THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DENTAL NURSE

DENTAL NURSES ARE MEMBERS OF A GROUP OF DENTAL CARE PROFESSIONALS (DCPS) WHO PLAY A VITAL ROLE WITHIN A DENTAL TEAM AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE IN CLINICAL AND NON CLINICAL ASPECTS OF PATIENT CARE.

A dental nurse is able to work in all branches of dentistry including general dental practice, dental hospital, public dental services, and within the armed forces.

THE ROLE OF A DENTAL NURSE

The role of a dental nurse encompasses:

• Preparing and maintaining the dental equipment, instruments and materials within a dental surgery
• Carrying out infection control and decontamination procedures
• Recording dental charting carried out by clinicians
• Preparing, mixing and handling dental materials
• Providing chair-side support to dentists, therapists and hygienists throughout a range of dental procedures
• Providing support and reassurance to patients
• Providing administration support in making appointments, taking payments and dealing with paperwork.

An experienced dental nurse will use his/her knowledge of dentistry to anticipate what is needed during treatment sessions, a skill that is highly valued by the clinician.
REGULATION AND PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION WITH THE GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL (GDC)

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 Nurses 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 Professionalism and Fitness to Practise’.

A named supervising GDC registrant must take full responsibility for providing direct supervision of a trainee dental nurse. However, according to the ability and progress of the trainee, supervision may be delegated (if appropriate) to other GDC registrants. The named supervising registrant will continue to be accountable overall for the trainee throughout the training.

For more information on the GDC and their guidance for students and registrants please access their website at www.gdc-uk.org.

TRAINING

Training will begin on the first working day in employment as a trainee dental nurse. In Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) recognises the importance of ensuring all staff begin their work in a positive and supportive environment and provide a Dental Nurse Induction Programme, which is a blended learning package. This programme enables trainee dental nurses to gain the essential knowledge and skills to work safely in practice before commencing a pre-registration programme. Upon successful completion of the Dental Nurse Induction Programme, trainee dental nurses can be awarded The National Unit: Introduction to Safe Working Practices within the Dental Environment SCQF Level 5, awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Following successful completion of an induction programme, trainee dental nurses must register and successfully complete one of the following qualifications to enable registration with the GDC as a dental nurse:

- Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Level 3 in Dental Nursing and Professional Development Award (PDA) in Dental Nursing, awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) or
- National Diploma in Dental Nursing, awarded by The National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN)

These qualifications are awarded to dental nurses who have successfully achieved the examination criteria. NHS Education for Scotland has five dental education centres that deliver the SVQ & PDA in Dental Nursing qualifications.
FURTHER QUALIFICATIONS

There are a wide range of opportunities available to enable registered dental nurses to develop their knowledge and skills and extend their role within their professional scope of practice. Examples include impression taking, taking dental radiographs and clinical photographs, upon prescription from a dentist.

THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your local educational provider will stipulate any specific qualifications they require for registering in their training programme. Typical entry qualifications sought may include three qualifications at SCQF Level 4 (National 4 or above) or above in Maths, English and a science, for example: Biology.

Employers will expect a friendly, responsible attitude and positive approach to people. The dental nurse must be well presented and show a willingness to study, a team player, with good written and oral communication skills and excellent organisational skills and good manual dexterity.

Following successful completion of a dental nurse qualification and registration with the GDC dental nurses are required to complete at least 50 hours of verifiable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities over a five-year period. This purpose of CPD is to maintain skills, knowledge and competence, and registration with the GDC.
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
Aberdeen
AB25 2ZR
T: 01224 559708
E: caroline.taylor@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Lead DCP Tutor
Dundee Dental Education Centre
Frankland Building
Smallis Wynd
Perth Road
Dundee
DD1 4HN
T: 01382 425771
E: jenne.crowe@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Lead DCP Tutor
NHS Education for Scotland
2 Central Quay
89 Hydepark Street
Glasgow
G3 8BW
T: 0141 223 1400/1401
E: margaret.saunderson@nes.scot.nhs.uk

DCP HUB: dcp.hub@nes.scot.nhs.uk