



SMILE AGUS SLAINTE

NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH POLICY

The Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health (ISDH) welcomes the additional support for vulnerable people to access oral healthcare and improve their oral health outlined in the national oral health policy.

Vulnerable children and adults have more untreated oral disease, missing teeth and total tooth loss compared to the general population in Ireland. Their access to appropriate oral healthcare services is inadequate. These oral health inequalities are unfair, unjust and unnecessary. The ISDH believe that it is time for radical change.

After many years of outdated policy, *Smile agus Slainte* brings oral healthcare in Ireland up to date. This policy highlights gaps in services for vulnerable groups, like those with disabilities and older adults, and outlines major change in how oral healthcare is delivered to ensure health and equity.

Five ISDH Implementation Priorities

ISDH calls for five strategic priorities to support successful implementation of this policy for vulnerable people.

1

Deliver mainstreaming and include disability across the spectrum of care

2

Develop comprehensive care pathways

3

Deliver and value specialist training for the dental team

4

Secure resources for delivery of quality dental care

5

Support clinical leadership in Special Care Dentistry



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Five ISDH Implementation Priorities

1

Deliver mainstreaming and include disability across the spectrum of care

It is essential that the care of vulnerable people is integrated into, and not segregated from, mainstream oral health care, health surveillance, health promotion and advanced care. All oral healthcare services must engage with people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

2

Develop comprehensive care pathways

Models of care should be implemented nationally and delivered locally. Vulnerable people must have choice in how and where they engage with care. Dental teams in primary care must be supported to develop *Dental Homes* for vulnerable patients, as a viable choice for most vulnerable people. To ensure the viability of Dental Homes in primary care and access to secondary and tertiary care when needed, the ISDH sees a need for clear pathways to and from Community Oral Healthcare Services and specialists in Special Care Dentistry in advanced care centres. There is a need to develop key positions at key points in these pathways of care.

3

Deliver and value specialist training to the dental team

The ISDH recognizes the need for training in Special Care Dentistry across the dental team. There is a need to provide training in Special Care Dentistry for dental teams across primary care, community oral healthcare services, health surveillance, health promotion and advanced care. Specialist training in Special Care Dentistry must be delivered to future specialists and leaders. Competence must be acknowledged accordingly.

4

Secure resources for delivery of quality dental care

There is a need to fund all levels of care for vulnerable groups equitably to ensure quality of care. There is a need to fund care packages equitably, develop skilled teams, sedation and general anaesthesia services that can deliver high quality treatment to vulnerable groups. Advanced care centres must be developed that meet the needs of our most vulnerable patients who find it most difficult to access care.

5

Support clinical leadership in Special Care Dentistry

There is a need to develop and nurture national and regional clinical leadership in Special Care Dentistry. The ISDH calls on government, the profession and the public to support the leaders of today and tomorrow so as the five implementation priorities of the ISDH can be secured. Clinical leadership positions must be developed to assure right care at the right time and in the right place, nationally.

Sources of Information

- Disability and Oral Health: The Way Forward; National Disability Authority (NDA), 2005.
- Oireachtas Committee Future Healthcare: Submission from Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health, 2016.
- Project SMILE Ireland: Mac Giolla Phadraig C, Nunn J, Dougall A, O'Neill E, McLoughlin J, Guerin S (2014) What Should Dental Services for People with Disabilities Be Like? Results of an Irish Delphi Panel Survey. PLoS ONE 9(11): e113393. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0113393>
- Mac Giolla Phadraig, C., Dougall, A., Stapleton, S., McGeown, D., Nunn, J. and Guerin, S. (2016), What should dental services for people with disabilities in Ireland be like? Agreed priorities from a focus group of people with learning disabilities. Br J Learn Disabil, 44: 259-268. doi:[10.1111/bld.12152](https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12152)
- Smile agus Slainte, Department of Health, Dublin, 2019.
- UNCRPD, United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities