



## Press Release

### **Action for Sick Children Scotland wins National Oral Health Promotion Group Prize for Special Smiles Project in NHS Lanarkshire and was finalist in International Paediatric Dentistry Competition**

Action for Sick Children Scotland's Special Smiles Dental Project won the National Oral Health Promotion Group Patron Prize at the NOHPG Conference held in Manchester on 12 June. Dr Albert Yeung, Consultant in Dental Public Health at NHS Lanarkshire and a member of the ASCS Project Advisory Group in Lanarkshire nominated the work Special Smiles had carried out in the Board area for the NOHPG prize. This Project supports children with additional support needs, using ASCS's Dental Play resources, to look after their teeth and helps to reduce any worries about visiting the dentist. ASCS Chair Professor Richard Olver said, *'Since 2009 our Special Smiles project has worked in partnership with NHS Boards and Education Authorities in various parts of Scotland and so we are delighted that it has been recognised in this way.'*

The project works in additional support for learning schools training teachers to use dental play resources with the children. It worked in 22 Lanarkshire schools during 2013-14, trained 106 teachers and supported 403 children. Results showed that children's oral health understanding improved and dental anxiety was reduced. In Lanarkshire the number of children worried' or 'upset' decreased from 35% to 11% and those who felt 'okay' about the dentist increased from 65% to 89%. Feedback also pointed to an increase in the children's self confidence. Teachers and parents increased their awareness of and ability to contribute to the children's oral health needs. The percentage of teachers increased from 69% to 95%; while the percentage of parents increased from 64% to 93%. One Principal Teacher from Crosshouse Primary School in East Kilbride said, *"I have had fantastic feedback from the parents you have been working with. It is brilliant that you can help us to deal with something that many of us take for granted but it has such a huge impact on a family if there are problems.... We really appreciate your support and are extremely grateful for the resources which have already benefited the children in many ways."*

The project also provides families with dental playpacks which can be used at home. One parent said, *"The Playpack made a huge difference to my twin sons who are autistic. They have been twice to the dentist since using it .... They were really good as they knew what to expect and had used the Playpack before going. I am really pleased as they were terrified before. It has made a huge difference."*

Special Smiles' work in Lanarkshire was also a runner up for the Bright Smiles-Bright Futures Award, at the (IAPD) International Association of Paediatric Dentistry's 25th International Congress held on 1 July in Glasgow. It was one of four child oral health initiatives chosen from entries from around the world to present for this award. The first prize winner was an "Infant Oral Care Program and Protocol", from San Diego, USA .

Special Smiles is now working in Forth Valley and will also work in Lothian after the summer school holidays. The Project is funded by the Scottish Government's Third Sector Early Intervention Fund.

**Notes for Editors:** Action for Sick Children Scotland is the only charity in Scotland working on behalf of the needs of ALL sick children and young people within our healthcare system. Its vision is for the best quality healthcare for sick children and young people in Scotland and its mission is to enable children and young people meet their healthcare needs, in partnership with parents, carers and professionals.

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