Introduction

The West Sussex Sugar Reduction Programme (started in January 2015) launched the West Sussex Sugar Smart Dental Toolkit pilot on 29th May 2018 in local dental practices. This innovative toolkit breaks down the barriers of accessing resources by providing hard-copy and online resources to make it easier for dental teams to promote sugar reduction and a healthy diet amongst their patients.

Method

- Local authority public health specialists collaborated with the Local Dental Committee, Health Education England and Public Health England to develop the toolkit over nine months.
- Aligned to the national Change4Life and ‘Top tips for teeth’ campaign, it is designed to involve the whole dental team in raising sugar reduction awareness amongst patients.
- The resources include badges, stickers, promotional material, social media links, and prescription pads encouraging dental teams to signpost patients to healthy lifestyle services within their local Wellbeing Hub www.westsussexwellbeing.org.uk
- A four week pilot ran in twelve local dental practices, led by Foundation Dentists.
- The launch date coincided with school holidays to maximise impact.

Results

- Dental practices reported their overall experience of the toolkit was very good/good, highlighting positive examples. For example, it enabled better discussion with dental practice teams regarding sugar/healthy lifestyles.
- Other impacts reported were improved toothbrushing habits, the online PHE resource centre was good for the dental team’s CPD, and food diaries were effective in reducing sugar intake. Some respondents suggested that patient stickers could be brighter to increase engagement.
- A partnership approach has been critical to creating the toolkit, enabling public health specialists to gain insight into the dental profession and create a resource which is beneficial to both dental teams and patients.
- Overall, this innovative approach has produced a positive public health impact by raising awareness of the harms of sugar on teeth and its effect on general health.