



portman
dentex

Considering a Career as an Apprentice Dental Nurse?

**Things to know when considering this
career path**

The Highs and the lows

Dental Nursing is an extremely fulfilling role. You work as part of the local community helping patients overcome fears, gain confidence through their smiles, get relief from pain and have overall great experiences when they visit our practices. It's a busy and varied role, meaning you can go home at the end of each day feeling fulfilled. Not to mention, there is great career progression! But with this, comes plenty of hard work and challenges. Take a look through this useful guide to get a real understanding of what life as a Trainee Dental Nurse for a Portman Dentex practice is really like.....



Tips for candidates

How to get your application to stand out

It can be daunting writing a CV – how can you make sure you stand out from everyone else? It might seem especially tricky if you're applying for your first role. Whilst previous work experience can be good, it's not all we look for!

[Click here](#) to read our list of 8 Top Tips to Make Your Apprenticeship Application Stand Out.

The role of a Dental Nurse isn't just any old job, there's a lot of responsibility, so the key thing is to ensure you have researched the role to make sure it's really the right fit for you





What being a trainee Dental Nurse really means

After a few weeks of finding your feet, the role of a Trainee Dental Nurse is essentially – a Dental Nurse! Of course, this comes with lots of additional support, so don't worry about being thrown in at the deep end.

For most people, the role will be completely new and unlike any job they have had before. There is a LOT to learn. But don't panic, whilst this can feel very daunting in the first few weeks we promise, it does get easier!

Alongside the role you will be enrolled onto a Dental Nursing course – usually an apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship takes around 18 months to complete and will be a mix of hands on learning & studying. Most course learning is done remotely & online, however some courses do require you to attend college. There will also be practical observations in practice and an end point assessment.

Read more from course provider Tempdent on what to expect from the course [here](#) .

Once you pass the course you will have a City & Guilds accredited level 3 Extended Diploma in Dental Nursing and can apply for your GDC registration to practice as a Qualified Dental Nurse.

Course Eligibility

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Qualifications required for Apprenticeship	Maths & English language grade C /4 GCSE or functional skills level 2	5 GCSEs including Maths, English Language & ICT or functional skills level 2	A good standard of English, Maths and Science (ideally SCQF Level 4)

Whilst we do aim to place candidates on the apprentice course, if you are not eligible based on the above criteria, you can still apply and we can explore other options such as the National Diploma route.

Above is the eligibility criteria for the Dental Nurse apprentice programme as outlined by the UK Government:

- GCSE grade C/ 4 and above in maths & English (please refer to table for variances for Northern Ireland & Scotland).
- Must have lived in the UK for the past 3 years
- Must not have already studied fully or partly another Dental Nurse apprenticeship

The real picture

We want you to be able to make an informed decision when considering if Dental Nursing is the right role for you. Here are some key things to consider.....



You're working on your feet a lot of the day

It's hard work - juggling a job alongside a level 3 course is a lot to take on

Dealing with nervous patients

Complaints handling & dealing with difficult situations

Fast paced role

Squeamish? The role involves working up close with the mouth meaning saliva & blood. How do you feel about seeing a tooth extraction up close?



The day to day

Most of us have been to the dentist many times throughout our lives, but have you ever stopped to think about what was really going on behind the scenes to enable your appointment to go ahead as smoothly as possible? Duties vary from practice to practice and day to day, but this overview gives you an idea of the basic duties you can expect to do on a daily basis.



Setting up

It's normal to start a bit before the first patient arrives. There's a lot to do in this time to prepare; checking patient lists, turning on the equipment, cleaning down the surgery, setting out the instruments and collecting lab work.



Working with patients

As a Dental Nurse you will greet patients and bring them through to meet the clinician. It's normal for patients to feel nervous, so being friendly and putting them at ease is a big part of the role. During the treatments there is a lot of different things you may need to do: suctioning, passing instruments, charting and ensuring the patient is comfortable at all times. In some practices we have Decontamination Assistants who keep everything running by sterilising all the instruments before and after use. In other practices, this may also be a part of the Dental Nurse role. Most appointments run back-to-back, so there is a quick turn around, as one late appointment can have a knock on effect for the rest of the day.



Clean down

A key focus at all times is cross-infection control. By the end of the day you will already have cleaned a lot! But the biggest clean is to come. All surfaces, chairs and instruments will be wiped down & sanitised as well as flushing lines. It's a big team effort!

FACTS

MYTH BUSTING FACTS ABOUT THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

Myth busting facts

Apprentices don't get paid well.

False! At Portman & Dentex we don't pay apprentice rates, but rather uplifted rates of pay that fairly reflect the hard work you put in and are competitive across the industry.

I've already done an apprentice in another sector, that means I can't apply.

False! As long as you haven't already done another dental related qualification you can be eligible to apply.

Men don't work as Dental Nurses.

False! All genders can be dental nurses, within Portman Dentex we have male colleagues across all practice roles.

I have to do an apprentice programme instead of college.

False!

You may choose to do an apprentice programme rather than going to college, but it could also be something that you chose to do after completing a college course or to enable a career change at a later stage..

The apprentice course means I will have to study unpaid during my evenings & weekends.

False! As a minimum all apprentices are granted at least 6 hours paid off the job time to dedicate towards studying during contracted working hours. Whilst we can't guarantee that your study on occasion won't spill into your own time, the majority of your work will be able to be completed during these paid allocated hours.

The apprenticeship doesn't give you the full qualification.

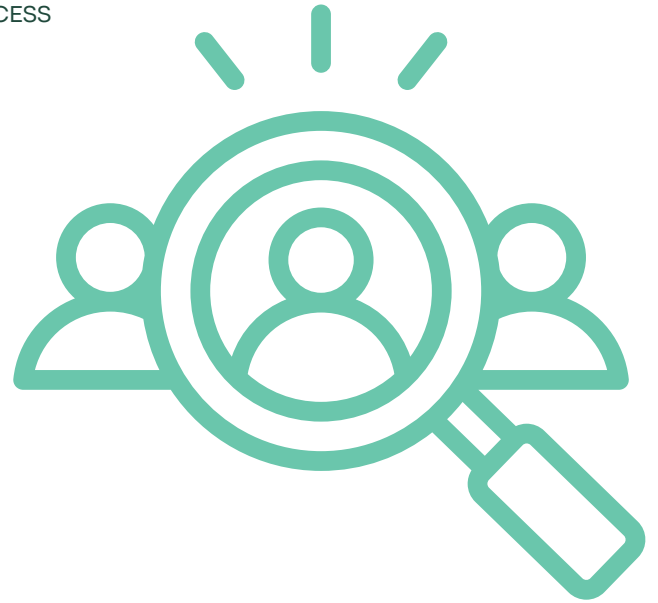
False! The apprentice programme awards an extended diploma level 3 in Dental Nursing, allowing you to practice as a Qualified Dental Nurse upon passing the course.

You have to go to university to be a Dental Nurse.

False! You can go to uni to study dental nursing, but this isn't for everyone. The apprentice route is a great alternative allowing you to work, earn a wage and study at the same time.



Our recruitment process



1

You apply online for the vacancy you would like to be considered for

2

A Portman Dentex Recruitment Partner reviews all applications that come through and gets in touch to arrange a time to chat

3

You have an initial phone call with a Recruitment Partner who will ask you about your previous experience & why you are applying for the role. It's also an opportunity for us to give you as much information as we can about the role & the course commitment. Allow up to 30 minutes.

4

Following the call if all criteria is met, the Recruitment Partner passes your application to the hiring manager at the practice who confirms if they'd like to invite you to interview.

5

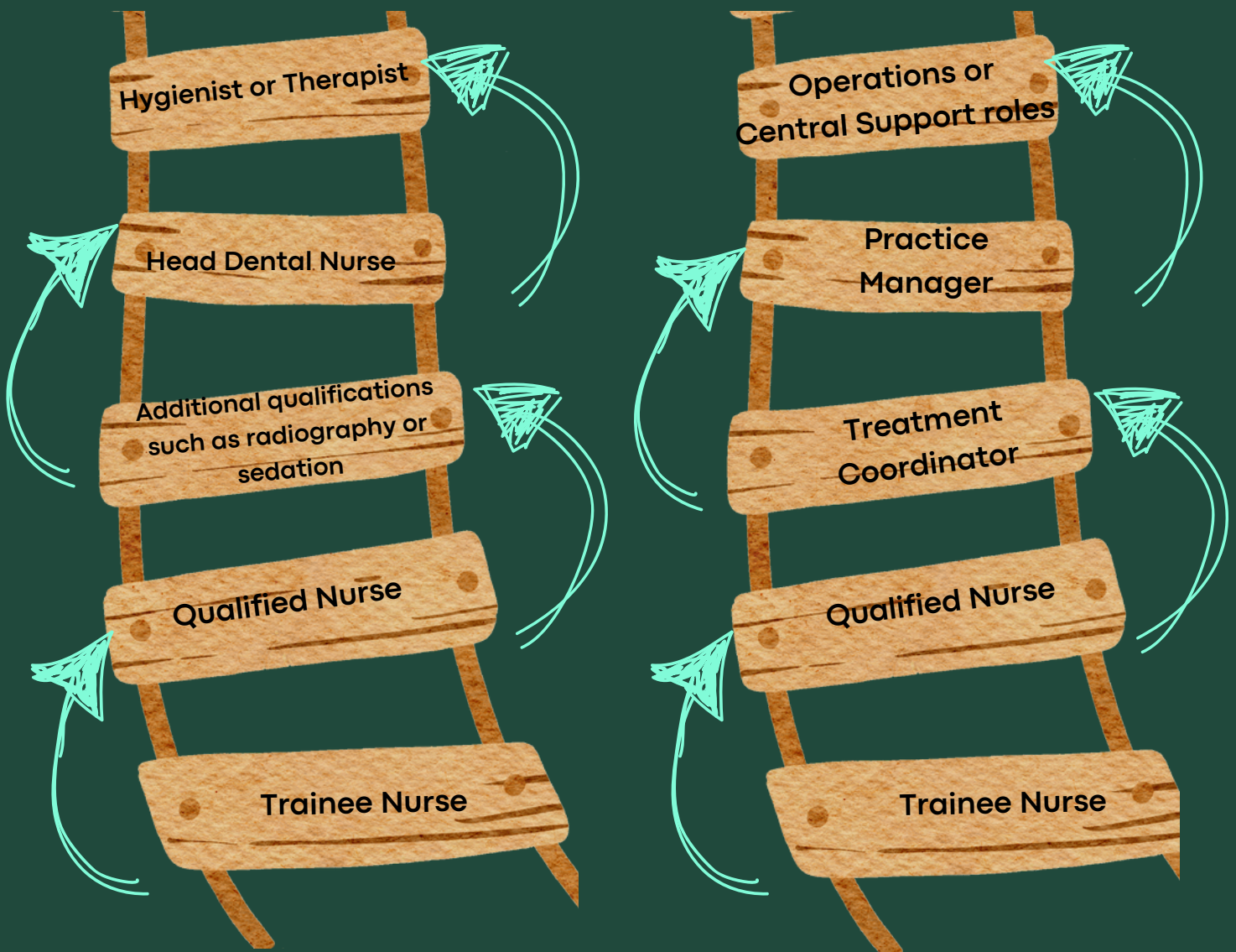
Interviews where possible are face to face at the practice allowing you to meet some of the team, see the space you would be working in and get a good feel for the role. Allow up to an hour.

6

The Recruitment Partner will get in touch to provide an outcome. We aim to update all candidates within 48 hours of their interview where possible.

Career progression

Dental Nursing is known to have great career progression. Depending on where your interests lie there are several routes you can explore. Below are just two examples.



Hear from our current colleagues

We asked our current Trainee Dental Nurses and recently Qualified Dental Nurses about their own experiences.

What do you wish you had known before you started in the role?

wish I had known that there is a lot to learn in this career and not to worry or panic if I don't grasp things first time. I'm always learning in this job and even now being newly qualified there's still new things to learn. - Jasmin

Some things are like driving or riding a bike - once you have learnt it, you do it without thinking about it - Milly

What do you wish you had known before you started in the role?

I would tell someone starting this role that as long as they have a positive attitude and work hard, they will do very well in this career. The science and knowledge aspects can be learnt but having a positive attitude gets you further - Jasmin

Dentistry is so much more than it seems – learning and understanding a lot of the science / biology even as a dental nurse. It is very rewarding – Milly