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Impact Inclusion Innovation Investment

Sickness to prevention

BRUSH: Tackling Children's Tooth Decay

ARC Yorkshire and Humber in collaboration with PenARC (now NIHR ARC South West)

The challenge
The BRUSH project addressed a critical public health challenge where a quarter of five-year-old children in England suffer from tooth decay, rising to 50% in deprived areas. With tooth decay being the leading cause of hospital admission for children aged 5-10, the project developed evidence-based solutions to implement supervised toothbrushing programmes in nursery and school settings.

The approach
Through the creation of comprehensive implementation resources and conducting extensive stakeholder research, BRUSH has transformed how local authorities and health services deliver preventive oral health interventions to high-risk children, with the work influencing an £11 million government commitment for supervised toothbrushing programmes for 3–5-year-olds in deprived areas.

The outcomes and impact
The project's resources are now embedded in Department for Education guidance and endorsed by key dental societies. BRUSH continues to support programme expansion across England, with supervised toothbrushing clubs included in the Government's Family Hubs recovery plan and adopted as a Labour party election commitment, demonstrating sustained policy influence in reducing children's oral health inequalities.

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