A 2008 campaign against mouth cancer has just been announced by one of the UK’s leading oral health charities, which claims it is time to take action against the disease. ‘Action speaks louder than words’ is the message from the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF) which is gearing up to stage a November spotlight on this hidden killer disease.

Mouth Cancer Action Week takes place from November 16 to 22, as campaign organisers take up on a new, positive stance against the condition. The new Action Week replaces the former Mouth Cancer Awareness Week name, as the BDHF together with health professionals across the land take action on this disease, which kills more people than cervical and testicular cancer combined. However, in the light of this, a fifth of the UK population still remain unaware of mouth cancer, with which nearly 5,000 are diagnosed annually. Mortality figures have remained above 1,500 deaths per year for a decade for mouth cancer, which kills someone every five hours in the UK.

The BDHF’s Blue Ribbon Badge campaign is continuing to promote awareness by sending badges and collection boxes to dental practices, doctor’s surgeries, pharmacies and health centres across the country, which will be on-sale to the public, with the key message: ‘If in doubt, get checked out.’

Easily recognisable symptoms and regular check-ups can boost survival rates to 90 per cent with early detection. But survival rates once mouth cancer has spread can be as low as 50 per cent.

Foundation chief executive Dr Nigel Carter BDS LDS (RCS) said: ‘Our slogan reinforces our call to action. We are encouraging the public and the health profession to wear their Blue Ribbons with pride, and not only talk about mouth cancer but take positive steps. Action can be as simple as visiting the dentist regularly to making lifestyle choices such as quitting smoking or drinking in moderation.’

Early detection of mouth cancer can save lives, so people should look out for ulcers which don’t heal, red and white patches in the mouth or other unusual changes.

Common causes are smoking, chewing tobacco, drinking to excess and poor diets. Links have also been found between oral sex and mouth cancer.

For more information or for order forms for Blue Ribbon Badge campaign collection boxes, log onto: www.mouthcancer.org.