A Career in Dental Hygiene and Therapy
The role and responsibility of the Dental Hygienist-Therapist

Dental Hygienist-Therapists are members of the group of dental care professionals (DCPs) who work as part of the dental team. They undertake the prevention and treatment of oral disease.

A Dental Hygienist-Therapist is able to work in all branches of dentistry including general dental practice, hospital and community services, in industry and within the armed forces. They may also set up an independent practice or choose to work in an academic environment such as in teaching or research.
The role of the Dental Hygienist-Therapist

The role of a Dental Hygienist-Therapist encompasses:

- Provision of advice on smoking cessation, nutrition, fluoride and prevention of oral disease
- Provision of periodontal therapy (scaling and polishing of teeth)
- Application of antimicrobial agents
- Administering local anaesthesia
- Monitoring oral disease
- Screening for oral cancer
- Placing restorations (fillings) in deciduous and permanent teeth
- Undertaking treatment of the pulp of deciduous teeth
- Placing preformed crowns on deciduous teeth
- Extracting deciduous teeth
- Taking dental radiographs
- Taking dental impressions
- Providing emergency replacement of crowns and bridges
General Dental Council (GDC) – Regulation and Professional Registration

The GDC is the organisation which regulates dental professionals in the United Kingdom. It is a legal requirement that all dentists, dental nurses, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental therapists and orthodontic therapists must be registered with the GDC in order to work in the United Kingdom. Dental nurses, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental hygienists and dental therapists are known as Dental Care Professionals (DCPs)

The GDC aims to protect patients within the United Kingdom by regulating dental staff, assuring the quality of dental education and setting standards for conduct that all dental professionals must adhere to.

Dental Hygiene-therapists in training are temporarily exempt from this requirement but must be able to demonstrate that they are working towards one of the registerable qualifications on a recognised training programme. However students must abide by the GDC ‘Student Fitness to Practice’ guidelines and be able to demonstrate during their pre-registration training that they have the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of a dental care professional.

For more information on the GDC, access their website at www.gdc-uk.org
Training

Dental Hygienist-Therapist education in Scotland is presently available in several regions with varying qualification outcomes:

**BSc in Oral Health Sciences**
- Glasgow Caledonian University - 3 years duration
- University of Dundee - 3 years duration
- University of Highlands & Islands/NES, Inverness and Dumfries - 3 years duration

**BSc(Hons) in Oral Health Sciences**
- University of Edinburgh - 4 years duration

The entry requirements

Each education establishment has different entry requirements. Please visit the websites below to view these:

- University of Edinburgh  [www.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ed.ac.uk)
- University of Dundee  [www.dundee.ac.uk](http://www.dundee.ac.uk)
- University of Highlands & Islands  [www.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.uhi.ac.uk)
- Glasgow Caledonian University  [www.gcu.ac.uk](http://www.gcu.ac.uk)
Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provides evidence that a registered DCP’s:

- Knowledge is up to date and relevant to practice
- Professional performance is up to the standards needed to maintain registration
- Behaviour meets the standard set out in the GDC’s guidance “Standards for the Dental Team”.

The GDC require that all registered DCPs complete at least 150 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) every five years to maintain registration.

CPD should include the following subjects:

- Medical Emergencies (at least 10 hours)
- Radiology and Radiation Protection (at least 5 hours)
- Disinfection and Decontamination (at least 5 hours)

The GDC also recommend that registrants keep up to date by doing CPD in the following areas:

- Legal and ethical issues
- Complaint handling
- Oral cancer early detection

Further Qualifications

Masters Degrees in a number of subject areas eg Education, Public Health, Health Promotion etc

BSc/MSc in Dental Primary Care
Contact details

The following regional contacts can provide information on training and development opportunities for DCPs in your area.

**Lead DCP Tutor**
Aberdeen Dental Education Centre
Argyll House
Foresterhill
Cornhill Road
Aberdeen
AB25 2ZR
T 01224 559708
E caroline.taylor@nes.scot.nhs.uk

**Lead DCP Tutor**
Dental Office
NHS Education for Scotland
The Centre for Health Science
Old Perth Road
Inverness
IV2 3JH
T 01463 255722
E teresa.ross@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Lead DCP Tutor
Dundee Dental Education Centre
Frankland Building
Smalls Wynd
Perth Road
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T 01382 425771
E anne.crowe@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Lead DCP Tutor
Edinburgh Dental Education Centre
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Lauriston Place
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Lead DCP Tutor
NHS Education for Scotland
Ground Floor
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1 Clifton Place
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E margaret.saunderson@nes.scot.nhs.uk