

# Becoming a Dental Practice Manager

What help is available?

What training is available?

What can I do to prepare myself for further training?

## 1. Becoming a Practice Manager

### 1.1 The Job

A fully skilled Practice Manager ensures that all the non-clinical aspects of a practice i.e. the business of dentistry are managed so that the partners are free to concentrate on clinical issues.

Irrespective of how practices are funded i.e. sole ownership, partnerships, with or without associates, with private and/or NHS funding they all require a similar management framework.

The roles and responsibilities of the Practice Manager may differ from practice to practice but would include:-

- **General Management** – daily office organisation, patient accounts, debt control, complaints, recall system, policies & procedures, clinical governance, rotas, staff meetings and ethical & statutory requirements.
- **Health & Safety Management** – relevant legislation, COSHH, risk assessments, fire, first aid & RIDDOR, disposal of waste, safe working procedures and training of staff.
- **Human Resource Management** – relevant legislation, recruitment process, job descriptions, contracts of employment, induction training, appraisal system, disciplinary & grievance proceedings, PAYE and recording holidays, sickness etc.
- **IT & Technology Management** – organisation and maintenance of the practice computer system.
- **Physical Resource Management** – maintain existing equipment and premises

- **Financial Management** – monitor cash flow, supply end of year information to accountants, obtain grants & allowances, practice insurances, purchasing, stock control and submission of GP17s to Practitioner Services.
- **Marketing** – develop new strategies for marketing the practice, planning and overseeing new services, client communication materials, patient surveys and advertising.
- **Strategic Planning** – SWOT analysis, set objectives, set targets to measure performance and review processes. Change management & managing efficiently.

## 1.2 The Skills

Some Practice Managers will be registered dental nurses others will come from an administrative or business background.

Practice Managers need to have excellent interpersonal skills and be able to lead effectively in sometimes challenging situations. They must be able to communicate with a wide range of people from different walks of life and be able to lead and manage change.

A Practice Manager needs to have a good understanding of IT, its benefits and risks and be able to manage the implementation of new systems.

## 1.3 The Practicalities of the Role

Some practices offer early and late appointments and some surgeries open on a Saturday morning. Practice Managers and their staff need to work flexibly to cover the opening hours of the Surgery.

A starting salary, negotiated at time of appointment would rise in line with length of service and experience.

Whilst a newly appointed Practice Manager does not have to be an expert on every aspect of Practice business, they must ensure that these skills and knowledge are available within the overall team and are used as effectively as possible. Clearly the more a candidate can offer the better, but people coming into practice management from outwith dentistry will need to learn some of this from scratch and the business will need to keep going meantime. One of the most important skills is to be able to get on with all kinds of people in all kinds of circumstances and have the resolve to deal with difficulties effectively finding solutions to problems and helping teams engage to increase performance.

## 2. What Help is Available/What Training is Available?

### 2.1 Training and Development Opportunities

There are no specific entry requirements to the position of Practice Manager but increasingly, owing to the complicated nature of the role, candidates will offer a range of professional skills. Employers will expect their Practice Manager to be an experienced middle manager.

Many Practice Managers already hold first or second degrees. On the job training can be difficult because often it is only the Practice Manager who holds such a position within the practice. Therefore, peer support and mentoring can be difficult to find.

**NHS Education for Scotland** delivers a course tailored specifically to the role of the Practice Manager. The course is delivered over a year and is entitled the 'Professional Development Award in Dental Practice Management'. This is an SQA qualification at SCQF level 8 and it includes units specific to Dental Practice Management.

**NES** also supports the provision of CPD training opportunities delivered throughout the regions. CPD courses can be viewed on Portal <https://portal.scot.nhs.uk/>

The **Association of Dental Administrators and Managers** provides training opportunities for members together with excellent support in the form of Advice Sheets, templates etc. [www.adam-aspire.co.uk](http://www.adam-aspire.co.uk)

## 3. What Can I Do To Prepare Myself for Further Training?

NES also offers a Professional Development Award in Dental and Medical Reception Skills. This is an SQA qualification at SCQF level 6 and is a very good 'stepping stone' for new Practice Managers who wish to go on to study for the PDA in Dental Practice Management. This course is also delivered in various locations in Scotland.

