



Public Dental Service Vocational Training

Becoming a Vocational Trainee in the Public Dental Service (PDS) is a satisfying and rewarding experience on many different levels.

Working within the PDS provides an invaluable opportunity to meet and work alongside other dental professionals with a variety of specialties and as part of a multidisciplinary team. This in the early stages of your career teaches you different approaches to clinical problems and provides you with a significant personal growth experience. Alongside the development of the Dental Vocational Trainee's clinical skills comes management of patients and the benefits of interpersonal skill development, which is a requirement when working in a larger dental team.

Vocational training within the PDS also provides an introduction to aspects of the managerial side of a larger organisation; interfacing with HR, occupational health, payroll and health care governance structures. The HR department provides trainees with an insight into employee policies concerning sickness, maternity etc. The managerial support structure provides qualitative support through difficult situations. A good example of this is how the nursing staff is managed by senior nurses and managers rather than dentists, demonstrating the advantages and disadvantages of working within a large NHS organisation.

As with all Vocational Training places, structures are in place to allow PDS vocational trainers dedicated time with their trainees. As a trainer and PDS practitioner, the relationship is one only of trainer and not as employer, eliminating some of the financial pressures. VDPs may wish to discuss this prior to taking a job if the financial aspect of dentistry is important to them. Within the PDS practitioners have to adhere to the SDR and patients are charged accordingly, in line with that of a general dental practice, allowing practitioners to carry out a comprehensive range of NHS care for patients. However, the opportunity to expand your skills providing private treatment will be limited due to the PDS providing NHS care only. Due to the nature of the patient base within the PDS, a lot of new, untreated patients attend, giving vocational trainees a chance to carry out comprehensive treatment planning. This is an essential skill for any young dentist, as you gain invaluable experience of prioritising treatment and the planning of appointments.

At the trainer's discretion, there may be the opportunity for the trainee to gain experience in other areas of dentistry, out with that of general practice, provided



by the PDS, for example, domiciliary visits, GA extraction sessions and unregistered patient emergency sessions. The treatment of unregistered emergencies allows vocational trainees to hone their diagnostic skills, decision-making abilities and to prioritise what treatment is required at that visit. These opportunities would give the vocational trainee a greater understanding of the referral pathways in place within the PDS, the challenges encountered in treating various patient groups and advice on making appropriate referrals.

Irrespective of where you practice, your trainer can impart the hints and tips accrued over many years of practice, as well as providing coping mechanisms for dealing with the potential stress of working.