



Scope of practice: dental nurses

An up-to-date focus on the scope of practice of one group of dental care professionals (DCPs), as described by the General Dental Council (GDC).

'Scope of practice' means what you are trained and competent to do. It describes the areas in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise safely and effectively in the best interests of patients. The GDC's full document on the scope of practice of all dental registrants, published in 2013 and updated in 2017, can be found at <https://www.gdc-uk.org/professionals/register/reg-types>.

Dental nurses

Dental nurses are registered dental professionals who provide clinical and other support to registrants and patients. As a dental nurse, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- Prepare and maintain the clinical environment, including the equipment
- Carry out infection prevention and control procedures to prevent physical, chemical and microbiological contamination in the surgery

or laboratory

- Record dental charting and oral tissue assessment carried out by other registrants
- Prepare, mix and handle dental bio-materials
- Provide chairside support to the operator during treatment
- Keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- Prepare equipment, materials and patients for dental radiography
- Process dental radiographs

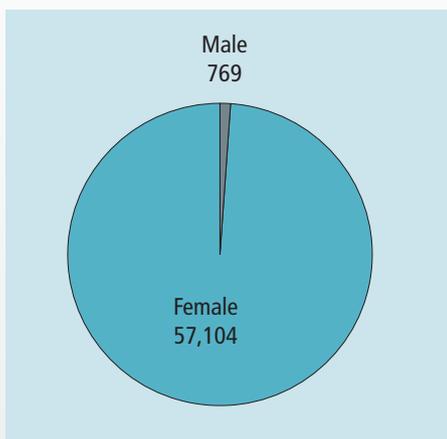


Fig. 1 Dental nurses on the GDC register (March 2018)

- Monitor, support and reassure patients
- Give appropriate patient advice
- Support the patient and their colleagues if there is a medical emergency
- Make appropriate referrals to other health professionals

Additional skills dental nurses could develop include:

- Further skills in oral health education and oral health promotion
- Assisting in the treatment of patients who are under conscious sedation
- Further skills in assisting in the treatment of patients with special needs
- Further skills in assisting in the treatment of orthodontic patients
- Intra- and extra-oral photography
- Pouring, casting and trimming study models

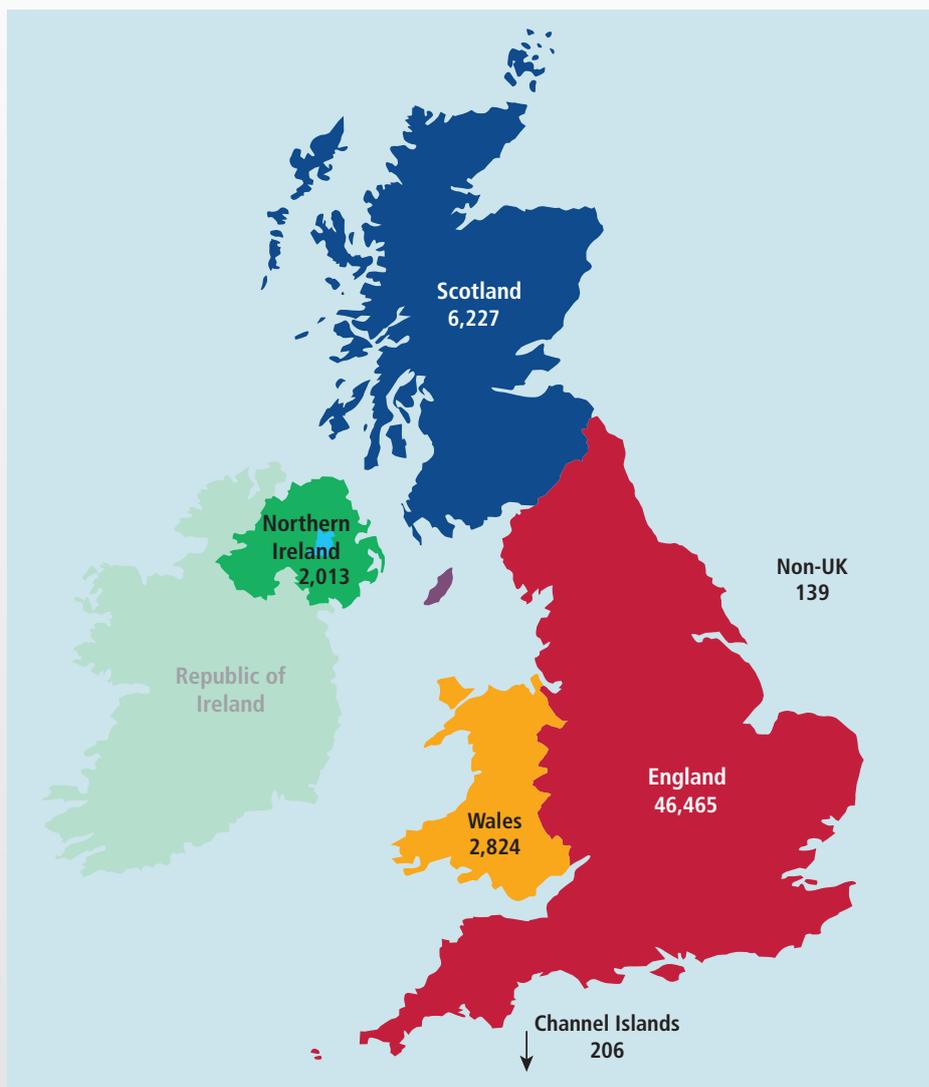


Fig. 2 Dental nurses by UK region (March 2018)

‘DENTAL NURSES CAN APPLY FLUORIDE VARNISH EITHER ON PRESCRIPTION FROM A DENTIST OR DIRECT AS PART OF A STRUCTURED DENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME’

- Shade taking
- Tracing cephalographs.

Additional skills carried out on prescription from, or under the direction of, another registrant:

- Taking radiographs
- Placing rubber dam
- Measuring and recording plaque indices
- Removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist
- Constructing occlusal registration rims and special trays

- Repairing the acrylic component of removable appliances
- Applying topical anaesthetic to the prescription of a dentist
- Constructing mouthguards and bleaching trays to the prescription of a dentist
- Constructing vacuum-formed retainers to the prescription of a dentist
- Taking impressions to the prescription of a dentist or a CDT (where appropriate).

Dental nurses can apply fluoride varnish either on prescription from a dentist or direct as part

Table 1: Dental care professionals with more than one title (March 2018)

	Dental Nurse
Clinical Dental Technician	3
Dental Hygienist	1,035
Orthodontic Therapist	558
Dental Technician	0
Dental Therapist	711

of a structured dental health programme.

Dental nurses **do not** diagnose disease or treatment plan. All other skills are reserved to one or more of the other registrant groups.

bdjteam2018103