

SMOOTH MOVES

Sara Bilal, 33, is an associate dentist in Barking but recently relocated from Manchester. Sara qualified BDS in Lahore, Pakistan, in 2005 and registered with the GDC in 2010.

I am usually up around 6.30 am. First things first, I have a cup of tea to get myself going. I normally have something like porridge with fresh fruit and honey for breakfast, as I like to eat quite healthily. I have a lift to the practice, IDH Barking, which is only a 15-minute drive.

I work part time at the practice, 8 am to 1.30 pm, Monday to Friday, and mostly carry out general dentistry such as check-ups and seeing new patients. For the rest of the day I'm mummy to my two-year-old. Being part time helps make things easy and manageable.

I practised as a dentist for two years in Pakistan after graduating. A career in dentistry replaced my initial dream of becoming an astronaut and going to the moon. I fell in love with dentistry when I got my braces. I had a fantastic dentist, and that was when I knew a career in dentistry was for me.

Moving to the UK was straightforward but the process to register with the GDC, waiting for exam dates and preparing for the exam, etc, took almost two years.

My first job in the UK was in Manchester at Fallow Field Dental Centre; it was an incredibly friendly and helpful environment.

After three years in Manchester, my husband's work took him to London. Rather than him commuting permanently, we made the decision to relocate.

It was difficult leaving my colleagues and patients behind in Manchester having been there so long. However, everyone at IDH was very supportive of my relocation. The recruitment team were also a great support. They were really understanding about my situation and were very active in looking for London positions and regularly updating me with vacancies. My husband took care of finding somewhere to live.

I think I faced the same challenges anyone would when moving to a new place: getting used to an unfamiliar location, meeting new people... It all takes time for things to fall into place.

My new practice is bigger; there are more of us – more dentists and more



staff generally. That was a bit of an adjustment that took me a few days to get used to and to settle in fully.

There are bits and pieces of Manchester I miss: for example, the peace and quiet. London is far busier.

For others considering relocating, I would recommend talking to your practice manager and area manager (if you have one); they are there to help and guide you. It's likely they have dealt with similar changes before and can answer any questions, as well as point you in the right direction to get further advice.

Also, make sure you are set up to receive regular updates of new vacancies. Once you accept a new position, take the time to visit the practice, talk to the people you will be working with and make sure you get a feel for the place.

I usually get home around 2.30 pm, thanks to London traffic! I spend time playing with my son. I also love to read or, after a particularly busy day, there is nothing better than curling up in front of the TV with a cup of tea to unwind.

I like to have a mix of leisure time for myself and family time. I never miss the gym but I have to admit I do enjoy my soaps. I also love cooking and arranging big dinner parties for family and friends.

I have a very loving and caring husband and we always eat our evening meals together as a family. I go to bed between 10.30 and 11 pm.

INTERVIEW BY KATE QUINLAN