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December 2018

## BRIDGEWATER DENTAL SERVICE ENGAGING WITH VULNERABLE PATIENTS IN HARDER TO REACH COMMUNITIES

**Bridgewater's Community Dental Service has recently started working on a initiative to improve engagement with hard to reach communities in order to improve their access and use of dental services.**

These communities include people who may be marginalised from society and those who face significant barriers to dental care including people for whom English is not their first language, the travelling community, people seeking asylum and people who have been subjected to human or sexual trafficking.

Figures released by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) show that over 40% of the general population attend the dentist irregularly and approximately 2% never attend. Anecdotal evidence shows that amongst marginalised groups these figures are likely to be higher, as the burden of dental disease lies in those who attend irregularly or not at all.

Following a CQC inspection which highlighted the importance of engagement with both staff and



patients, a working group was set up, with the starting point being to define what constituted hard to reach groups, and then to look at the profile of patients referred to the service as well as those people under regular care and finally to consider how their engagement with dental services could be improved.

The initiative was launched in the boroughs of Halton, Bolton, Wigan and St Helens by appointing Engagement Champions including David Mills who is a specialist in special care dentistry and lead clinician along with dental nurses Carly Coull, Ceri Lewis-Shaw, Sarah Hopley and Susan Rice.

Because of the difficulties involved in trying to gain access to and the trust of people in these specific communities, the dental services team worked closely with other healthcare professionals and service providers. These included Healthwatch and also Community Link Worker, Mags Sanders, from Bridgewater's Outreach and Inclusion Service.

### **Pictured above:**

Dental Nurse Carly Coull from Bridgewater's Hallwood Dental Service in Halton assisting the dentist and offering comfort and support to a patient.

Case Study

In addition, Halton based Engagement Champion Carly Coull has also been able to share her knowledge and insight gained through her work with SVP (Society of Saint Vincent de Paul) at her local church.

Through her work Carly has become a recognised and trusted face in the community, which has enabled her to promote the importance of dental care, including regular brushing, accessing a dentist and ensuring regular visits.

Carly said: “Although still in the very early stages and with challenges still to face the initial feedback has been very positive. As we continue to build links with other healthcare services and build confidence and trust in the communities, we feel this initiative will go from strength to strength”.

She continues: “In fact at the CQC inspection one of the inspectors was so enthused by the initiative, he said he would like to return further down the line to see how it is progressing”.

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Find out more about the Bridgewater Community Dental Network at <http://www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/communitydentalnetwork/>

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The ‘Now We’re Talking’ campaign encourages Bridgewater staff to talk about their successes, achievements and service developments.

If you have any patient stories, lessons learned or achievements to promote, please email [communications@bridgewater.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@bridgewater.nhs.uk)

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