

# A day in the life: community dental services

**Helen Paisley** details her role as operations director for community dental services in Bedfordshire

I work for Community Dental Services CIC, an employee owned social enterprise delivering clinical, dental and oral health promotion services throughout Bedfordshire, Luton, Suffolk, Thetford, Essex, Oxfordshire and Leicestershire.

The main focus of our organisation is to provide care for children and adults who have additional needs, but we do so much more – providing care for communities with poor access to services. We have invested in specialist equipment and our teams to ensure welcoming, high quality care is accessible for some of the most vulnerable in society.

CDS-CIC is also dedicated to ensuring the needs of both plus size and elderly patients are met. With specialist

equipment available across our clinics, including bariatric chairs and wheelchair recliners, our service reaches far beyond the parameters of what high street practices can offer.

## Diversity

Unsurprisingly, my tasks, responsibilities and schedule can vary from day to day, but that's what I love about working for a social enterprise. A typical day usually begins by dropping into our dental care centre in Bedford – which is comprised of eight surgeries – to talk to clinicians and nurses about any operational issues or updates. From there it is on to headquarters in Bedford, which may be one or several hours



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later and is not an arrival time that can be predicted!

I also have an interest in dental epidemiology and coordinate the oral health surveys across many local authorities, so a proportion of my time is spent preparing progress reports for local authority commissioners.

## Children's oral health

My other main clinical commitment focuses on assessing and treating children referred to Bedford and Luton as part of our 18-week waiting list target scheme. The number of young children with severe early childhood caries requiring multiple extractions does not seem to be reducing, and we are seeing new communities lacking awareness about good oral health behaviours, such as families from eastern Europe.

## All in all, the teams I work with are passionate and committed to patient centred care

Our vision has always been to improve oral health in even more communities, and has been our focus since leaving the NHS Community Trust. We have always strived to get out of the surgery and into the community with our mobile dental surgeries to provide clinical and preventative care.

As a social enterprise we will continue to develop independent dental services for a wide range of communities and groups, such as Emmaus, a charity trying to end homelessness, and will remain dedicated to providing support in areas where it is needed the most.

All in all, the teams I work with are passionate and committed to patient centred care, and the opportunities I have had since we became a social enterprise have certainly enhanced my career. I have been privileged to sit on our board as an employee elected director and have been able to support our charity CDS Action. **D**



Helen completed her bachelor of dental surgery degree in 1984, her diploma in dental public health in 1991 and became a master of community dental health in 1993.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about CDS-CIC, website [www.communitydentalservices.co.uk](http://www.communitydentalservices.co.uk). For more information about the Association of Dental Groups visit [www.dentalgroups.co.uk](http://www.dentalgroups.co.uk).