THE NEW SUGAR LEVY
What does it mean, what does it include, and what does it mean for us? We investigate.

REACHING ONE YEAR AS THE ORAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

OUR TIPS FOR TWO SPECTACULAR NATIONAL SMILE MONTH EVENTS
Hello and welcome to the latest issue of Word of Mouth – a digital magazine by the Oral Health Foundation.

One year ago this month, our wonderful charity changed its name from the British Dental Health Foundation and became the Oral Health Foundation. It was a new name, a new look, and a world of new ways in which our charity would be able to help improve oral health all around the world. A little over 12 months on from this monumental moment in our history, we look at what we have achieved so far and what there is still to come.

Meanwhile, National Smile Month, our biggest oral health campaign of the year, is a little over three weeks away! In the issue, we take a look at National Smile Month, what it’s all about and more importantly, how you can get involved and help us campaign for better oral health and wellbeing.

We also have some exciting fundraising stories from Brighton and Reading, both of which are doing great work to raise valuable money and awareness for our Mouth Cancer Action programme.

Finally, in this edition of Word of Mouth, we share our view on the Sugar Tax, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s spring budget, which failed to address some of the concerns about the new levy while we also report on a new film by Plymouth University’s Peninsula Dental School which hopes to tackle the city’s problem with tooth decay.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Word of Mouth.

David Arnold
Editor, Word of Mouth
Director of Communications
Oral Health Foundation
Exactly one year ago, the British Dental Health Foundation changed its name to become the Oral Health Foundation. A new name, a new look, and a world of new ways in which our charity would be able to help improve oral health all around the world.

Over many years, we have continued to see significant changes to our charity and the work that we do, in addition to many changes within dentistry itself. Our new identity was chosen to not only represent our current image and embody who we have been for the last 45 years, but also keep us moving forward by recognising the effectiveness, progression and inclusivity of the charity and the environment we’re now working in. So, one year on from this monumental moment in our history, we wanted to look at what we have achieved so far and what there is still to come.

**Increased support**

Over the last year, we have been able to provide more information and support for children, the elderly and vulnerable, people with disabilities and those living in deprivation around the UK, than we ever have before.

As inequalities in oral health continue to grow, and with incidences of mouth cancer on the rise, our role as a leader in oral health education and preventive action becomes ever more crucial. That’s why we truly value all the generosity and hard work of our supporters. At its heart, the Oral Health Foundation is an inclusive organisation that provides opportunities for everyone interested in oral health to participate. Support for our campaigns continues to grow and reflects the diverse range of people and organisations involved: including dentists, oral health professionals, practices, educators, companies, huge multinationals and members of the public.

The connection created between us and our supporters is precious, helping us to champion oral health in the public domain, whether it’s out on the high street, in the dental practice, or contributing to Government consultations on fluoridation, sugar taxation, minimum pricing alcohol or plain packaging on cigarettes.

**National Smile Month’s Big Birthday**

Between May and June last year we celebrated something special with National Smile Month’s 40th birthday. The campaign has truly established itself as one of the largest and well supported oral health initiatives in the world.

National Smile Month is now a focal point for thousands of people and groups to co-ordinate events and activities across the UK, all with the aim of improving oral health.

Over the last year, we have been able to continue to work closely with dental and health professionals, schools and nurseries, community groups, businesses and members of the public, to organise grassroots activities such as fun days, talks, sponsored events, roadshows, displays, open sessions and competitions.

These are what made National Smile Month 2016 one of our most successful campaigns yet.

**Dental Helpline Supports Thousands**

Staffed by a dedicated team of qualified dental nurses and oral health educators, our Dental Helpline provides advice on a wide variety of dental issues. The most common of the 11,115 enquiries during the last 12 months have been about tooth replacement options such as implants and dentures, while information about finding a dentist, dental charges and NHS regulations, were also high on the list of questions.

This year our Dental Helpline celebrates its 20th anniversary and together with our world renowned Tell Me About leaflets supports our role in providing the public with accurate and trustworthy information.

**Accreditation**

It was another successful year for our Accreditation programme, both domestically and internationally. We are proud that the scheme is now one of the largest of its type in the world, with 247 products spanning more than 60 territories.

For almost 25 years we have helped the dental profession and consumers make informed choices about which dental products they
buy. Accreditation gives us the opportunity to provide people with information, protection and education, in a 'shorthand' form, delivered via recognition of the Oral Health Foundation's 'Approved' Smiley-face logo.

**Oral health provisions and expanding educational resources**

Our patient leaflet range now has 52 titles, providing impartial and independent information for the dental profession and is a popular choice with patients, with over 550,000 being distributed in the last year. Provision of oral care materials, motivators and other literature, such as our Infobites, are the most popular categories of product sales.

Our own brand products are also being added to every year, offering value and quality to the professionals seeking oral health education and motivation materials for the patient and the public alike. Dental practice products continue to be an integral part of our work, and with more than 30 years' experience of advising members of the public how to improve their oral health, we have a wealth of knowledge on the dentist-patient communication process and offer constant support to our customers.

**Going forward**

One year on from becoming the Oral Health Foundation we have managed to build more effective partnerships and develop stronger networks between dental and health professionals all around the world.

We want to continue to be a charity which brings people together while developing closer relationships and ties to those people and groups who care passionately about improving oral health. We will continue to work as a leading national charity to improve oral health and tackle the harm caused by oral diseases – many of which are entirely preventable. We remain passionate and committed to providing expert, independent and impartial advice and education on all aspects of oral health, delivering it to those who need it most.

Our fundamental aims also remain the same. To improve oral healthcare and promote practice of good oral hygiene, to be a key source for oral health information for members of the public, and to effectively lobby and influence government policy on behalf of the public. We want to increase the awareness of mouth cancer and reduce mortality rates through early detection and the changing of lifestyle habits, to see the addition of fluoride to drinking water, and increase the number of people visiting a dentist on a regular basis. Finally, we want to facilitate a place where the dental and health profession can campaign together for better public health, and continue to be a successful independent supplier of oral health promotional material to the health community.

In the coming months, we will also be unveiling our brand-new website, with our existing websites getting more than four million visits each year this is an incredibly exciting development, be on the lookout for all our latest updates.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the support you continue to show us. We cherish campaigning alongside you to address the inequalities which exist in oral health, changing people's lives for the better.

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**HAVING TOOTHACHE TROUBLES?**

**PUT YOUR MIND AT EASE AND CALL ONE OF OUR DENTAL EXPERTS**

Our Dental Helpline can advise you on subjects such as dental terms and treatment procedures, oral hygiene, current legislation and regulations, dental charges, complaints procedures, and referrals to other organisations. Anything you want to know about your dental health, our experts are awaiting your call.

Our free and impartial advice centre is open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. If you need urgent advice on any oral health issue please give us a call on 01788 539780 (local rate call in the UK), alternatively you can email helpline@dentalhealth.org

Dental Helpline
01788 539780
Oral Health Foundation

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National Smile Month is back and all set to help put a smile on your face this summer. Now into its fifth decade the UK’s largest oral health campaign is bigger and better than ever as it aims to spread awareness of the importance of a healthy mouth to more people across the country. This year, the charity is challenging you to make a difference.

Taking place from 15 May to 15 June. National Smile Month will see thousands of volunteers get together to promote three basic messages, all of which go a long way in helping us develop and maintain good oral health. They are:

• Brush your teeth last thing at night and on at least one other occasion with a fluoride toothpaste.
• Cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
• Visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

At the Oral Health Foundation, we are determined to improve oral health, not only in the UK but around the world. National Smile Month is our (and your) chance to promote positive oral health messages throughout your local community and help put a smile back on so many faces.

Maintaining a healthy smile can be so simple but so for so many this is not the case. Despite the many improvements in oral health over the last 40 years, inequalities continue to be a burden for countless groups. The elderly, those on lower incomes or in areas of low social equality, people with educational barriers or learning difficulties, those with reduced mobility, physical or mental disabilities, are all more likely to suffer from chronic ill-health.

It is important to remember that health inequalities are almost entirely preventable and National Smile Month gives us a timely reminder that we can make a difference in addressing this unjust imbalance. It’s not just adults who need our help. Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in children, affecting more than one in four five-year-olds and has emerged as the number one reason why children are admitted to hospital in the UK.

We want to increase oral health education in the classroom, after all, children who learn the right lessons at an early age are more likely to carry them on into adulthood. We are dedicated to improving the oral health of young children everywhere by continuing to help dental health professionals and nearby schools develop strong relationships.

Throughout life, the state of a person’s teeth and gums can have a significant effect on their overall health and wellbeing. With your help, National Smile Month can have long-lasting benefits on the quality of thousands of lives. National Smile Month is not just about education and learning about the benefits of good oral health, it’s also about having lots of fun. The campaign’s symbol, the Smiley, has been a roaring and continues to drive interest and awareness of oral health while helping raise funds for charity.

More than half a million have been circulated over the last few years, resulting in thousands of Smiley Selfies appearing all over social media. But behind each smile there is are some very important oral health messages to remember.

Throughout National Smile Month dental practices, hospitals, pharmacies and schools will be taking part by holding dedicated events and activities in the community. Be on the lookout for your local dental practice doing something special and see how you can get involved.

Visit www.smilemonth.org and register to receive your free National Smile Month guide.
THE ORAL HEALTH FOUNDATION ON THE ‘SUGAR TAX’

Sugar-filled soft drinks will see a tax hike in April 2018 in an attempt to combat tooth decay and rising levels of obesity. Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond confirmed details of the new sugar tax in his budget statement earlier this month by saying the money raised would go to the Department for Education for school sports.

Tax on drinks with more than five grams of sugar per 100ml will be levied by 18p per litre, while those with eight grams or more of sugar per 100ml will have an extra tax of 24p per litre.

The Treasury estimates the ‘sugar tax’ will raise an extra £1bn, however, he added that revenues could be lower than expected as companies reduce the amount of sugar in their products to avoid the tax. This could bring significant health benefits, cutting rates of tooth decay, obesity and type 2 diabetes, although soft drinks manufacturers say there is no evidence this will be the case.

The levy was first announced last March, however health campaigners including the Oral Health Foundation, were quick to point out omissions where the bill falls short. With only one year until the new ‘sugar tax’ is launched, we have our view on the levy and some of its surrounding issue.

1. Our initial reaction

The Sugar Tax has ticked a box for government in regards to being proactive against the increase of sugar consumption in the UK, but time will tell as to its true effectiveness. While we welcome what could be a positive step in addressing the normalisation of sugar in our diets, we have been constantly astonished by the government as they continue to brush over the issue of tooth decay and its relationship with sugar. In fact, with obesity and diabetes at the forefront of the new bill, there is no mention of oral health whatsoever in the Sugar Tax proposals.

This is particularly disappointing, especially when you consider that tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in the UK. Additionally, over the last year more than 40,000 children were admitted to hospital for tooth extractions under general anaesthetic. This is completely heart-breaking, and is entirely as the result of an excess of sugar.

We do hope the Sugar Tax will lead to better knowledge amongst the public of the amount of sugar in our food and drinks and how damaging it can be to our oral health, as well as our general health.

2. Not going far enough

Ultimately, the Sugar Tax, certainly in regards to improving oral health, has many flaws. Its failure to apply to sugary pure fruit juices and milk based drinks, not to mention smoothies – the latter of which being an unmistakable oversight – is quite frankly astounding. Interestingly, even some soft drinks will fail to be taxed. The popular fizzy drink ‘Lilt’ for example, contains too little sugar to fall into one of the bands but remains hugely acidic in its make-up, which will continue to cause significant levels of tooth decay and erosion.

The Sugar Tax also omitted multipacks, multi-buy offers such as ‘buy one get one free’, as well as junk food advertising post watershed. When tackling products with excessive amounts of added sugar, these are particularly worrying oversights.

While we are happy to see the money raised by the levy go to towards school sports, we feel some of these funds could have been used to educate the public, particularly children in the classroom, about preventing oral health problems, which are some of the biggest health issues facing children in the UK.

Some of the funds raised through the Sugar Tax could have gone into better oral health education in schools, better access to dentistry, fluoride varnishes, just anything to stop us seeing these shocking headlines about the children’s oral health crisis we are experiencing in the UK. We have recently seen how successful the Childsmiles programme is in Scotland, in not only improving children’s dental health but saving the NHS money too. This is exactly the kind of initiative we need rolling out throughout the UK.

3. The impact of sugar on our teeth

Every time we eat or drink anything sugary, our teeth are under acid attack for up to one hour. This is because the sugar will react with the bacteria in plaque (the sticky coating on our teeth) and produce harmful acids. So it is important to have sugary foods or drinks just at mealtimes, limiting the amount of time our mouth is at risk.

Acidic foods and drinks can be just as harmful. The acid ‘erodes’ or dissolves the enamel, exposing the dentine underneath. This can make our teeth sensitive and unsightly.

All sugars can cause decay. Sugar can come in many forms. Usually ingredients ending in ‘ose’ are sugars, for example: sucrose, fructose and glucose are just three types. These sugars can all damage our teeth.

Many processed foods have sugar in them, and the higher up it appears in the list of ingredients, the more sugar there is in the product. It is always a good idea to read the list of ingredients on the labels when we are food shopping. Just remember...
that ‘no added sugar’ does not necessarily mean that the product is sugar free. It simply means that no extra sugar has been added. These products may contain sugars such as those listed above, or the sugars may be listed as ‘carbohydrates’.

4. Manufacturer’s responsibility

Giving manufacturers another year to review their products and potentially reduce the amount of sugar in them is a positive move, and we now want to see food and drink manufacturers seriously evaluate their products with the aim reduce their sugar content or make it more obvious the amount of sugar in them.

By implementing the levy on manufactures, the pressure is now on companies to change the sugar quantities in their products. We now have a challenge to make sure that manufacturers do just this and not continue with their current models and pass the cost onto the consumer through price rises.

We’re delighted to hear from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Sugar Tax will fall short in terms of estimated revenue, due to manufactures already beginning to cut sugar in their products. But while this is a positive step, it’s important to remember that even for those manufacturers who have reduced the amount of sugar in their products, they are still bursting with sugar and should still be treated as such.

Manufactures of sugary foods and drinks absolutely have a responsibility to sugar the amount of sugar in their products, but this change will only have a minimal effect. The real change will come from within ourselves and our own attitudes towards reducing the amount of sugar we consume in our diets.
V FOR VICTORY (AND VIENNA) - RUNNING THE VIENNA HALF MARATHON

Last Sunday, the amazing Louise Fernandez took part in the Vienna City Half Marathon to raise awareness of mouth cancer. Louise ran in support of the Oral Health Foundation’s Mouth Cancer Action campaign, a cause which is especially close to her as it has affected somebody very important to her.

Since September 2016, Louise’s close friend, Charlie Rees has been on a tumultuous journey after being diagnosed with mouth cancer. Following on from her diagnosis, Charlie has undergone surgery to remove part of her tongue and had to battle mentally and physically through numerous sessions of radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Throughout her journey, Charlie has remained strong, determined and courageous. For Louise, the Vienna City Half Marathon, was the perfect opportunity to support her brave friend. And to make the start line herself, Louise had a journey of her own through her relentless training. This points to her determination to spread awareness of mouth cancer and the bond that her and Charlie both share.

It is now the sixth most common cancer in the world, yet far too many people still are not aware of it and the affect that it has on thousands of people each year. We are asking you to be aware of the main symptoms of mouth cancer. These are; mouth ulcers that do not heal within three weeks, red or white patches within the mouth and any unusual lumps in your mouth or neck area. It is important to visit your dental team straight away if you are worried about any of these symptoms. If in doubt get checked out.

Louise, along with Charlie herself, have raised £1,000 for mouth cancer action. Their target is £5,000 and both, along with the Oral Health Foundation, urge you to help support their (and our) cause on their Just Giving page.

All donations, no matter how big or small, would be greatly appreciated by Louise, Charlie and all of us at the Oral Health Foundation. Anybody can be affected by mouth cancer and sadly, research has shown that mouth cancer is becoming more common, particularly in younger people and women.

If you would like to learn more about mouth cancer, its causes, signs and treatment, you can find more information at www.mouthcancer.org.
UNIQUE FILM TACKLES TOOTH DECAY

Devonport children and parents were treated to a special screening of a unique film aimed at tackling the city’s growing tooth decay problem.

“Open Wide and Step Inside” is a fun and interactive resource to help raise the profile of dental decay and disease and highlight the large number of children who are hospitalised for tooth extraction under general anaesthetic – 848 in Plymouth alone in 2015-16.

Produced by Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise (PDSE), Peninsula Dental School and Plymouth University, the film was shown at Action for Children’s Green Ark Children’s Centre in Fore Street, Devonport.

The PDSE Community Engagement Team has established an excellent partnership with Green Ark over a number of years.

The project received financial support from the Wrigley Company Foundation and toothbrushes and toothpaste for children’s oral health packs from Henry Schein Inc.

The film stars Geoffrey the Giant and his friend Mouse who live in Smeaton’s Tower on Plymouth Hoe. Geoffrey has toothache as a result of eating sweets, drinking fizzy drinks and neglecting to clean his teeth properly.

Mouse persuades him to visit Daisy the Dentist who finds the problem and gives Geoffrey a filling.

The animation was created by Plymouth University’s TELMeD team which produces e-learning tools and materials for medical, dental, Faculty of Health and other students.

Dr Robert Witton, Director of Social Engagement and Community-based Dentistry, PDSE, said: “We are incredibly proud of “Open Wide and Step Inside” which is making an important contribution to oral health education.

“We devised and delivered every aspect of the project, which includes the film, teachers’ resources and an oral health pack for every child.

With more children being admitted to hospital for dental problems than for any health issue, data suggests new and innovative approaches are needed to encourage better cleaning, improved diet and frequent visits to the dentist.

“The project conveys precisely those messages to large numbers of local children.

“Our thanks go to the Wrigley Company Foundation, Henry Schein, local schools and the TELMeD team at Plymouth University.”
Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) has been credited with helping women manage a range of menopause-related issues, including hot flushes, heart health and bone density, and now new research suggests HRT could be used to reduce gum disease and prevent tooth loss.

The study, which evaluated nearly 500 women between the ages of 50 and 87, discovered rates of gum disease were significantly lower in those receiving HRT, with many seeing a 44% improvement in gum health.

The menopause, which commonly strikes in the late 40s and early 50s, leaves women at higher risk of several health issues, including gum disease, due to a decrease in oestrogen levels.

Gum disease is the leading cause of tooth loss while previous studies have also suggested more than one in four (28%) post-menopausal women are likely to suffer from tooth loss within five years.

An estimated one million British women are currently taking HRT, however, the NHS has claimed that many more could be suffering from menopausal symptoms in silence. As a result, the Oral Health Foundation, is encouraging woman to be more aware of their oral health during this time and are offering advice about how to cope with such changes to the mouth.

Karen Coates, Oral Health Educator and Advisor for the Oral Health Foundation, said: “Several significant changes occur in the body during the menopause and many have resulting symptoms which can have a substantial impact on a woman’s day-to-day life, so much so that oral health can at times feel like the least of their worries.

“Falling oestrogen levels throughout menopause can cause numerous health issues, such as loss of bone density, leading to osteoporosis. At the same time, changes in oral health also are common as teeth and gums become more susceptible to disease, resulting in heightened risk of inflammation, bleeding, pain, and ultimately, loose or missing teeth.”

In addition to gum disease and tooth loss, women undergoing menopause can also be at heightened risk of other oral health conditions such as dry mouth, Burning Mouth Syndrome and weakness in the jaw bone.

Helen Minnery, President of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy, added: “While HRT could offer women an opportunity to alleviate some painful symptoms, it is extremely important to continue maintaining a good oral health and hygiene routine during menopause.”

“Brushing our teeth twice last thing at night and at one other time during the day with a fluoride toothpaste and reducing the amount of sugary foods and drinks we consume could make a significant difference in keeping any major problems at bay. Cleaning in between our teeth on a daily basis with interdental brushes, or floss can also be of great benefit.

“Maintaining good oral hygiene throughout our lives is the best way to prevent the development of many oral health problems. It is important that we do not overlook the health of our mouth and remember, if you are in pain or discomfort please visit a dental professional. A visit to a dental hygienist or dental therapist could really help you and provide you with great advice too.”

Anybody wishing to find out more about their oral health, or suffering from post-menopausal oral health symptoms, can contact the Oral Health Foundation's Dental Helpline. The Dental Helpline is staff by fully-qualified dental professionals and gives free, impartial and expert advice on all matters pertaining to oral health.

The Dental Helpline is available by either telephone on 017888 539 780 or email at helpline@dentalhealth.org.
OUR GUIDE TO ORGANISING A SMILEATHON

National Smile Month might well be the perfect opportunity to help improve oral health and wellbeing in local communities all around the United Kingdom, but it’s just as important for us that you have fun and put a smile on your face while supporting it.

If you’re looking to get involved in National Smile Month but are not quite sure what to do, then look no further than organising your very own Smileathon!

A Smileathon is a wonderful and easy way to get people interested in their oral health and hygiene.

We’re sure by now that you’ve noticed our splendid Smileys, the campaign’s official symbol. Maybe you’ve had them in previous years, or perhaps they’re still lingering around in your pen pots at work?

All you need for a Smileathon is a large group of people, a bunch of those Smileys and a camera. Anybody can take part and it only takes a matter of seconds.

Whether, you’re simply snapping yourself, a patient, colleague, pupils, family or friends…. even pets, a National Smile Month Smileathon is sure to put a smile on somebody’s face.

Smileathons are a really fun activity and there’s also an element of education too.

On the back of our Smileys are our three key messages for great oral health – a fab tool to get us really thinking about the importance of the health of our mouth.

Your Smileathon can take place in one location over the course of a day, or many places over the entire campaign – it’s completely up to you! It’s all about taking as many photos using the Smileys as possible!

How many Smileys photos can you take in your Smileathon? Show us your Smile and share it with the world by posting it on Twitter and Facebook with #smileathon.

What you need

• A bunch of Smileys.
• A camera or smartphone.
• A social media account (Twitter or Facebook).

Steps to organise

• Find out how many people would like to get involved in your Smileathon. It could be just yourself, your department or workplace, or the number of children in the class or school. Once you know, get a hold of the necessary amount of Smileys.

• Decide what format your Smileathon will take. Will it be a mass photo including everyone, a series of smaller teams, or will you be taking individual photos? Will the Smileathons take place on one specific day, or over a number of days? How about one per day throughout the whole of National Smile Month?

• Is your Smileathon a series of photos or selfies? You decide.

• Upload your photos to social media @smilemonth using #mysmileyselfie and #smileathon. Don’t forget to ask the permission of those taking part and remember to include an educational message alongside your post.

• Finally…. tag and share with those people in the photos. Like, retweets and comment on the photos too – it will help them go viral and get National Smile Month messages far and wide.
EVERYBODY HAS TWO MINUTES! OUR SIMPLE STEPS FOR A BRUSHATHON

Brushing our teeth is not usually considered a communal event. It’s done in the privacy of our bathrooms, in the morning and last thing at night. Perhaps we’ll open the door for our partner or children, but apart from that, our brushing routine is something not too many people see.

That is until National Smile Month comes around! The Brushathon is a really popular campaign event, and one which has roots right back to the beginning of National Smile Month. It’s perfect to get schools and groups of children involved in learning more about their oral health. It’s also great for large workplaces!

The Brushathon asks dental practices, hospitals and oral health educators to partner up with local groups to brush their teeth simultaneously for two minutes. You can also take this opportunity to talk to the group about good oral health and hygiene.

What makes the Brushathon such a great event is the factor of mass participation. The activity creates a brilliant buzz, especially among the children, which will mean they’re more likely to engage with the subject.

It’s also a great photo opportunity for local press too, especially if you take with you a Smiley for each participant!

How to organise...

There are currently three Guinness World Records when it comes to groups coming together to brush their teeth simultaneously. They are…

- The most people brushing their teeth simultaneously in a single venue is 13,380 at an event arranged by Colgate Palmolive How to organise...

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1. Choose whether your Brushathon will gather participants in one location or throughout several locations.
2. Decide on a date, time and venue/s.
3. Send around an invitation to local schools, business and community groups, informing them of the Brushathon.
4. Give participants an option of whether they will bring in their own toothbrush and toothpaste, or will require them.

Those needing a toothbrush or toothpaste can be facilitated for in our online shop. How about providing them with one of our Dental Goody Bags? They all contain a toothbrush, toothpaste and oral health and hygiene educational material. We have Adult Dental Goody Bags, Toddler Dental Goody Bags and Baby Dental Goody Bags… as well as many more for your tailored group. They’re great value too!

Tell the press. A Brushathon is a great photo opportunity so their picture desk would love to know about your event. Download our National Smile Month Press Release Template, fill out the details and send it into your local newspapers.

(Central América) Inc at the Cuscatlán Stadium, City of San Salvador, El Salvador on 5 November 2005. The most people brushing their teeth simultaneously was 177,003 at 380 locations across India for an attempt organised by Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd in association with the Indian Dental Association (IDA) on 9 October 2007.

- The most people brushing dogs’ teeth simultaneously is 268, and was achieved by The Link Management Limited (Hong Kong), in Hong Kong, China, on 9 December 2012. This event took place in Stanley Plaza, Hong Kong, to promote dog dental care and hygiene awareness. It also supported the charity ‘Hong Kong Dog Rescue’.

Okay, so maybe these are a little bit ambitious for your events but why not get as many people involved as possible?! A Brushathon is perfect for building great relationships within local communities.
BRIGHTON DENTAL TEAM TAKING ON BM10K IN AID OF MOUTH CANCER

‘A visit to the dentist is about more than looking after our teeth and gums, it could also save our life.’ This was the message from the team at Brighton’s Dental Health Spa as they competed in the BM10k to raise awareness for a cause very close to their hearts – the growing cases of mouth cancer.

The team, from the practice on Queens Road, took to the streets of Brighton on Sunday 9 April for the BM10k to improve education, as well as valuable donations, for the Oral Health Foundation’s Mouth Cancer Action campaign.

With cases of mouth cancer in the United Kingdom increasing by a third in the last decade alone, Dental Health Spa, who were dressed as giant red mouths, ran the annual ten-kilometer race as an opportunity to address the current mouth cancer epidemic and urged residents to be aware of any changes in their mouth.

Christina Chatfield, Clinical Director of Dental Health Spa, explained why the team decided to take on this grueling challenge: “When we think about our dental check-up, we naturally believe that it is just our teeth and gums that are given a thorough examination. While this is very true, not many patients realise that we also check for far more other conditions and diseases that relate to the mouth.

“During a check-up, dental professionals will also carry out a visual examination of mouth cancer.”

Mouth cancer has been diagnosed in more than 7,000 Brits over the last year while more people now lose their life to the disease than testicular and cervical cancer combined.

“We have seen first-hand the devastating impact mouth cancer can have on a person’s life. Fortunately, those who visited us were vigilant and quick to recognise that something unusual was occurring and came to us for further examination,” added Ms Chatfield.

“Like any cancer, our chances our beating the disease depends on the speed at which it is caught. Unfortunately, mouth cancer remains relatively unknown and awareness of the disease remains frightfully low. That is exactly why Dental Health Spa took on the BM10k.

“We ran the BM10k to raise awareness, education and money for Mouth Cancer Action. Three years ago, we developed a special initiative called Moveit4smiles, which helped support this charity cause and since then we have raised over £25,000 for mouth cancer.

“By increasingly knowledge about the disease; what it is, what causes it, what to look out for, and where to go for help, we can ultimately help save lives through prevention and early detection.”

The Oral Health Foundation say if caught early enough, the chances of surviving mouth cancer are 90%.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, CEO of the charity, highlights what we should be looking out for: “Early signs and symptoms of mouth cancer include mouth ulcers that have not healed within three weeks, red or white patches in the mouth, or unusual lumps or swellings in the mouth, head or neck area. It’s so important for us all to be mouthaware and alert to any unusual changes in the mouth.

“If you recognise any of the symptoms, please checked out by your dentist or doctor.”
A few weeks ago, we saw figures from the Faculty of Dental Surgery showing tooth extractions in children aged four and under have increased by 24% in the last decade. I hope that you will agree with me we see these horrific figures and headlines like this far too often, but that does not mean that they should every be ignored and we should certainly not become desensitized to them, in fact the exact opposite is true they should be seen as a ‘call to arms’ for the dental profession to help change the course of oral health in the UK.

In the run up to National Smile Month I believe figures such as these should be seized upon by the dental community to do two important things.

One: To help us highlight the inefficiencies and total lack of appropriate provisions in the current structure of oral health education across huge swathes of the UK.

Over recent years’ local authorities have seen their purse strings increasingly tightened from above with Public Health budgets being particularly badly affected and ultimately, there is a chronic lack of funding for to seriously assess and address the oral health of their local populations.

As a result, the public increasingly suffer from a lack of oral health services to educate, inform and treat them effectively. Funding cuts have also resulted in many oral health promotion teams being disbanded. This obviously reduces the amount of resource invested in grassroots level activities within local communities across the UK.

Two: We have to use this information to take action and alter oral health in the UK and we are asking you to start with National Smile Month.

Supported by thousands of individuals and organisations, National Smile Month promotes three key messages at the heart of good oral health; brush your teeth last thing at night and at least one other time during the day with a fluoride toothpaste, cut down on how often you eat sugary foods and drinks, and visit the dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

The Child Smiles Programme in Scotland has made huge strides in helping to address this and it is a great pity that even with her undoubted political skills the Chief Dental Officer, Sara Hurley, has not been successful in getting proper funding for a national unified Smile for Life programme, but instead we have a mish mash of different funding models and examples of good practice from around the country as a sort of Pick ‘n’ Mix, contributing to an ineffective system which leaves some of those most at risk behind.

Alongside the recent 5% raise in NHS dental fees, the second in a year, which is well above inflation and effectively amounts to a ‘tax on dentistry’ for the public. Although this does not apply to the children reported on by the FDS it does contribute to a perception that available dentistry is becoming a rare thing and people forgoing treatment due to perceived difficulties getting it.

So, what can we do about this? This is our second important appoint.

Over the past 40 years the campaign has helped to connect the dental profession and the public, particularly children, and with statistics like these continuing to make headlines and official resources repeatedly cut and limited it is more important than ever in helping to bridge the gap.

This year we are asking for your help again to reach more people than ever before and spread messages of healthy smiles right across the country.

If you have not done so yet there is still time to take part in this year’s campaign, simply visit www.smilemonth.org/register to support and take part in National Smile Month. Registration only takes a couple of minutes and is completely free, by registering you will receive our amazing National Smile Month Registration Pack which includes everything you need to kick start your personal campaign.
GET READY TO SMILE!

NATIONAL SMILE MONTH IS BACK AND IS LOOKING FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

VISIT WWW.SMILEMONTH.ORG/REGISTER AND PICK UP YOUR FREE PACK.