

Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise CIC

Principles of Community Engagement

By Wendy Smith
Community Development Officer, Peninsula Dental School

and

Gareth Hart
Director, Iridescent Ideas CIC



1. Why community engagement?

Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise (PDSE) is a Community Interest Company (CIC). As such, everything it does is guided by the need to fulfil its 'community interest statement' which sets out its mission and reason for existence as a company. PDSE has adopted the following statement which forms the underlying principle for its community engagement activities:

The company's activities will provide benefit to...

1. Members of the community in Devon and Cornwall requiring dental treatment, other clinical and non-clinical services and other relevant information.
2. Students and other members of the community who require education and training in dentistry and related clinical and non-clinical services.

Furthermore, the CIC registration documents stated that the company will provide a range of services such as:

- Teaching and training
- Research
- Community engagement
- Workshops
- Providing dental treatment
- Education about oral health
- Other related activities.

And that the community will benefit by:

- Improved education
- Improved health
- Reduced oral health inequalities.

These values and outcomes should guide the company's community engagement work.

2. About Community Interest Companies

CICs are limited companies with special additional features, created to conduct business, or other activity, for community benefit and not purely for private advantage.

This is achieved by a 'community interest test' and an 'asset lock', which ensure that the CIC is established for community purposes to which the assets and profits are dedicated.

Registration of a CIC has to be approved by the Regulator who also has a continuing monitoring and enforcement role. For more about CICs visit: www.bis.gov.uk/cicregulator



3. Standards and values of the new social enterprise

PDSE will have a community ethos and be driven by the principles of good corporate governance embracing integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and honesty. Our commitments are:

- Outstanding clinical education
- Strong social and community engagement
- World class research.

Partnership is at the heart of what we do with:

- Our students
- The NHS
- The University
- Communities and other partners throughout the peninsula.

We are here to:

- Drive innovation in medical and dental education
- Support our NHS partners in improving healthcare in the peninsula
- Generate and use research for the benefit of patients.

4. Community engagement vision

Community engagement is crucial for the success of PDSE. This approach supports regional and national health improvement agendas and will ensure that 'engagement for better oral health' is the thread that runs through the ethos and delivery of this new and innovative community interest company.

Our vision for community engagement is that:

- People in the South West take an active role in oral health improvement.
- Our partnership approach supports health improvements at a local level.
- People have the best information to make the best choice about their dental healthcare
- People take responsibility for their own dental healthcare
- Students provide a world-class experience to all sectors of the community in clinical and non-clinical settings.

For this paper we have chosen not to go into detail about specific aims and objectives. Some of the opportunities listed below give a flavour of what the new CIC could achieve.



5. Current activities and impact

The Community Engagement Team (CET) is delivering a range of activities and projects which encourage and support people in the Plymouth area to access dental care services provided by Peninsula Dental School as well as by General Dental Practitioners. This includes:

- Developing and supporting the fluoride varnish programme.
- Training 'dental ambassadors' in Children's Centres.
- Implementing supervised brushing sessions in early years settings such as Children's' and Sure Start Centres, schools, Family Intervention Projects, community venues and others.
- Engaging directly with the local population to encourage attendance at Dental Education Facilities via information sessions, community open days, etc.
- Delivering a range of workshops and activities with partners which encourage and promote improved dental well-being, for example, with parent support advisers in primary schools and information sessions with disadvantaged groups.
- Providing community-based, dental triage sessions for disadvantaged groups.

Working with community based organizations; the CET has built effective and responsive networks and partnerships in the private, public and civil society sectors.

The impact our work has had includes:

- Increasing knowledge and awareness for participants.
- Reducing negative barriers and perceptions that frequently surround accessing dental services.
- Increased awareness of the importance of a well-balanced diet.

- Reducing dental pain and anxiety for 'at risk' groups.
- Encouraging families to establish good oral hygiene habits.
- Helping children to brush effectively.
- Enabling and empowering people to make more informed choices about oral health.



6. Future opportunities

Context and approach

We are the only dental school in the country to have created a link between the formal education of dental students and a community approach. This ensures that graduating clinicians have a wider range of skills and experiences to draw upon which will help them deliver excellent dental care in a changing health environment. PDSE will aim to continue and expand this approach by engaging with communities across the peninsula in Cornwall and Devon. This can be achieved in a number of ways such as:

- Engaging with local stakeholder groups
 - Working across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
 - Identifying key stakeholders and agencies which are well placed to support the PDSE ethos.
 - Developing networks and partnerships which are recognised and trusted by residents across the south west peninsula.
- Understanding neighbourhood needs
 - Undertaking neighbourhood mapping to assess needs and oral health inequalities.
 - Using an evidenced-based approach to complement and enhance health improvement opportunities.
 - Understanding how communities operate and function.
- Developing excellent communication strategies
 - Reflecting regional and national strategies which support health improvement such as 'Delivering Better Oral Health', Marmot Review – 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'.

We will use the experience and good practice that has been successful in Plymouth to develop active partnerships and networks to support local health needs across the peninsula.

Funding and finance

The new social enterprise will be able to access significant grant funding from organizations such as the Big Lottery Fund, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Wellcome Trust and many others. It could also attract 'social investment' from financiers such as Big Issue Invest, Social Investment Business and others to deliver new and innovative programmes. Some of these schemes could have significant income generation potential and provide an opportunity to fulfil social and business goals simultaneously.

Once note of caution is that CICs, unlike charities, sometimes find it harder to access grant funding from trusts and foundations which often only support charitable organizations. Many of the bigger trusts can give grants to CICs but it is important to research the funding criteria before applying.

Example projects

- Establishing community-based health fairs to target disadvantaged groups to enhance access to dental healthcare.
- Developing an oral care toolkit and training programme to develop and build capacity for carers in residential and nursing homes. This could have strong income generation potential.
- Creating a volunteer programme aimed at dental students which enhances and expands curriculum experience.

- Develop a network of 'dental ambassadors' across the south west region who can communicate effectively to deliver health improvement messages in their local communities.
- Establish supervised brushing sessions in primary schools in deprived communities to establish good oral hygiene habits from an early age.
- Develop peninsula-wide programmes around issues such as oral health and homelessness with partners such as The Big Issue (potential investor link to Big Issue Invest).

Social enterprise networks and leadership

Another opportunity is to engage with the wide range of social enterprises and social enterprise networks that are emerging in the peninsula. There is a strong social enterprise network in Plymouth (www.plymsocent.org.uk) and also newer groups in Exeter and Torbay. Cornwall and rural Devon are less well served by formal networks but the organization should keep abreast of developments here.

In the health sector, social enterprise is increasingly important as it is seen as a new way of delivering healthcare. Many people see social enterprises as able to deliver more innovatively and more accessibly in a locally accountable way. Recent and on-going changes to the NHS have also created an important context for social enterprise development in the UK. PDSE has the potential to be a leading social enterprise delivering world class healthcare and education in a unique and locally appropriate way. Community engagement is a key component in delivering this.

