

NHS

Careers

Careers in dental care

Join the team and
make a difference



Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 350 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your interests, skills or qualifications.

What's more, no matter which career you choose within the dental care team, you'll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones – our commitment to skills development. See pages 10 and 11 for more information about the Career Framework, which is relevant for dental nurses, hygienists, therapists and technicians.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, health informatics staff and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!

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Foreword

In this booklet, you'll find out about the different careers in the dental team. Dental care is an important part of the NHS – as well as looking after the nation's teeth, gums and mouths the team contributes to the wider care of patients.

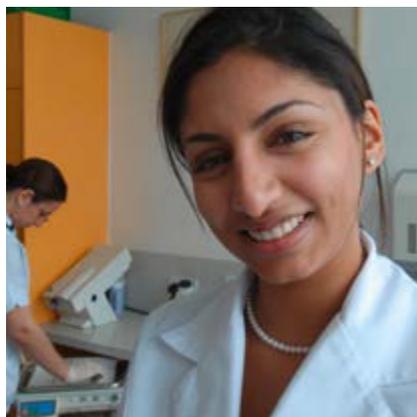
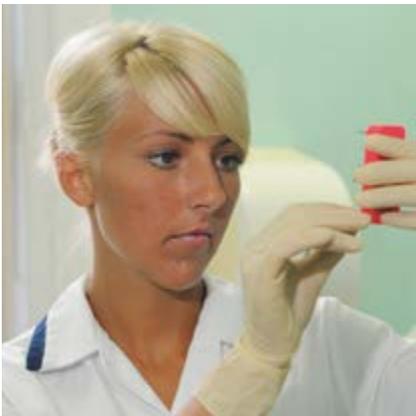
In joining the team, you'll have day-to-day contact with a wide range of people and your work will make a real difference to their lives. As the stories in this booklet show, you will have a responsible and rewarding job that comes with all the benefits and flexibility of working in the NHS.

Whatever your academic background, you can find a role that's right for you. We offer a flexible working environment, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career. In addition, many people who work in the dental team are self-employed and this gives you different options on how to further your career.

The NHS Careers team

For more information about working in the dental care team please visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dental

If you have any questions, call our helpline on 0345 60 60 655 or email
advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk



The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are few careers that are as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a variety of people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people, committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

Benefits of working for the NHS

Every NHS employee is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

On top of your basic salary, NHS employees will receive at least 27 days' holiday, not including public holidays and statutory days each year, plus a range of other benefits, including health and counselling services.

Most members of the dental team work in high street dental practices delivering NHS dental care. They are either self-employed, employed by the dental practice or employed by a company. Terms and conditions of service can vary and it's important to ask about these when applying for a job.

Join one of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits. All dentists can join the NHS Pension Scheme, and other members of the team can join if they are NHS employees – that is, not self-employed or employed by a company or practice.

For more information about the pension scheme, and a full list of the benefits included, please visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

PAY AND CONDITIONS

Agenda for Change

The NHS pay system, known as Agenda for Change, offers real benefits for directly employed staff. This system applies to members of the dental care team, except dentists themselves (as well as doctors and very senior managers).

The benefits include:

- a standard working week of 37.5 hours
- holiday entitlements of 27 days per year, plus eight general and public holidays rising to 33 days after ten years' service
- pay enhancements to reward out of hours, shift and overtime working

- better career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

To find out more about the different Agenda for Change pay bands, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, visit
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payrates



FULFIL YOUR POTENTIAL

- The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff.
- No matter where you start within the NHS, you'll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation.
- You will receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.
- As part of the Knowledge and Skills Framework, within Agenda for Change, members of the dental team employed directly by the NHS will be encouraged to extend their range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities.

See pages 12 and 13 for more on the Career Framework and an example of how an employee has progressed through the NHS.

CASE STUDY

Name: Samantha English

Job title: qualified dental nurse, NHS Bury

Entry route: dental nurse cadet scheme

Samantha English has found that a dental nurse cadetship has been a great way to start her career as a dental nurse. Now qualified, she's keen to develop her skills further.

Ever since I was young, I knew I wanted to work with people – at the surgery, we see patients of all ages, from young children to the elderly and I enjoy working in a busy community setting.



I found out about dental nursing through a careers day at school, and after finishing college I applied to join the dental cadet scheme at the NHS Academy North West. It was hard work learning at the same time as doing the job, but the cadet coordinators and practice staff were really supportive.

Dental nursing involves a really wide range of day-to-day jobs. Some are technical, such as decontaminating and preparing equipment, assisting with different types of dental procedure, and processing x-rays. Others, like writing patient notes and arranging appointments and taking telephone calls, need accuracy. Reassuring patients, and explaining about the treatment is also an important part of the job and requires empathy and communication skills – so it's quite hard work, but very rewarding.

I'd like to develop my range of skills by completing an Oral Health Education Certificate so that I can give health advice to patients, and also a qualification in dental radiography so that I can take x-rays. Once I have enough experience, I'd like to work in a hospital or in primary care – there are quite a few different options.

I found out about dental nursing through a careers day at school

Helping you find the right work-life balance

The NHS is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all NHS staff. There is a real focus on specific areas that are designed to make your life easier at certain times during your career. These include:

- flexible working and flexible retirement
- childcare provision and support for carers in the workplace
- coping with stress
- training and development
- tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment.

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces

Manage your commitments in and out of work

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Part-time roles and job-share opportunities are available in some jobs. We will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life – whether you're studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full time.

We will help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, if you work for the NHS, you will also have access to a range of childcare services, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care.

Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits



Your career in dental care

Providing dental care for the community or in an acute setting is a team responsibility. Each member of the dental team has an important role to play in promoting and maintaining dental health. If you like the idea of working with people, doing a job that's respected and offers flexibility and security, a career with the dental team could be right for you.

There's a range of different employment arrangements for members of the dental team. People working in general practice will either be employed by, or be partners in, a dental practice; some may be self-employed, dividing their time between different practices and other settings for providing care. Dental staff working in hospitals are usually employed directly by an NHS employer and some staff working in dental teaching hospitals are employed by universities.

Whatever your role, you'll be making a big contribution to improving the oral health of the nation. In recent years, the number of fillings needed has reduced and more of us are looking after our teeth better. What's more, the skills of the dental team, coupled with advances in dentistry, mean that a visit to the dentist is seen as a positive way to support health and well-being. There are still high levels of gum disease to cope with and other diseases of the mouth. Most dental diseases are preventable and so it is important that all member of the dental team are skilled and qualified.

Who's who in the dental team

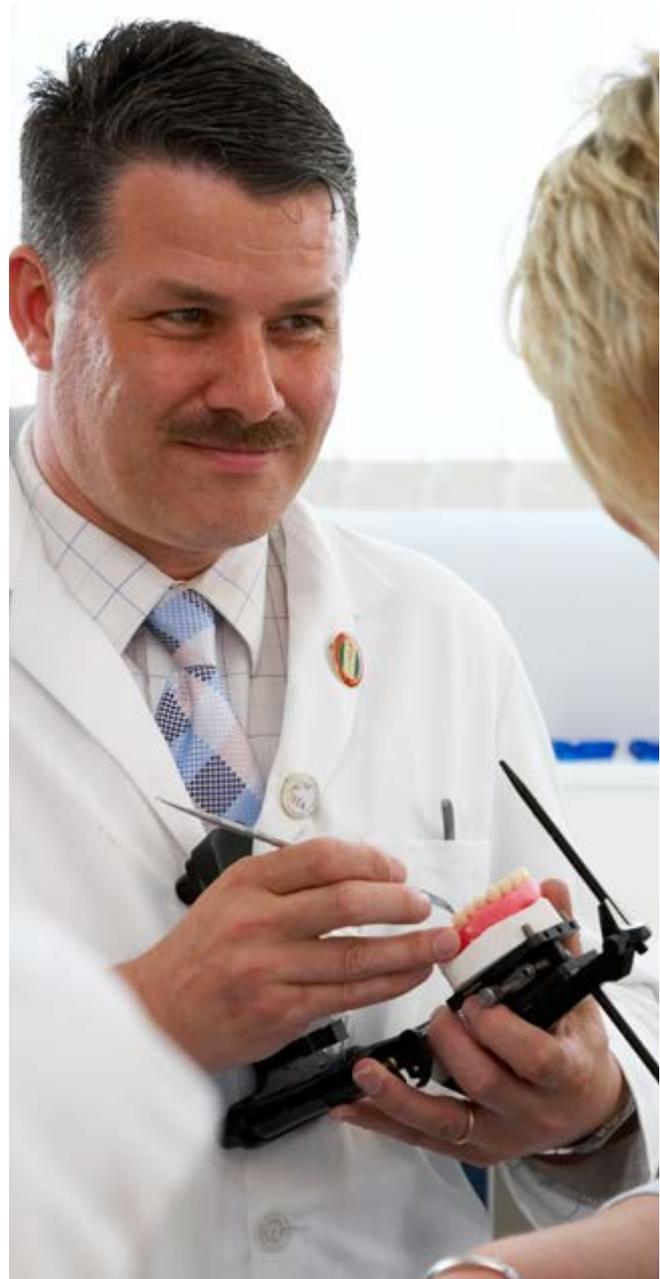
Dentists

Dentists lead the dental team. You'll need the skills and confidence to diagnose and treat problems and provide good advice to patients, as well as having high levels of manual dexterity to carry out intricate surgical and dental procedures. You will have excellent knowledge of human anatomy, and oral diseases, as well as first-class clinical skills.

Most dentists work as general practitioners so, on the whole, your patients will come from your local community. You will need to be able to communicate well with everyone from toddlers to

the elderly. It's also important for you to be able to lead your team effectively, so you'll need good managerial and administrative skills.

An increasing amount of a dentist's work is preventive, protecting teeth and gums from decay and disease. When your patients do have problems, you'll need to put them at ease, gain their confidence and deal sympathetically with their fears. You will hold a position of trust, so you will need to behave with integrity, tact and understanding.



Dental nurses

On a typical day as a dental nurse, you'll be helping dental professionals such as dentists, dental technicians/technologists, hygienists and therapists treat more than 30 patients of all ages. Some will just be there for a check-up while others will have more complicated treatment. You'll need to reassure people and put them at ease, while supporting the dentist in all aspects of patient care. It is a responsible and rewarding job.

No two days, or patients, will be the same. You will be the sort of person who enjoys variety and wants to understand everything that goes on in the surgery or clinic.

In a dental practice you will not only welcome patients but provide direct support with the treatment itself, take responsibility for the decontamination of instruments, maintenance of dental operating equipment and ensure that all relevant materials and supplies are in place. You will look after patient records – including making notes when the dentist is examining a patient. You will work closely with the dentist, responding quickly to requests and generally keeping the surgery ready for use. You will be responsible for ensuring high standards of cleanliness and control of infection, with extra training you could take x-rays and clinical photographs, take impressions, make models of teeth and apply fluoride varnish to prevent tooth decay.

You may also help with reception work. Tact and discretion are important qualities for a dental nurse, as you will be handling confidential patient information and caring for people who may be anxious.

Dental hygienists

As a dental hygienist, your main role is to help stop problems arising in the first place. You will show children and adults how to look after their teeth and gums. This may be on an individual basis or to groups. Many dental hygienists lead teams of oral health educators. You will also work inside patients' mouths, scaling, at times under local anaesthetic and polishing teeth and applying sealants (coatings that protect teeth). Your work will save teeth by



preventing and treating gum disease, helping people get rid of associated problems like bad breath. The dentist will usually advise you and help direct your work, although it is now possible for hygienists and therapists who have extra training to set up their own practices or work independently without patients having to see a dentist.

If you work in a hospital, you will help patients who may have had major surgery or complicated orthodontic treatment to correct irregularities of the teeth. Patients may be very ill, apprehensive or unsure after life-changing surgery. Good people and communication skills are very important for all dental hygienists. In the community, you could be working with people with a wide variety of special or additional needs.

CASE STUDY

Name: Dave Martin

Job title: dental therapist, Manchester

Entry route: apprentice dental technician

Dave Martin is a great example of how determination, together with support from the NHS, can help you develop your career in the dental team.

Although I started out working in a dental laboratory, after a while I wanted to get involved in the clinical side of things. I worked for a short while as a dental nurse, and then trained for two years full time to be a dental hygienist. I followed that with two years part-time training as a dental therapist.



The NHS helped me to move up the career ladder, by supporting my training.

The role of dental therapist is a relatively new one. Dentists are beginning to realise that we can make a real difference in helping to cut waiting times for patients. For example, I see around 12 patients on a typical day. It means the practice as a whole can see more people more quickly – and that’s really important if you are a patient in pain.

One of the joys of the job is helping someone who is nervous get through their treatment and become more confident. I like the huge range of patients you see in the NHS.

It’s good to work with children – teaching them good habits that will keep their teeth and gums healthy.

I am self-employed and I work in different practices, carrying out routine work under the direction of the dentist, allowing the dentist to focus on more advanced procedures.

I really enjoy the job and earn a good living!

One of the joys of the job is helping someone who is nervous get through their treatment and become more confident

Dental therapists

Dental therapists are increasingly important members of the dental team especially as they are also qualified as dental hygienists. More and more dentists are adding therapists to the practice team to handle much of the routine dental work. However, many dental therapists also provide treatment in a variety of places in the community, such as schools and care homes.

You'll be carrying out simple fillings on adults and children, or extracting 'baby' teeth under local anaesthetic. You will do scaling and polishing, allowing dentists to devote time to more advanced work. Health education is also an important part of the role, and the work you do is likely to be directed by a dentist, unless you have had extra training and experience.

If you work in a dental practice, being a therapist gives you independence without the full responsibility of running a practice. You will need the confidence to work on your own and the ability to put even the youngest of patients at ease. Much of your work is likely to be with children, older people and those with special needs.

Dental hygienists and dental therapists, who work in hospitals and some other NHS posts, are sometimes known as oral health practitioners.

Dental technicians/dental technologists

As a dental technician (sometimes known as a dental technologist), you support the dental team by making the dentures, crowns, bridges and braces that can improve a patient's appearance, speech and ability to chew. You could be making braces to straighten a teenager's teeth.

Working to dentists' or doctors' prescriptions, technicians use a wide range of materials to design and construct appliances to meet each patient's needs. As well as knowing about the properties of these materials, you will need an excellent understanding of dental and facial anatomy. You might also have some artistic ability. Although much of the work is done by hand, you will also work with specialised equipment in the laboratory. Since each patient is unique, absolute precision is essential if a device is to be comfortable and effective for the patient.

Dental technicians may also work directly with patients in a clinic alongside a dentist or clinical dental technician.

Clinical dental technicians

Clinical dental technicians have undertaken specific clinical training to design, create, construct, modify and fit removable dental appliances for patients. In this role you are able to provide dentures direct to patients with no natural teeth. For patients with some teeth, you can provide what are known as partial dentures, but only when working with a dentist. You would also check on the patient's general dental welfare.

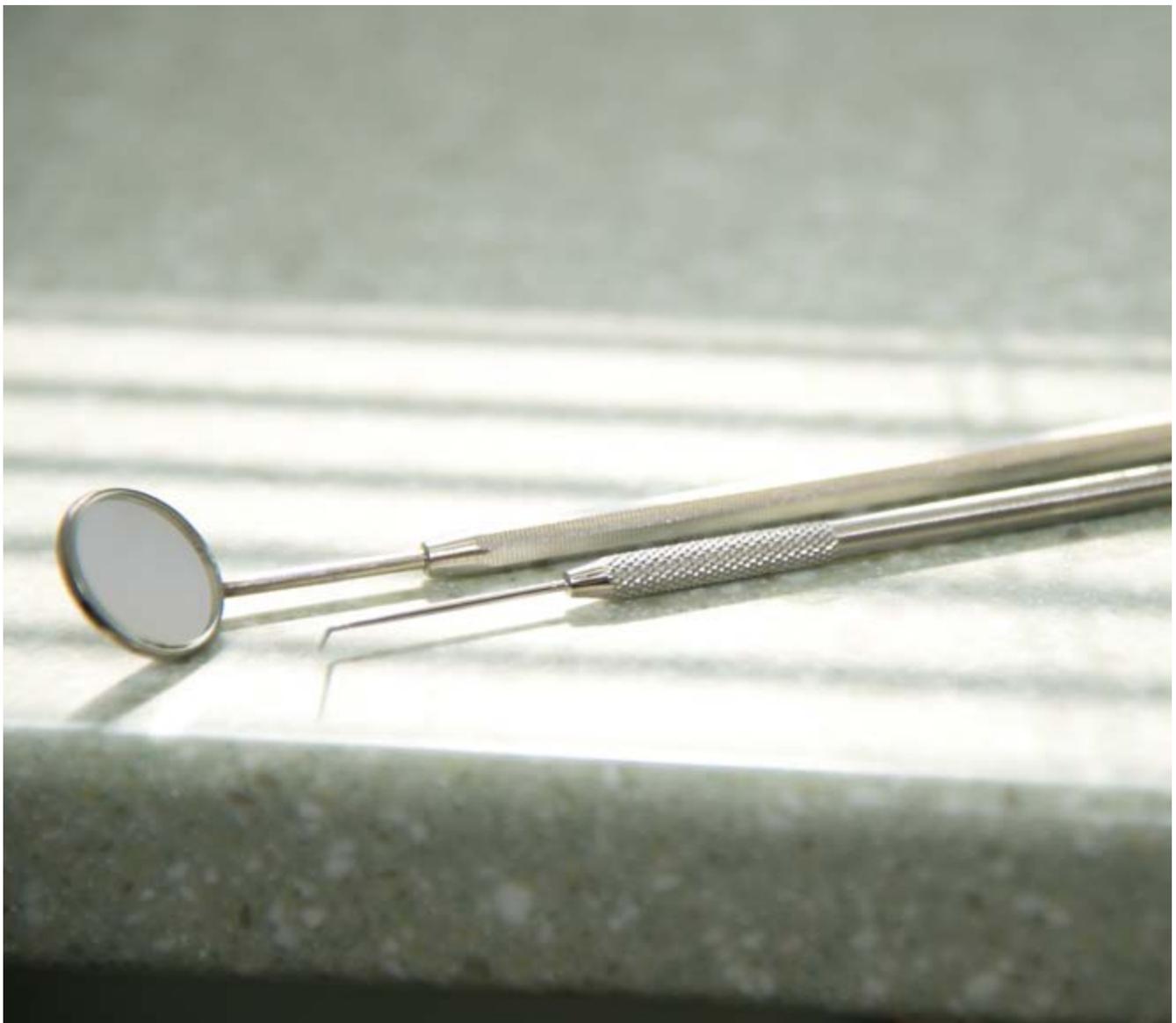
To find out more about the qualifications needed to work in the dental care team, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining

Orthodontic therapists

Orthodontic therapists are generally dental nurses with additional training who assist dentists when they are carrying out orthodontic treatment. Under the direction of a dentist or orthodontist, you will provide treatment including impression taking, fitting brackets and wires and giving oral hygiene instructions directly to patients. You might also help patients in an emergency by providing pain relief.

Is the dental team right for you?

There are some qualities that are needed by everyone working in the dental team. Among these is a willingness to learn and to understand the science behind dentistry. A key part of the role would be handling of dental instruments with confidence while working inside someone's mouth. Good eyesight is also important as you will be carrying out precision work. You will need to be able to offer advice and educate others and have excellent people skills – you'll be dealing with a broad range of people, each with their own characteristics and concerns. You must also be happy to work as part of a team.



CASE STUDY

Name: Neil Valder

Job title: medical technical officer (orthodontic laboratory manager), Eastman Dental Hospital (part of University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)

Entry route: City and Guilds training scheme

Neil had always enjoyed working with his hands at school and was looking for a career that was practically orientated. A teacher at his school suggested he consider a career in dentistry, so he applied to the City and Guilds training scheme and never looked back!

I started my NHS career in 1973 as a band 4 trainee dental technician at the Eastman Dental Hospital via the three-year City and Guilds training scheme. The course really allowed us trainees to experience both practical and theoretical training at the college, and then to apply that knowledge when working with patients at the hospital.

After I completed the course, I was offered a permanent job at the Eastman Dental Hospital as a band 5 basic grade technician. I worked in this role for a year and was then given the opportunity to



study for an advanced City and Guilds certificate in orthodontic technology. I was promoted to a band 6 senior dental technician where I learnt to construct more complicated appliances. After a few years in this role, I was promoted again to a band 7 chief dental technician, where I took a more active role in the running of the lab and supervising the more junior staff. In 1996, I successfully applied for the position of senior chief dental technician. The role later changed to orthodontic lab manager, but both were graded at band 8a.

In the lab, I supervise three dental technicians and a laboratory administrator and we provide appliances to more than 40 clinicians.

I really enjoy working closely with clinicians and advising them about appliance designs that are suitable for their patients' treatment plans. Here at the Eastman Dental Hospital, I liaise with clinicians in the paediatrics department to construct appliances for children with disabilities. I find this part of my job very rewarding, as the clinician and I speak directly with the children's parents to assess what type of appliance is needed.

Keeping up to date with new techniques and developments in my field is another important part of what I do. Having this knowledge is a real benefit for everyone in the lab and it's always good to learn something new!

I really enjoy advising clinicians about appliance designs

Career Framework

The Career Framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees. The framework doesn't apply to those working outside the NHS. It is possible to move between NHS and independent practice jobs as part of your career development.

Depending on your role, there are two ways to develop your career. For dentists, see page 12. Other members of the dental team are part of the Career Framework. It encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to progress within the organisation. Many people take on additional responsibility within their

	Ambulance service professions	Allied health professions	Dental care professions	Healthcare science
9 More senior staff		Director of therapies		Director of regional genetics services
8 Consultant practitioners		Consultant radiographer	Orthodontic laboratory manager: advise clinicians on appliances and supervise design process	Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)
7 Advanced practitioners		Specialist speech and language therapist	Chief dental technician: supervise the day-to-day activities of the laboratory and staff members	Chief maxillofacial technologist
6 Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Senior paramedic	Senior occupational therapist	Senior dental technician: making braces to straighten teeth	Senior biomedical scientist
5 Practitioners	Paramedic	Dietitian	Basic grade technician: making dentures, crowns and bridges	Cardiac physiologist
4 Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners	Control room duty officer	Assistant clinical psychologist	Trainee dental technician: supporting dental technicians in producing dentures, bridges and crowns	Critical care technologist
3 Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Emergency medical dispatcher	Rehabilitation assistant		Newborn hearing screener
2 Support workers	Patient transport service driver	Therapy clinical support worker		Pharmacy dispensing assistant
1 Initial entry level jobs				

own area, while others retrain and move in to different roles.

The case study of Neil Valder, describes how he has progressed within the dental team. You can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram on page 9, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

The diagram below gives an illustration of a variety of NHS careers and where they may fit on the Career Framework. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant booklets and on the NHS Careers website.

Health informatics	Management	Midwifery	Nursing	Wider healthcare
Director of information management and technology	Director of human resources	Director of maternity services	Director of nursing	
Access, booking and choice manager	Maxillofacial laboratory manager	Consultant midwife	Nurse consultant in stroke	
Head of communications	Head of accounts	Head of midwifery	District nurse (team manager)	Head of estates
Special projects manager	Project manager	Community midwife	Community psychiatric nurse	Chaplain
Web developer	Payroll manager	Midwife	Neonatal nurse	Catering manager
Helpdesk adviser	General office manager		Community care assistant	Medical secretary
Medical records clerk		Maternity support worker	Senior healthcare assistant	Security office
Support desk assistant		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Maintenance assistant
Health records assistant			Nurse cadet	Porter

14 Careers in dental care

If you are a dentist, there are opportunities to work in thirteen specialties after qualifying while undertaking further study and training. Postgraduate Dental Deans can advise on the range of training opportunities and funding available to support them. Specialty training posts last between three and five years and are highly competitive. Career progression is based on demonstrating your abilities and competencies against set standards and gaining experience in a variety of settings and specialty areas.

Dental education comprises three main related stages:

- undergraduate dental education. To qualify as a dentist you must complete undergraduate training leading to a dental degree. You will spend much of this time learning practical skills as well as attending academic lectures and seminars. You will attend a variety of hospital and community clinics and treat patients under close supervision.

- postgraduate dental training – dental foundation training, dental core training and specialist training
- continuing professional development (CPD) Once you have successfully completed your undergraduate dental education, you will need to register with the General Dental Council. You will need to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) throughout your dental career, starting immediately after registration in order to be allowed to practice.

For more information, visit the NHS Careers website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dental

To find out about developing your career in the dental care team, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining



What opportunities are available?

This section tells you where you would work as a member of the dental team. It also summarises the main responsibilities of each

team member and gives you an idea of the different opportunities open to you.

Dentists

Most dentists work in general practice, providing care to people from the local community. Alternatively, you may choose to specialise in certain types of treatment, work in a dental hospital, other NHS hospitals or in a dental service; or in a non-clinical role such as dental public health, academic dentistry (teaching or research), or as a dento-legal adviser.

Dentists who work in hospitals and high street practices will be responsible for a range of more complex work such as orthodontics, oral surgery and pathology, root canal fillings or replacing teeth with dental implants.

After a year as a foundation dentist, you will be ready to practise on your own. In general practice or salaried service clinic, the usual route is to begin as an associate, later becoming a partner or specialist or setting up your own practice.

Dental foundation training is necessary if you want to work in an NHS dental practice or salaried service clinic. Foundation training introduces new graduates to general practice and gives them a protected environment to work in for a year. Each foundation dentist has a trainer dentist in the same practice and attends weekly day release study days. The trainer provides the foundation dentist with supervision and help whenever it's needed, and meets with them for weekly tutorials.

If you choose to work in a hospital, you will probably start as a dental core trainee, working in different departments and then you might specialise working in a general dental practice in a specific area of dentistry and eventually become a hospital consultant or a specialist to whom other dentists refer cases.

Your main responsibilities include:

- diagnosing and treating problems
- carrying out preventive dentistry and education to protect teeth and gums from decay
- leading the dental team and managing a general dental practice.
- Carrying out dental treatment such as fillings, extractions, minor oral surgery, crowns, bridges, dentures and dental implants



Dental nurses

Most dental nurses work in local dental surgeries. You could also work in specialist dental hospitals, in the dental department of a general hospital or in a salaried dental service looking after patients with additional or special needs.

As an experienced and qualified dental nurse, you can continue building up skills that will always be in demand. Career breaks and part-time working are often possible.

You could go on to acquire specialist qualifications in areas such as sedation, dental radiography and oral health promotion.

You might take on more responsibility as a trainer and assessor for other dental nurses or move into a management role within your dental practice.

You could apply for a course to qualify as a dental hygienist, therapist, dental technician, orthodontic therapist, oral health educator or dental practice manager.

Your main responsibilities include:

- mixing the materials used for filling teeth
- processing x-rays
- completing patients' records
- sterilising instruments
- generally keeping the surgery ready for use.

Dental hygienists

Most hygienists work in general dental practice, but you could opt to work in hospitals or salaried dental services, where you may also visit people in their own homes and residents of care homes.

You will have a range of options as a dental hygienist. Many hygienists are self-employed,

working in a variety of practices and in hospitals. Others work as a salaried member of staff in a large practice or hospital.

Later in your career you could move into teaching dental hygiene, lead oral health promotion teams or open your own dental hygiene clinic.

Your main responsibilities include:

- scaling (or periodontal therapy) and polishing teeth and applying sealants – a plastic coating to protect teeth
- demonstrating a wide range of good dental cleaning techniques.
- helping patients who have had facial surgery or those with particular medical conditions to maintain a healthy mouth.

Dental therapists

Dental Therapists work mainly in general dental practice and salaried services, providing both dental treatment such as simple fillings, periodontal therapy and oral hygiene instruction. You may visit schools, clinics and people's homes.

You can also move into teaching the next generation of dental therapists or open your own clinic, usually working in partnership with other members of the dental team, especially dentists.

Your main responsibilities include:

- clinical work, including fillings and simple extractions, scaling, polishing and applying sealants
- teaching patients how to keep their teeth and gums healthy.

Dental technicians/technologists

Dental technicians normally work in community or hospital laboratories linked to dental or maxillofacial clinics, where complex cases are dealt with, including facial reconstruction and fittings for small children.

Career progression within the NHS can lead to senior technician grades and the role of chief technician in charge of a laboratory or group of laboratories. You could also become involved in education and training

for future technicians. With additional training in sciences, clinical skills and interpersonal skills, you could become a clinical dental technician and provide dentures for patients in the community or in hospitals.

You could also apply for the NHS Scientist Training Programme in reconstructive sciences (maxillofacial prosthetics). See our booklet Careers in healthcare science for details.

Your main responsibilities include:

- making dentures, crowns, bridges and braces
- working with the dental and medical teams to construct appliances that meet individual needs.

As you acquire more experience and skills, you will probably specialise in one of four areas:

- prosthodontics – designing and making dentures
- conservation – crown and bridge work
- orthodontics – braces to correct teeth positioning
- maxillofacial – more complex reconstruction of faces damaged by accident or disease.

To find out more about roles in the dental team, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dental

To search for jobs in your area, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk



CASE STUDY

Name: Cheryl McBroom

Job title: dental hygienist, York

Entry route: dental nursing course

After she left school aged 16, Cheryl studied dental nursing at college and later developed her career in the dental team as a dental hygienist.

Many people don't realise what being a dental hygienist involves.



I work as part of a team in a general hospital where I see people who are very ill, depressed and anxious. One of the rewarding parts of the job is being able to spend time talking to them – not just about their treatment, but about their life, their family and so on.

As a hygienist, you can work in a range of different places with different patients. When I was training, I had placements in a community dental clinic, an acute mental health trust and a school for children with special needs.

The job itself is also extremely varied. In the hospital outpatient clinic I see all sorts of patients, from children undergoing orthodontic work to cancer patients who are having chemotherapy and need help to keep their mouths moist, as the treatment can leave them with sore and dry mouths.

I was a dental nurse for five years before training to be a hygienist. There are opportunities to continue to learn and develop and I may consider teaching when I am a bit older.

As a hygienist, you can work in a range of different places with different patients

Getting started

There are a number of ways to start your career as a member of the dental team. For most jobs, you will need some formal qualifications but there are different entry routes depending on your skills and experience.

If you don't already have some dental or other healthcare experience, it is a good idea to organise a work placement. You can get in touch with local dental surgeries or your local community healthcare provider to find out what is available in your area.

Values and behaviours

If you decide to deliver NHS healthcare, whatever role you come into, you'll need to show your understanding of the NHS values and behaviours, which are part of the NHS Constitution.

Read more about the NHS Constitution
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution

Dentists

Your route to becoming a dentist will begin in a school of dentistry attached to a university. There is a lot of competition for places, so good A level grades or the equivalent are usually required. Some dental schools offer one-year pre-dental courses for students without appropriate A levels. A small number of dental schools offer shorter courses for suitably qualified graduates. Most schools will also look for some work experience within a healthcare environment. Courses must be approved by the General Dental Council (GDC).

The standard university course lasts five years, with an optional extra year for further research. Most dental students join straight after A-levels, but sometimes it is possible to have a degree in a relevant subject and undertake an accelerated programme. During your course, you will study a wide range of life sciences and disease processes that cause problems in the mouth. You will start to develop the practical clinical skills of a qualified dentist and the interpersonal skills that will help put patients at ease.

Once you have qualified and registered with the GDC, you will have to do one year's foundation

training before you can work as a principal or associate in a general dental practice, or start further specialist training if you want to work in one of the dental specialties. You need to do your dental foundation training if you want to work for the NHS.

Dental nurses

You do not necessarily need any academic qualifications to work as a trainee dental nurse, although in order to progress, you will need to study for qualifications, some of which require GCSEs or equivalent for entry as a minimum. Employers will expect a friendly, responsible attitude, a positive approach to people and a willingness to study.

To work as a dental nurse, you have to be registered with the GDC or be enrolled on an approved training course. To be eligible to register, you will need a recognised qualification, such as

- Diploma in Dental Nursing awarded by the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN)
- Level 3 Diploma in Dental Nursing awarded by City and Guilds
- Certificate of Higher Education in Dental Nursing awarded by some dental training institutions.

Your employer will generally encourage you to study for a qualification at a local college, on a day release basis or at evening classes. Some dental hospitals provide bursaries for dental nurses in training and some universities offer foundation degree courses in dental nursing.

Some dental hospitals and further education colleges currently run full-time, one or two-year courses, leading to the National Diploma and some dental practices will take you on as a trainee dental nurse, provided you are enrolled on a course and studying for one of the above qualifications.

Some NHS trusts and some dental practices offer apprenticeships in dental nursing. Qualifications are awarded to dental nurses who have passed the examination and completed two years' full-time surgery experience.

Dental hygienists

You will need to hold a GDC-approved qualification before you can register as a qualified dental hygienist. Qualifications may be at diploma or degree

level and some combine dental therapy with dental hygiene. The diploma is achieved on successful completion of a full-time, two-year course which, combines practical work and study of key subjects including anatomy and physiology, psychology, preventive dentistry, dental health education, oral medicine, dental pathology, pharmacology, and patient management. Courses combining dental hygiene and dental therapy are usually two-and-a-half-years in length. Degree courses usually last three years and have a similar content.

Dental teaching hospitals offer dental hygienist courses. Most hospitals also look for some previous experience in healthcare or dental nursing. You will be expected to hold 5 GCSE's (at grade C or above) and one A-level in a science related subject. Some dental institutions may accept post qualifications in dental nursing (such as radiography, oral health education and sedation) in place of an A-level.

Dental therapists

To register as a dental therapist, you must take a course (at diploma or degree level) in dental therapy, approved by the GDC lasting up to three years full time (or a longer part-time course). Some dental schools offer a combined qualification in dental hygiene and dental therapy, which would allow you to register to practise either discipline. You will probably need some previous experience in healthcare or dental nursing.

Subjects studied include preventive dentistry -psychology, dental health education, oral medicine, dental pathology, simple restorative procedures, extraction of 'baby' teeth, radiography and pharmacology. The course will include clinical experience with patients of all ages, some of whom may have medical problems or special needs. You will be expected to hold 5 GCSE's (at grade C or above) and one A-level in a science related subject/ alternative level 3 qualifications. Some dental institutions may accept post qualifications in dental nursing (such as dental radiography, oral health education and sedation) in place of an A-level.

Dental technicians/technologists

To work as a dental technician, you will need to register with GDC. There are two entry routes open to you, both of which involve completing a GDC-approved course.

You could choose to become a trainee with a dental hospital or commercial laboratory and then take a part-time course in dental technology. The mix of on-the-job training and study takes between three and six years, depending on the course.

Alternatively, you could take a full-time course in dental technology at a university. The course combines study with work placements. As a graduate in dental technology you will have a range of senior posts open to you much earlier in your career.

Orthodontic therapists

In order to qualify as an orthodontic therapist, you'll need to train first as a dental nurse, dental hygienist, dental therapist or dental technician and have had a period of post-qualifying experience. You can then be considered for GDC-approved training to enable you to register as an orthodontic therapist. You will be expected to hold 5 GCSEs (at grade C or above) and one A-level.

Training courses are held at a variety of sites around the UK and normally last one year. It involves attendance at a dental training institute followed by a number of study days at which you learn additional skills by working in an orthodontic dental practice or hospital department.

To speak to one of our team, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk. For more information on dental training in the NHS, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining

CASE STUDY

Name: Anita Patel

Job title: clinical assistant (vocational dental practitioner), Essex

Entry route: dentistry degree, Bristol University

Anita studied dentistry at Bristol University. Before starting her vocational training* year she is working part-time as a clinical assistant.

I didn't really sleep the night before I was due to treat my first patient. It was quite scary but in the end it was fine – even if I had to fill one of the hardest-to-reach teeth.

Being a dental student gives you the chance to build up to that first patient by working on model heads and learning how to cut cavities in teeth.



You also spend time watching, helping and learning in the clinic until the big day arrives.

I had also done a lot of work experience and looked at a range of specialties, so I knew dentistry was the right career for me. I liked all the personal contact with patients.

The training was great. I applied to universities through UCAS and after an interview, I chose Bristol University. The first year is really tough, harder than I expected, but you get used to it and manage to balance study and a social life, which is great. There is plenty of clinical practice – you get lots of hands-on work as a dental trainee.

I think dentistry is a fantastic profession to go into. You see new patients and learn different things every day.

Once I have completed my vocational year, I might go into hospital dentistry, get more qualifications and then I can go into general practice with a speciality or move up the hospital pathway.

There is plenty of clinical practice – you get lots of hands-on work as a dental trainee

* Vocational training is now commonly known as dental foundation training.

Funding

NHS Student Bursaries provide financial support to eligible students on courses that lead to professional registration as a dental hygienist or dental therapist. It also provides financial support to eligible students who are part way through a degree in dentistry. You may receive additional allowances, depending on your individual circumstances, and the amount you receive will depend on your eligibility and residency criteria.

For more information about funding, visit the NHS Student Bursaries website www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

Pay for dental care professionals

If you work as an NHS employee as a member of the dental team, most jobs are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a points score, which is used to match jobs to pay bands and determine levels of basic salary. Each pay band has a number of pay points.

Staff will normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

Your career in the dental care team could start at an AfC band 2 as a clinical support worker (dentistry) rising to band 7 as a dental technician (advanced), with higher bandings for managerial level posts. Examples of other roles, with typical AfC pay bands, include dental nurse entry level at band 3, rising to band 5 for a dental nurse specialist or dental technician.

Pay for dentists

As foundation dentists, core trainee dentists, or specialty trainees, you will be paid a salary during your dental foundation training.

NHS dentists are mostly self-employed contractors. A committed NHS dentist can expect to earn a high income from NHS contracts.

Dentists in the salaried dental services, have plenty of scope to move up within pay bands.

Senior dentists undertaking management and clinical leadership responsibilities for a whole salaried primary dental care service can earn a substantial salary.

Dentists working in the hospital dental service and dental public health areas are broadly paid on the same scales as doctors.

For more information on pay for dentists, visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/payfordentists and for information about pay for other dental care professionals, visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/payfordcps

CASE STUDY

Name: Manoj Kumar

Job title: senior dental officer (dental surgeon), dental services, Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust

Entry route: dentistry degree

Manoj always enjoyed science and helping people. During his A levels, he decided that dentistry was the career for him.

Since qualifying I have practised dentistry as a clinical dental surgeon at NHS hospitals, practices and community dental services. I have progressed to my current role as senior dental officer through Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which the NHS has really supported me with. CPD allows me to continually learn and update my knowledge while working.



My job is so varied and includes many aspects of dental treatment. One moment I'm undertaking an extraction and the next offering school children advice on how to better look after their oral health. I also get to see a mix of people including those who are anxious about seeing a dentist! Making these patients feel relaxed gives me a great sense of achievement.

I often treat patients in the dental access centre but sometimes I work in the mobile dental unit. This allows me to see patients who would not normally come to the dentist or find it hard to make the journey, such as those in care homes. I love being able to get out into the community and meeting the wide range of people living in Walsall.

My job is often challenging but also rewarding and relieving a patient's pain and providing them with the best possible dental care and advice is a fantastic feeling. Knowing that I am making a real difference to a person's health makes the whole job worthwhile and what drives me to get up in the morning.

One moment I'm undertaking an extraction and the next offering school children oral health advice

What's your next step?

We hope you've found this booklet useful, and now have a better idea of whether a career in dental care is right for you.

If you've decided you do want to work in this area, it's important to start planning ahead straight away. Find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

If you need a university qualification, you can find a list of institutions running approved courses leading to with the GDC, by using the NHS Careers coursefinder: www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/coursefinder

Each university will be able to tell you what they look for in applicants. For example, getting some work experience is an excellent way of showing your commitment and enthusiasm. You will usually need to apply through UCAS for full-time courses.

Whatever position you're in now, the NHS Careers service can help. Call us on 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit our website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

**To search for jobs, go to www.jobs.nhs.uk
To find information about professional bodies and all other contacts, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/dentalcontacts**

Here are some things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now.

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check what your likely exam grades/results will be • Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the NHS train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant? • Are there any particular skills or work experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career? • Find out if you need any specific A levels, or equivalent qualifications 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service Professional bodies National Careers Service NHS Careers
Studying for A-levels or another level 3 course at your school or a local college	As GCSEs, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate which universities have a school of dentistry and compare the courses on offer • Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role • Search the NHS Jobs website at www.jobs.nhs.uk and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current job and apprenticeship vacancies • Consider the option of an apprenticeship (e.g. in dental nursing). 	Subject teachers Your careers adviser/ Connexions service UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies National Careers Service NHS Jobs National Apprenticeship Service
At university	As A levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate fast-track degree courses, in dentistry, for graduates 	University careers service NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs NHS Student Bursaries
Looking for a new career	As A levels, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles or if the NHS will train you while you are working. 	Local careers/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) NHS Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies National Careers Service NHS Jobs UCAS

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