

Dental Nurse

Dental nurses work as part of a dental team. They help dentists with all aspects of patient care. They assist dentists during treatments as well as possibly taking payments and dealing with paperwork.

The Work

You could be:

- talking to patients to reassure them
- keeping the waiting area and surgery clean and tidy
- maintaining and sterilising equipment
- assisting the dentist in all clinical procedures such as examinations, fillings, extractions and other chairside requirements
- mixing amalgam or composite resin for fillings
- processing x-rays
- updating patient records
- covering reception – answering the phone, making appointments or taking payments.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Many dental nurses start by doing the Modern Apprenticeship in Dental Nursing. The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026).

Qualified Dental nurses who work for the National Health Service (NHS) are paid on the Agenda for Change scales. The current pay scales are from April 2025. They start off at Band 3, £29,061 to £31,364 a year. Qualified dental nurses are on Band 4, £31,492 to £34,254 a year.

Conditions

- You would work in a dentist's surgery, a clinic or a hospital.
- Working hours are usually regular but can be set by the dentist.
- You may need to work some evenings and weekends, perhaps with early morning starts.
- You would wear a uniform and sometimes protective clothing such as gloves or a mask.

Getting In

You must first complete a course approved by the [General Dental Council \(GDC\)](#), and then register with the GDC

as a qualified Dental Nurse.

The GDC approves two qualifications that are available in Scotland: The National Diploma in Dental Nursing awarded by the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN); and SVQ at SCQF Level 7 and PDA in Dental Nursing awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

- West College Scotland offers the Diploma in Dental Nursing, which leads to the exam set by the NEBDN. For entry you need 3 subjects at National 5 including English and Biology or another science subject.
- New College Lanarkshire offers an HNC (SCQF Level 7) and HND (SCQF Level 8) in Dental Nursing, which covers the SVQ Level 3 units and includes a work placement. For entry you need 2 Highers including English. See the college website for details.
- Most get a job as a trainee dental nurse in a dental practice, or NHS hospital Dental Service, and train on the job with part time study.
- You may be able to get in through a Modern Apprenticeship, with study leading to Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) at SCQF Level 7.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.
- You must undergo screening for, and have been immunised against, Hepatitis B.
- You should be fit and healthy.

The GDC website has details of qualifications recognised for registration. Most dental nurses work in general practice and hospitals. You might get a job in the community dental service or the armed services. Some companies have their own health centres and you may find work in one of these.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- able to get on well with people from all backgrounds
- calm, friendly, reassuring and empathetic – patients may be anxious and in pain
- well organised and able to work under pressure
- able to handle fine instruments
- able to follow strict hygiene rules
- good at working in a team.

Training

- Training is usually on the job, with part time study for the relevant Diploma or SVQ.
- When you are registered with the GDC, and you are qualified, you can take courses in oral health education, dental sedation nursing, dental radiography, orthodontics and special care.

Getting On

- Once registered with the GDC, you are required to undertake continuous professional development (CPD) in order to keep your skills and knowledge up to date. You must complete at least 150 hours every five years.

- [NHS Education for Scotland](#) provides a wide range of training opportunities and CPD courses.
- You usually need further qualifications or training to get promotion.
- In private practice, you could move into practice management.
- In hospital, with experience, you might get promotion to a senior job.
- You might take more qualifications to become a dental hygienist or therapist, a dental nurse tutor or oral health educator.

Contacts

British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN)

Tel: 01253 338360

Email: enquiries@badn.org.uk

Website: www.badn.org.uk

X: @BADNUK

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BADNUK

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.