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Underprivileged in Plymouth receive dental care

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Underprivileged in Plymouth receive dental care

As the clinical arm of Peninsula Dental School at the University of Plymouth, Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise (PDSE) aims to ensure access to dental care for all, especially those excluded from mainstream dentistry.

PDSE leads community engagement activities within the dental curriculum and beyond, and one of its four clinics is located in one of Plymouth's most disadvantaged areas.

In an effort to help a particularly underprivileged group, and as a *pro bono* contribution to its social impact, PDSE has provided urgent care and follow-up treatment by a qualified dentist to people who experience homelessness. The clinic started in January 2018 for half a day per week, and, due to demand and success, has increased to a full day per week since August 2018.

The service is continuously evolving, based on existing literature, primary research, and the growing experience of PDSE staff in working with homeless patients. By the beginning of July 2019, 61 patients had been seen, with 28 completing a treatment pathway. Evaluation shows that treatment helps patients in terms of pain relief, functionality and motivation to look after their teeth. Moreover, it impacts positively on their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

One patient who received treatment commented: 'It's helped me get a job, it's helped me move forward in society ... it's meant a great deal towards my future.'

The clinic is an important public health offer and a valuable learning opportunity for PDSE. A key lesson is the importance of close collaboration with a residential homelessness centre and active communication between the dentist and a centre volunteer.