Dental Nurse

Introduction

Dental nurses' main role is to help the dentist during the treatment of patients. They make sure equipment and materials are ready, disinfect clinical areas, and greet patients. They help during treatment by preparing patients, mixing materials for fillings and anticipating the dentist's needs. Some also act as receptionists, for example, booking appointments and dealing with payments.

Also known as

- Dental Surgery Assistant

Work Activities

As a Dental Nurse, you might be the first person the patient sees when they enter the building. You must greet each patient in a professional and caring manner. People can be very nervous when going to the Dentist, so you can help to put them at ease.

During treatment, you'll mix the materials and hand the right instruments to the Dentist when they need them. You will take notes from the Dentist's instructions and monitor the patient to make sure they are comfortable.

You will use equipment to remove saliva and water from instruments, which also makes it easier for the Dentist to see what they're doing.

After treatment, you must sterilise the instruments. You are also responsible for controlling infection within the surgery. You'll prepare permanent filling materials and temporary dressings, and process X-rays.

An important role for you as a Dental Nurse is to make sure the surgery is clean at the end of the day. You must file patient records correctly and securely. You will also have to prepare any records that will be needed for the next day, and do any other administrative tasks.

You may be responsible for ordering stock and equipment. At times, you might have to work in the reception, answering the telephone, greeting patients, taking payments and booking appointments over the phone or face to face.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Dental Nurse, you'll need:

- a confident, friendly, outgoing personality
- the ability to calm and reassure anxious patients
- good hand skills and attention to detail
- organisational skills
- the ability to act quickly and calmly under pressure
- teamwork skills to work as part of the dental team
- stamina and physical fitness; this job usually involves spending a lot of time on your feet
- the ability to take accurate notes

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

NHS employees are paid on a rising scale within defined pay bands, according to their skills and responsibilities. The pay rates given below are approximate.
• Starting: Band 2 pay of £17,460 - £18,702
• With experience: Band 4 pay of £20,150 - £23,363
• Senior Dental Nurses earn Band 5 pay of £23,023 - £29,608

**Hours of work**

You will usually work 9:00 am - 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday. You may also have to work on Saturdays.

**Where could I work?**

Dental Nurses work in general dental practices, the NHS (in hospitals and the community) and the armed forces.

Opportunities for Dental Nurses occur in towns, cities and rural areas throughout the UK. Most Dental Nurses work in general practice.

**Where are vacancies advertised?**

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

**Entry Routes and Training**

**Entry routes**

Dental Nurses must be registered with the General Dental Council (GDC). This means that your name must be on the GDC's Dental Care Professionals Register.

To register, you need to complete one of the following qualifications:

• national diploma in dental nursing (National Examining Board for Dental Nurses NEBDN)
• City & Guilds level 3 diploma in dental nursing
• certificate of higher education (CertHE) in dental nursing from the Universities of Cardiff, Teesside or Portsmouth
• foundation degree in dental nursing from the University of Northampton
• CACHE level 3 diploma in the principles and practice of dental nursing

People who already have other qualifications not listed here might still be able to register. Please contact the GDC for advice.

For a full list of approved courses, please see the GDC website.

An Advanced Level Apprenticeship is also a great place to start. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

**Training**

Most entrants start by finding work in a general dental practice. They have practical on-the-job training. Some might have time off to study towards either the national certificate in dental nursing or the level 3 diploma in dental nursing. Others do this study in the evenings, after work.

You can also join the armed forces and train to be a Dental Nurse, gaining either the national certificate or the level 3 diploma.
It's also possible to enter and train through an Advanced Level Apprenticeship in health - dental nursing, leading to the level 3 diploma.

**Progression**

You could be promoted to a Team Leader post. With further training, Dental Nurses can go on to become Dental Hygienists or Dental Therapists. It is also possible to go into a dental teaching role.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act**

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

**Work Experience**

Previous experience within a caring role such as in a care home or a hospital will be really useful for this career.

**Qualifications**

You can start work without any qualifications, training towards a dental nursing qualification while in employment. However, most employers and colleges will look for a good general education. Some might ask for GCSEs; English, maths and science or biology are useful.

Entry requirements for training courses will also vary between training providers. For example, some national certificate or level 3 diploma in dental nursing courses have no entry requirements, while some providers ask for 2 to 5 GCSEs (A*-C or 9-4), perhaps to include English, maths, science or biology.

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

**Courses**

Entry to this career is also possible through an Advanced Level Apprenticeship in Health - Dental Nursing.

**Statistics**

- 15% of dental nurses work part-time.

**Further Information**

**Professional institutions**

Professional institutions have the following roles:

- To support their members.
- To protect the public by keeping standards high in their professions.

For more information on the institution(s) relevant to this career, check out the contacts below.

**Contacts**
• **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**  
  National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)  
  Tel: 0800 015 0400  
  Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk  
  Website: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

• **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**  
  Tel: 0800 9178000  
  Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk  
  Website: [www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships)

• **City & Guilds**  
  Address: 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD  
  Tel: 020 7294 2468  
  Email: learnersupport@cityandguilds.com  
  Website: [www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com)

• **Health Careers**  

• **NHS Wales Careers**  
  Publisher: National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare  
  Email: abm.wedsteam@wales.nhs.uk  
  Website: [www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/829/page/36090)

• **NHS Jobs**  
  Website: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)

• **Step into the NHS**  
  NHS careers  
  Tel: 0345 6060655  
  Website: [www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk](http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk)

• **Skills for Health**  
  Skills for the health sector  
  Address: Goldsmiths House, Broad Plain, Bristol BS2 0JP  
  Tel: 0117 9221155  
  Email: office@skillsforhealth.org.uk  
  Website: [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

• **NHS Education for Scotland (NES)**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Address: Westport 102, West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN  
  Tel: 0131 6563200  
  Email: enquiries@nes.scot.nhs.uk  
  Website: [www.nes.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk)

• **British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN)**  
  Address: PO Box 4, Room 200, Hillhouse International Business Centre, Thornton-Cleveleys FY5 4QD  
  Tel: 01253 338360  
  Email: admin@badn.org.uk  
  Website: [www.badn.org.uk](http://www.badn.org.uk)

• **British Dental Association (BDA)**  
  Address: 64 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8YS  
  Tel: 020 7935 0875  
  Email: enquiries@bda.org  
  Website: [www.bda.org](http://www.bda.org)

• **General Dental Council (GDC)**  
  Address: 37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ
• **British Dental Association (BDA) Scotland**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Address: Forsyth House, Lomond Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TU  
  Tel: 01786 476040  
  Email: enquiries@bda.org  
  Website: [scotland.bda.org](http://scotland.bda.org)

• **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**  
  Tel: 0800 028 4844  
  Website: [ams.careerswales.com/](http://ams.careerswales.com/)

• **National Examining Board for Dental Nurses**  
  Tel: 01772 429917  
  Email: info@nebdn.org  
  Website: [www.nebdn.org/](http://www.nebdn.org/)

**Related Careers**

- Dental Technician
- Dentist
- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Therapist
- Orthodontist
- Periodontist