Careers in the dental team

Caring, compassionate, committed

Make a difference with a career in health
A career for you

There are more than 350 roles in health, and many of them are part of a wider team which works alongside other health professionals for the benefit of patients and the public. As well as the NHS itself, a great many large and smaller organisations provide healthcare and work to prevent ill health in the UK. These include public and private sector organisations, community interest companies, social enterprises and charities, and you could work for the NHS or any one of these other organisations in a health role.

Some roles give you direct contact with patients, while in others you are part of a vast support network vital to delivering healthcare and preventing ill health, and good team-working is essential. Some jobs are in hospitals, others are based in the community: increasingly, health and social care services are integrated or co-ordinated in order to provide a seamless service for people with a range of needs.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience, including people who have worked in other sectors or who bring life experience from outside the world of work. This helps us to understand the different needs of patients, families and carers, and to provide the best possible service every day.

NHS values and the 6Cs of compassionate care

To apply for any job in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, or for a course with clinical placements in the NHS, you’ll need to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution would apply in your everyday work.

The NHS Constitution values are:

1. Working together for patients
2. Respect and dignity
3. Commitment to quality of care
4. Compassion
5. Improving lives
6. Everyone counts

These values may also be promoted as the 6Cs of compassionate care, which are:

1. Care
2. Compassion
3. Competence
4. Communication
5. Courage
6. Commitment

Find out more about the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs at

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution
www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

Welcome

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Your career in the dental team

Dental care is an important part of healthcare. As well as looking after the nation’s mouths, the dental team contributes to the wider care of patients. You’ll have day-to-day contact with a wide range of people and your work will make a real difference to their lives.

Whatever your academic background, you can find a role that’s right for you.

The dental team may work in a variety of settings including general high street practices, hospitals, community services or in universities, and this gives you different options on how to further your career. Some skills and qualities are needed by everyone working in the dental team:

- willingness to learn
- good manual dexterity
- an eye for detail
- excellent people skills so you can deal with a broad range of people
- ability to offer advice and educate others
- team working

FAQs

Who works in the dental team?

The dental team includes dentists, dental nurses, dental therapists, dental hygienists, dental technicians and clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists. There are opportunities to progress into more specialised roles.

How do I train to be a dentist?

You’ll need to start by going to university to do an approved degree in dentistry. Find out more about studying for a career in the dental team at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining).

Visit our course finder to search for the dental schools/universities approved to run degree courses in dentistry: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses).

How do I train to be a dental hygienist or dental therapist?

You’ll need to go to university to do an approved diploma or degree course in dental hygiene or dental therapy. Some courses combine both areas. Visit our course finder to search for the universities approved to run degree courses in dental hygiene and dental therapy: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses).

Find out more about studying for a career in the dental team at [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining).

How do I train to be a dental nurse?

You can usually work as a trainee dental nurse without academic qualifications, but to progress to being a qualified dental nurse, you will need to study for a course in dental nursing, either part or full time, that is approved by the General Dental Council.

Can dental nurse training be done without working in a dental environment?

You’ll need to put what you learn into practice: so even if you do a full time course, there will usually be dental nurse placements or time spent in the dental school’s practice. Visit [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentalnursing](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentalnursing) for details of the training.

Is there financial help while I’m training?

Current students on approved dental degrees and those starting their course in September 2016 can receive some financial help from the NHS. Students on approved degrees in dental hygiene or dental therapy will usually receive financial support too. However, changes to the support available are due to start from September 2017.

Find out more about financial help available from the NHS at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students).
Which role is right for you?

Providing dental care for the community or in a hospital setting is a team responsibility. Each member of the dental team has an important role to play in promoting and maintaining oral health. If you like the idea of working with people, as a respected professional, in a career which offers flexibility and security, a role in the dental team could be right for you.

You could train to be a dentist and run a high street practice, work as a dental hygienist to help prevent dental disease or train as a dental nurse and help the team deliver treatment and advice. Alternatively, you could train as a dental technician and make dentures, crowns, bridges and retainers for patients.

Whatever your role, you’ll be making a big contribution to the oral health of the nation. In recent years, oral health has improved as more of us are looking after our teeth better. 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 oral diseases to address, as well as maintaining and improving oral and general health. Most dental diseases are preventable, so it is important that all members of the dental team are skilled and qualified.

There are opportunities for members of the dental team to work in the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air force. For further information about careers in the armed forces, visit the Ministry of Defence website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence
Dental team roles at a glance

You can find more detailed information about all the dental roles listed below on the Health Careers website at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentalteam

Dental hygienist

Most hygienists work in high street practices, but you could also work in hospitals or community-based services, where you may also visit people in their own homes and residents of care homes. You will usually work with a team of dental professionals, although it is now possible for hygienists and therapists to set up their own practices or work independently.

Good people and communication skills are very important for all dental hygienists.

As a dental hygienist, your main role is to help prevent the development of dental disease. You will show children and adults how to look after their teeth and gums on an individual basis or in groups. You will be highly skilled, working inside patients’ mouths, scaling (at times under local anaesthetic), polishing teeth and applying sealants (coatings that protect teeth). Your work will help prevent gum disease, maintain good oral health and help people get rid of associated problems like bad breath. If you work in a hospital, you will help patients who may have had major surgery or complicated orthodontic treatment. Patients may be very ill, apprehensive or unsure after life-changing surgery. In the community, you could work with people with a wide variety of specific and additional requirements, such as people with additional needs, for example, a disability.

Your main responsibilities include:

- scaling and polishing teeth and applying sealants – a coating to protect teeth
- demonstrating a wide range of good dental/oral cleaning techniques
- helping patients with additional needs such as children with high levels of dental disease

Dental nurse

Most dental nurses work in high street practices. You could also work in a hospital dental department or a community-based service looking after patients with additional or special needs.

As a dental nurse, you will help the dentist deliver a range of treatment and advice to patients from check-ups to more complicated treatment. You will 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.

Your main responsibilities include:

- welcoming patients and putting them at ease
- preparing dental materials
- helping patients with all aspects of their treatment
- making sure equipment and the surgery are clean

You will work closely with the dentist, maintaining the surgery and assisting during dental treatment. You will also work with your team to improve the quality of care and the efficiency of the practice. You will have the opportunity to develop your skills to take x-rays for patients, advise patients on oral health, take impressions and apply fluoride to prevent tooth decay.

Professionalism 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 technician

Dental technicians work in dental laboratories, and some also work in hospital settings providing more specialised work.

As a dental technician, you support the dental team by making the dentures, crowns, bridges and retainers that can improve a patient’s appearance, speech and ability to chew.

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.

Artistic ability and good dexterity are important as much of the work is done by hand, and you will also work with equipment in the laboratory. Since each patient is unique, 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 as a clinical dental technician.

Your main responsibilities include:

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

As you acquire more experience and skills, you may focus on one of four areas:

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

Clinical dental technician

Clinical dental technicians are qualified and registered dental technicians who 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, when working with a dentist. You would also check on the patient’s oral health. This is an interesting option for dental technicians who are interested in working directly with patients.

Dental therapist

Most dental therapists work in high street dental practices, but may also work in hospital and community-based settings.

Dental therapists provide advice and treatment to patients. Therapists may work on their own or with a dental nurse.

Dental therapists carry out treatment such as fillings, extraction of baby teeth and scaling and polishing. They usually work with a dentist but sometimes treat patients without a dentist referral.

Educating patients on preventing oral disease is another important part of the dental therapist role.

You will need the confidence to work on your own and the ability to put even the youngest of patients at ease. You may also work with children, older people and those with special needs, especially in hospital and community settings.

Your main responsibilities include:

- clinical work, including fillings and simple extractions, scaling, polishing and applying sealants
- teaching patients how to keep their mouths healthy
**Dentist**

Dentists mainly work in high street dental practices, but may also work in community-based settings in hospitals and university settings. 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 good clinical skills. It’s also important for you to be able to lead your team effectively, so you’ll need good managerial and administrative skills.

Dentists 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.

**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 young children to the elderly.**

Dentists may also want to specialise and focus in specific areas of dentistry. This may include orthodontics, special care dentistry (dentistry for patients with special needs), periodontics (the study of gums), endodontics (study of tooth roots) and prosthodontics (complex crown and bridgework and implants). There are also non-clinical roles in the management and organisation of dentistry and in dental research.

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.

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

Dentists may also work part or full time providing private treatment.

**Orthodontic therapist**

Orthodontic therapists form an important part of the orthodontic team. They assist orthodontists with day-to-day treatments including treating crooked or crowded teeth.

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.

Under the direction of an orthodontist, orthodontic therapists:

- clean and prepare tooth surfaces ready for orthodontic treatment
- identify, select, use and maintain appropriate instruments
- insert removable orthodontic braces
- insert removable braces activated or adjusted by a dentist
- insert or remove braces, orthodontic adhesives and cement
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. 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.

How I got into the role

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

What I do

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.

The best bits

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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.

Real-life stories

Name
Cheryl McBroom

Job title
Dental hygienist, York

Entry route
Dental nursing course

"As a hygienist, you can work in a range of different places with different patients.”
**Dental nurse**

**Name**
Emma Nelson

**Job title**
Dental nurse, Bracknell, Berkshire

**Entry route**
National Examining Board for Dental Nurses National Certificate

“How I got into the role**

I never planned to be a dental nurse. I was just looking for a job, but I soon started to enjoy the work.

Within a few months I decided to do a course leading to my National Examining Board for Dental Nurses National Certificate. My dentist paid for this and helped me in other ways, such as testing me while I worked.

I passed the exam, then worked for two more years to become qualified. I’m keen to carry on training. I recently passed exams on dental radiography and dental sedation nursing. I’d like to study oral health education and practice management in the future. I’m also interested in teaching dental nurses, so that’s another route I could take.

“How I got into the role**

Although I started out working in a dental lab, 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 with a grant and a small bursary for me to train as a dental therapist.

**What I do**

I work part time, three days a week, which gives me time to look after my young family. It is a busy job, with a lot of contact with patients. On a typical day I’ll start off by getting out the notes for all the patients due that day, then check the surgery to make sure everything’s in order. Throughout the day I’m likely to be spending time supporting the dentist with treatments and working on reception.

**The best bits**

One of the joys of the job is helping someone who is nervous get through their treatment. 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.

**What I do**

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.”***
Senior dental officer

**Name**
Manoj Kumar

**Job title**
Senior dental officer (dental surgeon), dental services, Birmingham
Community Healthcare NHS Trust

**Entry route**
Dentistry degree

*How I got into the role*
I always enjoyed science and helping people. During my A-levels, I decided that dentistry was the career for me. 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.

*What I do*
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 oral health advice.

The best bits
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 is what drives me to get up in the morning.

Medical technical officer

**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

*How I got into the role*
I always enjoyed working with my hands at school, and was looking for a career that was practically oriented. A teacher suggested I consider a career in dentistry, so I 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 we 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 role where I learnt to construct more complicated appliances. After a few years, 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.

*What I do*
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.

The best bits
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!
Getting started in the dental team

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. Whatever role you choose, and whatever level you start at, you will get all the support you need to develop your career. See the section Next steps and progressing your career for further information on different options and how you can specialise after you have qualified. For more information on dental training, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining

Work placements and volunteering

Doing volunteer work or arranging a work placement is the best way to find out if a role is right for you. It will give you experience of the working environment, show you the kind of work you would be doing and the people you would be helping, and let you talk with people who are already doing the job.

The number and type of work placements or volunteering opportunities available vary, depending on where you are in the country. Experience doesn’t always need to be gained in the NHS either, so think about the independent health sector, charities and other organisations where you could provide care for people as a way of gaining experience.

For more information about opportunities in your area, get in touch with local dental surgeries, your local community healthcare provider or voluntary organisations to find out what is available. You can also find more information on gaining experience at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in dental nursing are often advertised around the country. Many of these will be in high street dental practices. Apprenticeships may provide you with the opportunity to study towards relevant dental nursing qualifications.

Apprenticeship vacancies in health can be found on the NHS Jobs website www.jobs.nhs.uk and the government Apprenticeships website www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

More information on apprenticeship opportunities in health is available at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships

Professional training

Each training provider (including universities) has its own admission criteria and course structure, and the length of each course will vary.

Entry to degree/diploma courses at university usually requires three A-levels which will need to be at very high grades for degrees in dentistry. However, universities may recognise comparable qualifications at level 3. You will also usually need relevant experience of care work.

If you already have a degree in a relevant discipline, there are a few graduate-entry degrees in dentistry.

Whether you are applying for a course in dentistry, dental hygiene, dental therapy, dental technology or dental nursing, you should check with each university/training provider directly to find out what their entry requirements are in terms of qualifications, skills and relevant experience.

For more information on training for a career in the dental team visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentaltraining

Registration

To begin and continue practising as a dentist or dental care professional, you must be registered with and regulated by the General Dental Council. You need to apply for registration once you have successfully completed your training course, and then provide evidence of continuing learning and development to maintain your registration in future.

For more information, visit www.gdc-uk.org

For more information about financial support from the NHS, visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

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

Remember that if you’re applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you may be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution apply in your everyday work. Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution and www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

Make sure your course is recognised by the General Dental Council (GDC), which is the regulatory body for dentists and the dental care professions. For more information, visit www.gdc-uk.org
Professional qualifications

Dentists

A university degree
Your route to becoming a dentist will begin in a school of dentistry attached to a university. Courses usually require five years of full time study, with an optional extra year for further research. 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 science A-levels/qualifications at level 3.

Whatever your academic background, dental schools will usually look for evidence of work experience within a healthcare environment.

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.

Foundation training
Once you have qualified and registered with the GDC, you will have to do dental foundation training before you can work in the NHS 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.

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 regular tutorials.

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

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.

Dental nurses

Qualifications
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 learn.

Becoming a practitioner
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. 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.

Apprenticeships
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.

For a list of GDC-approved qualifications in dental nursing, use our course finder: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses
Next steps and progressing your career

If you want to work in health, it’s important to find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

If you need a degree, you can get a list of the institutions running approved courses leading to eligibility to apply for registration by using the Health Careers course finder at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses.

For a place on a degree course, you usually need to apply through UCAS.

For some roles, you can pursue a number of different options and specialisms once you have qualified.

Dentistry

If you are a dentist, there are opportunities to work in 13 specialties after qualifying while undertaking further study and training. Health Education England’s local offices 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:

- **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.** Most dental graduates complete dental foundation training. However, it is optional to continue training in a hospital or community setting as a dental core trainee.

- **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, to maintain your registration and keep your dental skills and knowledge up to date.

Dental nursing

As an experienced and qualified dental nurse, you will continue to develop your skills.

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

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, clinical dental technician, orthodontic therapist or oral health educator.

Dental technician/technologist

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 may also be able to apply for the NHS Scientist Training Programme in reconstructive sciences (maxillofacial prosthetics). See our booklet Careers in healthcare science for details.

Dental hygienist

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, working with oral health promotion teams, or open your own dental hygiene clinic.

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

For job vacancies with other health organisations, visit www.gov.uk/jobsearch

For job vacancies in local government, visit www.lgjobs.com

To search for jobs with organisations providing NHS services, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk

See the individual role pages at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentalteam for information about the professional bodies that represent staff in the dental care team.

24 Careers in the dental team

25 Careers in the dental team
Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where are you now?</th>
<th>What should you do now?</th>
<th>Who can help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Studying for your GCSEs | - Visit: [www.stepintonhs.nhs.uk](http://www.stepintonhs.nhs.uk)  
- 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 apprenticeships available in your area?  
- Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?  
- Enquire about volunteering or work experience.  
- Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications at level 3. | Health Careers  
Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser  
Professional bodies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college | As GCSEs, plus:  
- If you need to study a particular degree, investigate which universities offer it.  
- Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role.  
- Find out if you are eligible for NHS financial support.  
- Search the NHS Jobs website at [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) and speak to your local trust to get an idea of current vacancies.  
- Consider the option of an apprenticeship. | Health Careers  
Subject teachers  
Your careers adviser  
National Careers Service  
UCAS  
NHS Student Bursaries  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
Universities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| At university | As A-levels, plus:  
- If you’re doing a degree in a subject not relevant to dentistry, investigate your options for switching courses, or going on to do a graduate-entry degree in dentistry, approved by the General Dental Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Health Careers  
University careers service  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
Regulatory bodies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Looking for a new career | As A-levels, plus:  
- 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. | Health Careers  
Careers adviser  
National Careers Service  
Jobcentre Plus  
Professional bodies  
NHS Jobs  
UCAS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
Benefits of working in the NHS

If you work as a dentist or dental care professional directly for the NHS, you will enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career. You will join one of the country’s most respected organisations and one which has the values of compassionate care and staff wellbeing at its very heart.

If you work as a dentist or dental care professional in the private or voluntary sectors or another public sector organisation, your pay and benefits will vary depending on your employer.

Your pay as a dental care professional

If you work as an NHS employee in 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.

Your pay as a dentist

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 good income from NHS contracts, particularly those who decide to buy and run their own dental practice.

Dentists in the salaried dental services have plenty of scope to move up within pay bands, especially with increasing training and skills development.

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 dentistpay and for information about pay for other dental care professionals, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/dentalteampay

For more information on the NHS pension scheme, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

One of the UK’s best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member, unless you choose to opt out.

Other employment benefits for NHS staff

Everyone employed under the NHS Agenda for Change pay system is entitled to:

- 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
- career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations
- occupational health services
- study leave for sponsored courses

Many of these benefits apply across the whole of the NHS, although local organisations may offer additional benefits, such as cycle to work schemes and nurseries. Many local shops, restaurants and services offer discounts to health staff too, including most gyms and leisure centres. Health Service Discounts is an employee benefit provider for many NHS organisations and offers discounts and deals for NHS staff on shopping, holidays and financial services from well-known brands: www.healthservicediscounts.com

Health and wellbeing at work and your work-life balance

The NHS is committed to helping staff to stay well, including serving healthier food, promoting physical activity, reducing stress, and providing health checks covering mental health and musculoskeletal problems.

The NHS will help you combine your work with commitments in your everyday life and at different stages of your career - whether you’re studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working and retirement opportunities. Part time roles and job-share opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full time.

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, the NHS provides a range of childcare services for employees, 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.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

You can find more information on health and well-being at work at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces
This health career framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees. Depending on your role in the dental team, there are two ways to develop your career. For dentists, see Next steps and progressing your career on page 24. Other members of the dental team are part of the ‘Health career framework’ which encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to progress within the organisation.

The real-life story on page 19 describes how Neil Valder has progressed within the dental team. You can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial entry level jobs</th>
<th>Support workers</th>
<th>Senior healthcare assistants/technicians</th>
<th>Assistant practitioners/Associate practitioners</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Senior practitioners/specialist practitioners</th>
<th>Advanced practitioners</th>
<th>Consultant practitioners</th>
<th>More senior staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambulance service team</td>
<td>Patient transport service driver</td>
<td>Emergency medical dispatcher</td>
<td>Control room duty officer</td>
<td>Paramedic</td>
<td>Specialist paramedic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied health professions</td>
<td>Therapy clinical support worker</td>
<td>Rehabilitation assistant</td>
<td>Assistant clinical psychologist</td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>Senior occupational therapist</td>
<td>Specialist speech and language therapist</td>
<td>Consultant radiographer</td>
<td>Director of therapies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental care team</td>
<td>Pharmacy dispensing assistant</td>
<td>Newborn hearing screener</td>
<td>Critical care technologist</td>
<td>Cardiac physiologist</td>
<td>Senior biomedical scientist</td>
<td>Chief maxillofacial technologist</td>
<td>Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)</td>
<td>Director of regional genetics services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare science</td>
<td>Health records assistant</td>
<td>Support desk assistant</td>
<td>Medical records clerk</td>
<td>Helpdesk adviser</td>
<td>Web developer</td>
<td>Special projects manager</td>
<td>Head of communications</td>
<td>Director of information management and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health informatics</td>
<td>Healthcare assistant (maternity)</td>
<td>Maternity support worker</td>
<td>General office manager</td>
<td>Payroll manager</td>
<td>Projects manager</td>
<td>Head of accounts</td>
<td>Maxillofacial laboratory manager</td>
<td>Director of human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Nurse cadet</td>
<td>Healthcare assistant (nursing)</td>
<td>Senior healthcare assistant</td>
<td>Community care assistant</td>
<td>Neonatal nurse</td>
<td>Community psychiatric nurse</td>
<td>District nurse (team manager)</td>
<td>Director of nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwifery</td>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>Maintenance assistant</td>
<td>Security officer</td>
<td>Medical secretary</td>
<td>Catering manager</td>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>Head of estates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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