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

Dental nurses might be the first person the patient sees when they enter the building. The nurse must greet each patient in a professional and caring manner.

During treatment, the dental nurse mixes materials and hands the right instruments to the dentist when they need them. The nurse takes notes from the dentist's instructions and monitors the patient to make sure they are comfortable.

The dental nurse uses equipment to remove saliva and water from instruments, which also makes it easier for the dentist to see what they're doing.

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

Dental nurses make sure the surgery is clean at the end of the day. They have to prepare any records that will be needed for the next day, and do any other administrative tasks.

Dental nurses may be responsible for ordering stock and equipment. At times, they 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 be 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.
In the NHS, dental nurses earn in the range of £16,110 - £21,798 a year. People with higher-level responsibilities, such as dental nurse team managers and tutors, can earn between £25,472 and £34,189 a year.

**Hours of work**

Dental nurses usually work 9:00 am - 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday. They 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, at Jobcentre Plus and on the Universal Jobmatch website, on the NHS Jobs website, and on job boards.

**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 Certificate in Dental Nursing.
- 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.

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

The following has provisional approval. The GDC doesn't give full approval until the first group of students has finished the course. The GDC inspects the course provider's exams before granting approval. Please contact this course provider for more information.

- Barts and The London NHS Trust: Diploma in Dental Nursing.

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

An Advanced Level Apprenticeship is also a great place to start.

**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.

**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), perhaps to include English, Maths, Science or Biology.

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C 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)
  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
• Health Careers
  Website: www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

• 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

• NHS Jobs
  Website: www.jobs.nhs.uk

• Step into the NHS
  NHS careers
  Tel: 0345 6060655
  Website: www.stepintothennhs.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

• 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

• 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

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

• General Dental Council (GDC)
  Address: 37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ
  Tel: 0845 2224141
  Website: www.gdc-uk.org

• 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

• Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships
  Tel: 0800 028 4844
  Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers
• Dental Technician
• Dentist
• Dental Hygienist
• Dental Therapist