

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2024

Celebrating one year at Bristol Dental School



Welcome

Bristol Dental School opened its new facility at 1 Trinity Quay, Avon Street in September 2023. As a Care Quality Commission-registered provider, Bristol Dental School moved from a traditional hospital-based training model to a primary care provider directly operated by the University of Bristol. A first for an established Dental School, this has enabled us to reshape the delivery of clinical training and support the University's mission to contribute significantly to the quality and success of Bristol's economy, services and society.



Left to right: James Tubman, Senior School Manager; Barry Main, Head of School

A key benefit of the new Bristol Dental School is the opportunity to make a substantial impact to the University's civic mission. Embedded within the social accountability theme within our dental curriculum, we are supporting our students to engage with and support local communities.

In our first year of operation, our students have delivered 18,000 free-of-charge patient appointments to members of the public across the city. In our urgent dental care unit, our students have treated over 1,600 patients referred through NHS 111 who were in dental pain and without access to an NHS dentist. We have recruited over 400 child patients through local primary schools in the vicinity of the Dental School; many of these children have never seen a dentist. We have piloted, and recently formalised, a patient pathway for homeless patients referred through a local Homeless Health Service run by BrisDoc. Outside of the building, in partnership with Bridge2Aid, our Year 4 students have delivered oral health education to carers working in local care homes.

There were strong educational drivers for this change, and the new operating model has better enabled Bristol Dental School to deliver an inspiring education and transformative student experience:

- Bristol Dental School is student centred. All clinical support staff are now employed directly by the University and focused on delivering a high-quality education, training and student experience. £36m was invested by the University of Bristol to create a state-of-the-art clinical training facility. The 2024 National Student Survey highlighted the value placed on the new model by final-year students, with Bristol Dental School outperforming every other academic School in the University of Bristol.
- Bristol Dental School delivers a research-rich education. With evidenced-based practice a core theme within the dental curriculum,

the new facility and ownership of the clinical activity has created unprecedented opportunities for students to engage in clinical research. All students now undertake the NIHR's Good Clinical Practice training, an international standard for conducting clinical research.

- Bristol Dental School delivers curricula for a changing world, equipping students with the skills and confidence they need to embrace change and the implementation of new technologies and thrive in the future workplace. Our modern curricula promote integrated team training and sustainability, now delivered in a primary care environment closely resembling life in a dental practice. While it is early days in the new facility, we are working with the student-led Dental Innovation Hub and industry partners to integrate digital clinical workflows into education and clinical practice ready for the 2025/26 academic year. We are continuing to implement our actions to decolonise our curricula and teaching practices and diversify our programmes to ensure authentic and meaningful representation of the communities we serve.

Over the next 12 months we will continue to build on these foundations and successes. We are starting a pilot patient pathway for refugee patients, and working with dental public health teams to expand our school-visit programme with our dental students providing oral health education to pupils across primary schools in the local area.

We are proud of what has been achieved in our first year and are pleased to produce a series of case studies to highlight the impact of our student's work within the community. We hope that you enjoy reading these and if you think you can help support our efforts, please do get in touch.

James Tubman
Senior School Manager

Barry Main
Head of School

Our first year in numbers

£36 million

investment in our purpose-designed Dental School

300+

people invited to the opening events

44

external stakeholders engaged during the project

119

new dental chairs



18,000

free dental consultations for Bristol

1,600+

urgent dental appointments via NHS 111



400+

local school children
offered assessments



Partnered with
a local charity to
deliver oral health
education to

150+

carers

looking after

700+

residents

1

homeless patient treatment
pathway established with local
homeless healthcare service



for Dentistry

Complete
University
Guide 2025

The Times
Good University
Guide 2025

Dental appointments for over 400 local school children

Since opening, Bristol Dental School has provided a self-referral scheme that has made thousands of extra dental appointments available to local people who don't have access to a dentist.

The treatment, provided by undergraduate students under the supervision of a qualified dentist, has proved to be a lifeline for many local children in particular. Tooth decay remains a serious issue in child dental health in England and is largely preventable if treated. A quarter of five year-olds have tooth decay when they start school¹.

Dental Clinical Services Manager Kuldip Diggpal-Bhakerd spotted a gap in child patient recruitment and devised the idea to visit schools directly and proactively encourage self-referrals: "I've now visited 11 local schools across Lawrence Hill, Easton and St George to explain how the scheme works and help people with their applications. On average, each visit generates 80-100 applications which is absolutely brilliant."

1/4

of five year-olds have tooth decay when they start school¹

// So far we've provided much-needed appointments for over 400 children. It's been fantastic to hear really positive feedback from their families and schools. //

Kuldip Diggpal-Bhakerd
Dental Clinical Services Manager at Bristol Dental School



¹ Public Health England, Health matters: child dental health. Published 14 June 2017.
[Health matters: child dental health - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/health-matters/child-dental-health)



Left to right: Kevin Hawkins, Headteacher of Hannah More Primary School; Kuldip Diggall-Bhakerd, Dental Clinical Services Manager. Photographed at Hannah More Primary School

"In many cases, these children get treatment that will help to prevent them having further problems in the future. They also receive crucial advice on day-to-day dental care that some of them haven't had before.

"So far we've provided much-needed appointments for over 400 children and we are continuing to see and treat other children on our waiting list. It's been fantastic to hear really positive feedback from their families and schools."

Parents and carers self-refer their children to the scheme and, if needed, children receive a single course of treatment. The students began seeing patients in September as soon as the new School opened and continue to work their way through the waiting list.

Kevin Hawkins, Headteacher at Hannah More Primary School in St Philips, has played a key role in encouraging take up of the scheme: "Our parents have been so thankful that we've worked with the Dental School to enable our students to receive treatment. It's a powerful thing to facilitate help for those who need it."

The scheme has also proved a major benefit for trainee dentists. Student Rhys Francis adds: "It's free for our patients, and it's a good experience for us, learning how to ease anxieties with people who are possibly a bit scared to come to the dentist."

The School do not hold an NHS contract to deliver dental services and so patients are only taken on if they meet the education and training needs of the School.

Transforming availability of emergency NHS 111 appointments

Bristol Dental School provides an urgent dental care clinic during term time that has helped to fill a significant gap in local dental care provision.

The School saw half of the emergencies in Bristol with over 1,600 patients being seen in the first year following the move to the new location. The existence of this clinic at Bristol Dental School has doubled the daily availability of emergency dental appointments in the local area.

One beneficiary, Tom Adams, explains how the service helped him solve a longstanding problem with his teeth and has changed his perception of dental practice.

"I first experienced major problems with my teeth in 2021 and had struggled to see a dentist for some time, both because of lack of NHS availability and the cost of private treatment.

During early 2024 I started to experience pain again and decided to try 111 as a last resort. When I got through, the call handler booked an appointment for me at the Dental School quite quickly.

At my first assessment, I had a front tooth filling prepared and X-rays to confirm the further work I needed. The student who treated me was professional, knowledgeable, and I felt at ease. The supervisor was also great and guided the student effortlessly during the process. I was then referred to other students in the restorative department where I had two more fillings.

In the past, I was registered with an NHS dentist but I've had some bad experiences, including multiple teeth taken out when I was younger rather than being given any options to restore my teeth.

Going to the Dental School and having choices is an experience I have not had before. The treatment has been a huge step forward. I feel like my trust in dentists is returning. I would absolutely recommend Bristol Dental School to family and friends."

1,600

patients seen in the first year, that's

1/2

of the emergencies in Bristol.

The department work in close partnership with NHS partners to support the training facility, although this operates outside an NHS contract.

Ali van den Berg, Clinical Senior Lecturer at Bristol Dental School, commented: "We're really proud of what we've achieved in the first year of operation. The students develop essential skills that will benefit them when they qualify. In addition, we are able to help and support patients, who cannot access dental care and we make a real difference to these people, often offering them treatment to address their dental disease with onward referral within the Dental School to other departments. We also see patients from marginalised groups and help provide essential care. NHS 111 have advised that we provide the best care out of all the emergency dental services as we address the problems comprehensively, such that patients do not have to seek further emergency care."

// The student who treated me was professional, knowledgeable, and I felt at ease. //

Tom Adams

Patient at the urgent dental care clinic at Bristol Dental School



Students visit care homes to provide oral health guidance

Over the past two years students have provided training that empowers employees in care homes to become oral health champions in their workplace.

So far 140 students have trained over 150 staff in 17 care homes across Bristol, providing them with crucial advice on areas such as better brushing techniques, cleaning dentures and how to improve oral disease prevention for around 700 residents.

While there are national guidelines regarding the provision of oral health care for residents of care homes, reports suggest a lack of awareness of these guidelines, leading to calls for more support for residents to maintain and improve their oral health.

This is not the case at St Monica Trust. Deirdre Brunton, Clinical Audit Lead for the Trust, said: "The training has reinforced our mouthcare policy and brought to life the importance of good oral hygiene. It's strengthened colleagues commitment to promoting mouthcare champions using the dental student teaching model, ensuring all staff, including new joiners, receive this crucial information."

150

staff trained in 17 care homes across Bristol

// We want to enable our students to be socially accountable and future leaders in their community. //

Professor Dave Dymock
Head of Teaching at Bristol Dental School





Left to right: Shaenna Loughnane, CEO for Bridge2Aid; Patricia Neville, Senior Lecturer at Bristol Dental School; Professor Dave Dymock, Head of Teaching at Bristol Dental School; Dierdre Brunton, Clinical Audit Lead, St Monica Trust. Photographed outside a St Monica Trust care home

Before and during the visits the students receive guidance on how to train the carers from Bridge2Aid – a key partner of the Dental School that first developed its method of embedding oral health knowledge with community leaders through its charitable work in East Africa.

“At Bridge2Aid, our mission focuses on training, education, community development, and prevention. We're proud to apply our expertise in training oral health champions in rural Malawi to initiatives closer to home. We aim to broaden the perspectives of students, empowering them to discover positive ways to support their local communities. We're really pleased to be discussing with other Dental Schools now about rolling out this 'Bristol model'” says Shaenna Loughnane, CEO for Bridge2Aid.

For their part, students participate in the scheme as part of the social accountability theme in their curriculum, helping them to gain valuable experience that they can apply later in the careers.

“We want to enable our students to be socially accountable and future leaders in their community” explains Professor Dave Dymock, Head of Teaching at Bristol Dental School and the driving force behind this initiative. “This scheme is helping them to get their first valuable taste of that – and, I'm pleased to say, has been a great benefit for the care homes they visit.”

Dental care pathway for local homeless people

The Dental School has recently opened a new care pathway so it can accept referrals from the Homeless Health Service based in Stokes Croft.

The service offers much needed dental appointments for homeless people – over 90% of whom experience problems with their teeth according to research. It also provides a valuable learning experience for students who deliver courses of treatment under the guidance of trained supervisors.

The new pathway has been organised by Judy Caesley, a Dental Hygiene Tutor at the School who also runs a weekly dental hygiene clinic at the Homeless Health Service. She explains why this new initiative is so important:

“In the past, I’ve had significant problems securing appointments within the NHS so the people I see in the clinic can get treatment.

90%

of homeless
people experience
dental problems



Judy Caesley, Dental Hygiene
Tutor at Bristol Dental School

My work is focused on prevention, but many of them already have significant issues with their teeth that could impact their general health. Their oral health problems also affect their self-esteem, which means they lose hope of ever getting a job or reversing their situation."

"The new pathway will see more people get the care they need. Of course this won't solve everything - many homeless people have a lot of issues to deal with, and there has been a sharp increase in homelessness in Bristol in recent years, but it's a small step in the right direction."

Students who have participated in the early stages of the scheme are already benefiting. As one student reports: "My experience taught me to disregard initial stereotypes and not take words on a page to form an opinion before meeting a patient. I enjoyed building a rapport with the patient - they taught me how to set expectations regarding treatment and helped me understand the different realities and challenges people face that can affect their oral health."

Another, Oliver Stone, said: "The patient is an absolute pleasure to work with. He is always on time and always shows extreme gratitude for the treatment we are providing. He is mindful of the fact that we are still learning and shows real motivation in improving his oral health and with that his quality of life."

"For the students, it gives them an understanding that there are different kinds of patients out there," adds Judy. "It helps them develop communication skills beyond anything they would usually experience during training. They also see significant levels of disease. Ultimately, they get the opportunity to make people feel better about themselves."



Dr Mike Taylor from the Homeless Health Service photographed with Judy at the Homeless Health Service

// I enjoyed building a rapport with the patient - they taught me how to set expectations regarding treatment and helped me understand the different realities and challenges people face that can affect their oral health. //

Student at Bristol Dental School

Celebrating Bristol Dental School



Top: Guests at the official opening event following the ribbon cutting with MP Thangam Debbonaire, including MPs Darren Jones and Kerry McCarthy.

Bottom: The Aardman Animations team including Director and Designer Gav Strange who created The Denticles characters, Amalgam Modelmakers who built the large 3D sculptures and Marketing Manager for Bristol Dental School, Cheryl Miles, responsible for the launch events.





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