



Improving Oral Health for People in Prison

Co-designing an evidence-based intervention to reduce oral health inequalities in secure settings



WHY THIS RESEARCH IS NEEDED



People in prison experience severe oral health inequalities, with **higher rates of decay, gum disease and serious infections—5x higher prevalence of dental infections** than the general population.



Poor oral health causes **pain, impacts wellbeing, social interactions and employability**, and can worsen systemic health conditions.



Access to dental care in prison is limited. Only **19%** of prisoners report it is easy to see a dentist.



Untreated oral conditions lead to emergency hospital care, increasing pressure and costs for NHS and prison health services.



The UN principle of equivalence states people in prison should receive the same standard of health care as the community.



OUR AIM



To assess the oral health needs of people in prison and the factors that influence their oral health, and to **co-design** an intervention that can be delivered in the prison environment to improve their oral health.



WHAT WILL THIS PROJECT INVOLVE?

A mixed-methods study delivered across two phases.

Phase 1: Evidence and understanding



Scoping review
Identify co-designed public health interventions in secure settings to inform our approach.



Retrospective data
Analyse anonymised dental care and national prison survey data to understand oral health needs and current provision of care.



Qualitative interviews
Explore experiences and factors affecting oral health and dental care with people in prison and staff (healthcare and wider prison staff).



Phase 2: Co-design of an intervention



Co-design workshops
Work with people in prison, dental professionals and prison staff to co-design an oral health intervention that is feasible, acceptable and effective.



WHO IS INVOLVED?



People with lived experience of prison



Prison dental professionals and healthcare staff



Wider prison staff (e.g. officers, governors)



Policy makers and third sector organisations



Academic experts in oral health, public health, justice health and epidemiology

Lived experience and public involvement are at the heart of this research.

★ ANTICIPATED IMPACT



Better understanding of the oral health needs of people in prison.



Reduction in oral health inequalities for people in prison.



Reduced emergency hospital attendances and healthcare costs.



Improved efficiency and utilisation of prison dental and oral health services.



Evidence to inform policy and practice for fair and equitable oral healthcare.

For more information on the project please contact Joelle Booth
joelle.booth@plymouth.ac.uk



This project will be led by **Dr Joelle Booth**



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