
ISBN: 0-9540263-0-6

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