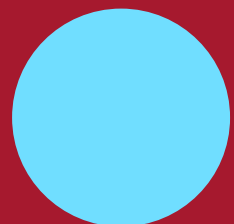
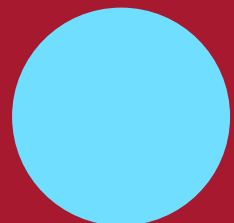




# University of Bristol Dental School

Social Impact Report 2026



# Foreword

**Since opening our doors in September 2023, our students and staff have made substantial positive impacts on the health, wealth and wellbeing of the city and wider region.**



**James Tubman**  
Head of School Operations

**Professor Barry Main**  
Head of School

## Building a workforce

100 new jobs were created to support the new Dental School, following a £36m investment in our state-of-the-art facility and new operating model.

The operational freedom of our new model, and the strength and ambition of our university strategy 2030, has enabled us to seize opportunities which align with local, regional and strategic needs.

Since moving to the new site, we have been able to increase the number of dental professionals in training, with nearly 300 joining the dental workforce since September 2023.

We have redoubled our efforts to widen participation in higher education and careers in dentistry. In 2024/25 nearly 50% of our Bachelor of Dental Surgery intake come from an underrepresented or disadvantaged background, and 71% of our Bachelor of Dental Therapy students are mature learners.

In 2023, we launched a dental nurse training programme to address the region's NHS workforce shortages. We have carefully thought about ways to introduce skills escalators and are doing so in our new CertHE programme.

We are now better integrated with our local NHS Integrated Care Board. By working with NHS England on workforce development and collaborating with local NHS partners and the wider health system, we are seeing the improvements we can make to the health and wellbeing of the local population we serve.

## Meeting the needs of our communities

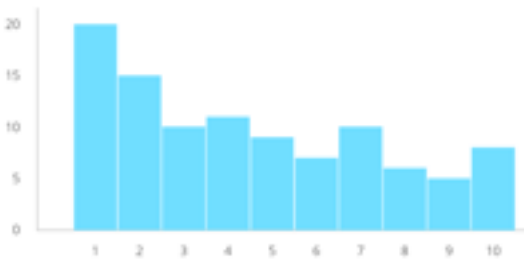
In the academic year 2024/25 our students and staff provided 54,510 free-of-charge appointments to patients in the local area. This equated to nearly 9% of all NHS primary care dental appointments across Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire.

We have continued to build our relationships with NHS111 to provide urgent dental care appointments. We have also matured our shared care approach, working across the system to reduce pressures on local NHS practices and Bristol Dental Hospital.

Our work with local schools and other stakeholders supports patients from communities that need it most: primary school-aged children, their families and other community groups such as the homeless population.

Fifty-five percent of our patient appointments are delivered to patients from postcode areas classified as Incidences of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 1-4 (indicating the most socio-economically deprived postcodes in Bristol and where access to NHS dental care is known to be most difficult).

Proportion of patient appointments by IMD Decile



IMD Decile: 1= most deprived, 10 = least deprived

## Delivering modern healthcare

In the last year, the NHS published *Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England*, highlighting three radical shifts in healthcare delivery. Bristol Dental School is well positioned to support these aims:

- **Hospital to community** In 2023 Bristol Dental School moved from a hospital to a community-based setting. This better aligns our education and clinical services to the needs of students and patients. Our students are better prepared to enter the dental workforce of the future.
- **Analogue to digital** Working with international scholars and industrial partners, in 2024 we made significant investment in upgrading our digital dentistry capacity, embedding digital clinical workflows in curricula from September 2025. Digital dentistry threads through our curricula, making Bristol Dental School a 21st century leader in the UK. We have been recognised as a Beacon Site for Digital Dentistry by our industry partner, the world's largest manufacturer of professional dental products and technologies, Dentsply Sirona.
- **Sickness to prevention** Prevention has been a key foundation of our dental education. This has been deeply embedded in our new curricula.

By separating out our combined Hygiene/Therapy programme into two separate Bachelor's enables us to really focus on the scope of practice and gives greater opportunities for those studying Dental Hygiene to practice prevention. This, paralleled to our innovative outreach activities, allow for increased focus on prevention and will benefit our students and patients through our integrated team training.

Our students have benefitted from these opportunities and wider community engagement experiences. This has been recognised by our graduating students through incredibly strong performance in the 2024 and 2025 National Student Survey, and a rise in Subject Rankings in national League Tables.

We have demonstrated wider impact through our work with care homes in partnership with our charity partner Bridge2Aid (see Social Impact Report 2024). This has inspired another Dental School to adopt this model of student community engagement.

Our innovation and forward-thinking was commended by the General Dental Council : *The Bachelor of Dental Surgery is a well-run programme that delivers a high-quality education within modern and impressive facilities...[this] was a deliberate step forward in the programme's delivery, allowing for decision-making to be made quickly and effectively, as well as offering students a central location from which a range of dental procedures can be practised. This, in conjunction with the School's social objectives to serve all facets of the local community, build an effective and innovative environment.*

We have continued to build on the foundations highlighted in our last Social Impact Report, and our case studies highlight some of the progress made. We are all proud of what we have achieved so far, and we will continue to innovate to meet our ambitions. If you would like to work with us, or would like to contribute to our efforts, please do get in touch. We hope you enjoy reading this report.

**James Tubman**  
Head of School Operations

**Professor Barry Main**  
Head of School

# Community impact in numbers

**£36m**

investment in our  
purpose-designed  
Dental School.

---

**20**

sponsored  
CertHE Dental  
Nursing students.

---

**47%**

of our Bachelor of  
Dental Surgery  
intake in 2024/25  
came from an  
underrepresented  
or disadvantaged  
background.

**100+**

new jobs since  
opening on Avon  
Street in 2023.

---

**£1.4m**

spent with local  
businesses in setting  
up the new School.

---

**90,000+**

free-of-charge  
patient appointments  
delivered by Bristol  
dental students.

**2nd**  
for Dentistry.

The Guardian subject rankings 2026

**120**  
years celebrated  
as Bristol Dental  
School.

---

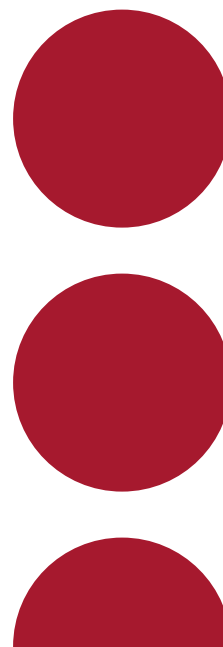
**1st**  
globally in the  
2026 Planetary  
Health Report Card.

---

**71%**  
of our Bachelor  
of Dental Therapy  
students were  
mature learners  
in 2024/25.

---

**1,500+**  
children from  
11 local schools,  
have received,  
or are lined up  
for treatment,  
many of whom  
had never seen  
a dentist before.





**Ignacio Guesa**  
Trainee dental nurse.  
Photographed with his  
supervisor Sarah Lansdown  
(bottom RH page) on clinic  
at Bristol Dental School.

# Widening access to create opportunities

**Developing new career opportunities  
and skills escalators for the Dental Team.**

The University of Bristol has a strong tradition of widening participation in higher education. In 2024/25 nearly 50% of our Bachelor of Dental Surgery intake came from a background that would not traditionally engage with Higher Education. In the same year, 71% of our Bachelor of Dental Therapy students joining the programme were classed as mature learners.

Opening our new school in 2023 allowed us to offer new training opportunities for dental nurses who would traditionally not consider entering the higher education route.

The aim was to help address regional and national workforce shortages in this area and to build on the recommendations from NHS England's Advancing Dental Care (2021).

We have further built on this success and are excited to launch our new one-year Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) in Dental Nursing in September 2026. This will provide a funded route into the profession, where the School covers tuition fees and offers access to University bursaries.

We're also removing a significant barrier to career-development by introducing a new approach to our skills escalator, with a guaranteed interview for those who meet all other entry criteria, for our new Bachelor of Dental Hygiene programme within two years of completing the CertHE.

Crucially, this route into the Bachelor programme enables students to work as a dental nurse alongside their studies.

At the School, we have been proud of the success of our staff who have been encouraged to engage with formal training and professional careers.

For trainee dental nurse Ignacio Guesa, this has opened up exciting new possibilities. After moving to the UK 18 years ago, he found that employers didn't recognise his engineering qualifications and worked as a cleaning supervisor for many years.

When Ignacio joined the University of Bristol as a housekeeper in 2023, determined to progress, he applied for a role as a Sterile Services Technician at the School, his first step into a clinical environment.

Ignacio then applied for the existing Dental Nurse training programme, where he now works full-time alongside clinicians and student dentists while completing his qualification.

Ignacio is already thinking about the next step in his career.

**“I’m now halfway through the course. It’s a big opportunity for me. I’m learning every day and already supporting patient care, which I find really fulfilling.”**

Ignacio said: “First, I want to complete this course, but I also have this new idea that I want to become a dental radiographer. This is a path that I just didn't have before, a dream that I couldn't have before.”

We actively encourage applications from mature learners and the local community. We have already made a significant contribution to the local economy since opening the new School by creating 100 new jobs.

We aim to widen access to healthcare careers, help people grow and create lasting social and economic impact across the city and beyond.





<b>Kevin Hawkins</b> Headteacher of Hannah More Primary School.	<b>Kuldip Diggpal-Bhakerd</b> Dental Clinical Services Manager.	Photographed at Hannah More Primary School.
---	---	---

# Vital oral healthcare for local schoolchildren

Preventing a lifetime of dental problems through  
early dental care access and creative education.

Tooth decay, a largely preventable condition that continues to affect thousands of families, is the leading cause of hospital admissions among young children in England. According to Bristol City Council's Oral Needs Health Assessment, the challenge in Bristol is particularly severe.

Almost half of children did not attend NHS dental services between 2021 and 2022, while more than a quarter of five-year-olds experience tooth decay. Tooth extraction rates for children aged 5–9 are nearly 50% higher than the national average, with the equivalent of 17 full classes going to hospital for removal of teeth in a single year. Locally, around 18,000 school days are lost annually to dental health problems, while parental absence from work is at a similar rate. In Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire, tooth extraction rates are three times higher in economically deprived areas.

In response, Kuldip Dignpal-Bhakerd, our Dental Clinical Services Manager, developed an initiative to engage with 8 local schools across Lawrence Hill, Easton and St George West.

The scheme involved meeting parents at the gate to talk about accessing dental services provided by our students. Since launching we've provided vital dental appointments for children who are unable to access an NHS dentist, with more than 1,500 children seen to date.

Under the scheme, parents and carers can refer their children directly, with supervised dental and dental therapy students delivering the treatment. For schools and families, this support is making a big difference.

Kevin Hawkins, Headteacher at Hannah More Primary School, has worked closely with us to encourage take-up among parents and carers. Kevin said:

"We have high levels of pupil premium funding and a lot of social barriers, with several asylum-seeking families too. This means many of our children don't have access to dental care. For these families, the service has made a huge impact, and the sign-up rate has been fantastic."

More than 50 families connected to the school have already benefited from the scheme, with some children receiving extensive treatment, including extractions.

"Lots of other children have had quite significant work, the equivalent of a full class. There are now fewer reasons for them not to attend, and they are less likely to get to the point where they're off school for longer. They will also have better life chances in the future."

"One Year 2 child had really been struggling with toothache and ulcers, but the Dental School's work has made them much more comfortable and able to learn."

We've also increased emphasis on prevention, working directly with Hannah More Primary School to build understanding of good oral health habits from an early age. This reflects national priorities set out in the NHS *Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England*, which highlights the importance of supporting children to develop positive habits and prevent tooth decay early in life.

At Hannah More Primary School, a group of Year 2 BSc Dental Hygiene and Therapy students recently delivered an interactive oral health session for pupils with a creative twist: they rewrote the lyrics to a popular Bruno Mars song so children can brush their teeth along to the tune for the recommended two minutes. The students, some inspired by their own experiences as parents, designed the initiative to make oral health advice engaging and memorable, with clear instructions on brushing technique and top tips like "spit, don't rinse". It has been requested by other schools to show their students and viewed over 61,000 times on our Facebook post.

"The dental students come in every year as part of their course, which is great," says Kevin. "The children really engage with it, the students enjoy it, and it's helped us build dental health into our PSHE curriculum."

For our students, working with children this way provides valuable experience in communication, prevention and managing patient anxiety, all key skills for their future careers.

Our goal is to combine improved access to care with early intervention and outreach. By doing so, we can help to tackle one of the biggest challenges in child health. This is not only improving outcomes for children today, it's supporting families, schools and the wider health system by reducing avoidable illness and its long-term impacts. We may even find some budding future students!



**Year 2 BSc Dental Hygiene and Therapy students** Alex, Amy, Beada, Emily and Poppy, performing their catchy tune at Bristol Dental School.



**Dr Oliver Stone**  
Newly qualified dentist  
and Bristol Dental School  
alumnus. Photographed at  
his dental practice in Hartcliffe.

# Life-changing dental care for homeless people

**Our dedicated care pathway helps people experiencing homelessness take important steps to boost their health and confidence.**

For people experiencing homelessness, access to dental care can be life-changing. Not only for their health, but for their confidence, relationships and ability to rebuild their lives.

Following a successful pilot in 2024, the School has now established a dedicated care pathway for patients referred from the BrisDoc Homeless Health Service in Stokes Croft. The service identifies individuals in need of treatment and connects them with the Dental School, where students provide supervised care. There are currently 29 patients under treatment referred through this route.

Recognising the importance of timely intervention for this community, we have also now started to prioritise these patients at every stage of their treatment journey, ensuring they can access care quickly and remain engaged.

For Noel, a beneficiary of the programme, this support has been a breakthrough. After being referred through the Homeless Health Service, Noel arrived at the Dental School feeling uncertain because of negative past experiences.

“When I arrived, I was anxious and unsure if I would be treated fairly. But then I met Oliver, the dentist in training, and he was so welcoming. He saw me. He did not see a homeless person.”

Over a series of appointments, Oliver worked closely with Noel to design and fit a full set of dentures, a complex process requiring several appointments.

“Oliver talked me through each appointment. I knew I was in safe hands. He really took his time with me and involved me and my opinion through every process.”

The impact went far beyond clinical care.

“Now I can hold my head up and not feel ashamed. I can go and visit my family, my children, which is a massive thing for me. My confidence has just grown.”

**“Thanks to the Homeless Health Service and Oliver, I can smile again. I didn’t want to do that before.”**

**Noel, patient at Bristol Dental School**

For former student Oliver Stone, who treated Noel, the experience was rewarding both personally and professionally. He now works in a general practice in Hartcliffe (South Bristol), in a high-needs area, and says treating Noel shaped his development.

“It felt really empowering to be part of that process with Noel. This was him taking his first steps to regain control of his life.”

“We’re taught to treat the patient as a whole, but until you start putting that into practice you don’t really get that experience. It gave me confidence that I could relate to people and help anyone, regardless of their circumstances...that’s something I’m going to take with me throughout my career.”

By combining high-quality clinical training with real-world social impact, we’re helping develop more socially aware and capable practitioners. We’re also proud to play a role in supporting some of the city’s most vulnerable people to rebuild their lives.





**Julie Clayton**  
Patient and Public Involvement  
lead for Mysmile.

**Nicola West**  
Principal Investigator  
for Mysmile.

**Maria Davies**  
Clinical Research  
Manager.

Photographed outside  
Bristol Brain Centre,  
Southmead Hospital.

# Partnering with our community on research to support people living with dementia

**With strong support from patients and the public, new research at the Dental School is exploring how better oral health could help slow Alzheimer's disease.**

Alongside our community-based education projects, the School is committed to community-based research that could reimagine how we view oral health care in the UK. The Mysmile project, for example, has started to explore whether treatment of gum disease could help slow cognitive decline in people with early-stage Alzheimer's disease or mild cognitive impairment.

With Alzheimer's affecting over 600,000 people in the UK, and gum disease affecting around half of adults, the potential impact for hundreds of thousands of patients and their care is significant.

As project lead Professor Nicola West explains: "The mouth is the window on the body, and there's now good evidence that Alzheimer's disease is linked to gum disease. If our hypothesis is right, Alzheimer's patients should have good access to dental care and be seen regularly to ensure they're dentally fit. This will help their general health and improve their quality of life."

The initial Mysmile feasibility study recruited over 50 local participants with gum disease and retained 89% to 12 months, demonstrating that people with Alzheimer's or mild cognitive impairment can successfully take part in this type of dental intervention trial.

We provided participants with either standard dental care or intensive periodontal treatment, with researchers assessing both oral health and cognition over time.

While it is too early to confirm whether treating gum disease can slow cognitive decline, the study has already delivered important benefits. Oral health improved across all participants, with greater improvements seen in those receiving intensive treatment. Crucially, the project also showed that general dental practitioners can deliver this care by following specialist guidance within existing primary dental care settings.

For participants and families involved in the initial study, there have already been tangible benefits on a personal and emotional level.

"One of the key things I've already seen is that patients feel more empowered and involved in their care." Says Natalie Rosewell, Research Nurse.

"They get time to ask questions, and carers really value having that space. People also feel more confident in managing their own dental hygiene."

One of Mysmile's strengths has been its focus on inclusion. In collaboration with community partners including Dhek Bhal, the team co-developed study

materials in accessible formats and languages including Chinese, Urdu and Punjabi, helping reach communities often underrepresented in dementia research.

**"Research has got to represent people from all sections of the community, because everybody is affected by health. We worked with the researchers to co-design the programme and support recruitment, and built a really strong relationship along the way."**

**Zehra Haq, CEO of Dhek Bhal**

The study has already helped establish stronger links between dental services, medical services and community organisations; partnerships that will be vital for any larger trial.

The next step is to secure funding for a definitive randomised controlled trial to answer the central question: can treating gum disease slow the progression of Alzheimer's?

If successful, the implications could be far-reaching. Slowing progression could help people live independently for longer, reduce the burden on carers and delay the need for residential care, which can cost £40,000 to £60,000 per person each year. It could also reduce costs for the NHS, which currently spends £27.6 billion annually on care for people living with Alzheimer's, a figure that projections say will double by 2040.

By combining clinical research with community engagement, we aim to show how oral health research can deliver practical benefits now – and open the possibility of game-changing impacts for families, communities and the future of the NHS.

# A University for Bristol



**Images:**

**Above:** Presenter **Ade Adepitan** and the team involved with filming for BBC Morning Live to talk about improving access to free dental care in the city.

**Images:**

**Above:** Minister of State for Care, **Stephen Kinnock**, on his tour of Bristol Dental School.

**Right:** During his visit the Minister spoke to staff and students about the positive impact the School is having on people living in the city, including Professor **Evelyn Welch**, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Bristol.



**Images:**

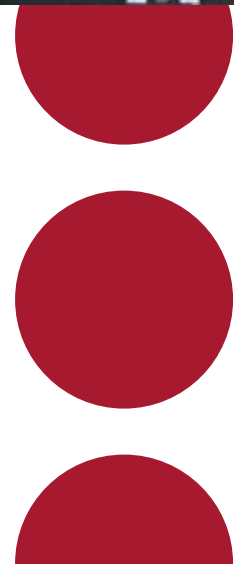
**Below and right:** Our students and staff continue to visit local care homes across Bristol to provide oral health guidance. Working in partnership with Bridge2Aid, students participate in the scheme as part of the social accountability theme in their curriculum.

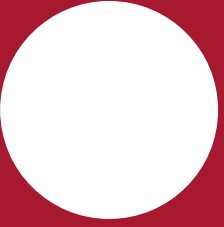
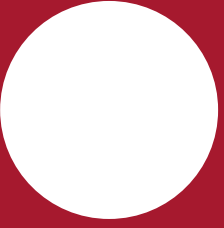


**Images:**

**Right:** Sarah Lansdown, Lead Clinical Dental Nurse Tutor and Jemma Goodey, Clinical Dental Nurse Tutor Assistant in Broadmead. Attending one of several health and social care careers events in Bristol to promote our Cert HE Dental Nursing programme.

**Below:** Bristol Dental School is part of the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus which opens in September 2026.





Bristol Dental School  
University of Bristol  
1 Trinity Quay  
Avon Street  
Bristol  
BS2 0PT

[bristol.ac.uk/dental](http://bristol.ac.uk/dental)