

A DCP's life:

The DCP tutor in the Highlands



Tommy MacGregor, 39, qualified as a dental nurse in 1996 and now works for NHS Education for Scotland (NES) as a DCP tutor and CPD advisor. Tommy has also been an NEBDN examiner and is now an NEBDN Trustee.

It depends on what I'm doing workwise but as a general rule I get up at 5 am. I live on my own in a small village called Maryburgh, not far from my hometown of Conon Bridge which is near Dingwall in the Highlands of Scotland. I bought my current house about 14 years ago. I'm very lucky to have family close by. I feel privileged to live in a beautiful part of the country, and with ever improving transport links.

I usually have breakfast at home and what I have varies; I might have a small bowl of homemade porridge/brose or cereal, a cup of coffee with 1% fat milk and a probiotic yoghurt. I've been on a bit of a health kick for about three or so years so I measure out all my ingredients. As a very occasional special treat I'll have a couple of slices of bacon, poached eggs and an avocado. I follow the 5:2 diet, although I see it more as a lifestyle change than a diet.

I work at the Centre for Health Science in Inverness which is 14 miles from home. I take the car when I have to, but I prefer to take the train as it involves a bit of walking. I walk to my local train station and then from Inverness train station to work. It adds up to an additional six miles of walking per day.

Currently I work three days a week within the Clinical Effectiveness work stream as a Dental Tutor in Infection Control. I'm part of the NES Quality Improvement in Practice Training (QIiPT) team; this involves delivering control of infection/decontamination training sessions to dental staff in their practices. Our team also support the delivery of control of infection/decontamination across the other work streams within the directorate such as VT, DCP, CPD etc. I also do one day as a DCP tutor, where I'm involved in the delivery, assessing and internal verification of various DCP courses and qualifications and one day as CPD advisor where I (as part of a national team) assist the development of CPD courses for the dental team.

I left school with pretty limited qualifications and no real clue as to what I'd like to do. What I did have was an open mind, a real work ethic and a willingness to give most things a try.

I never intended to go into dentistry; it was suggested to me by a work experience advisor. Eventually I was taken on by NHS Highland as a trainee dental nurse on the Skills Seekers programme. My intention was to do it for about six months to a year to gain a bit of

experience then move onto something else.

I qualified as dental nurse in 1996; since then I've gone on to graduate from Robert Gordon University in 2001 with an MSc in Health Promotion, De-Montfort University in 2009 with a Pg Cert in Frontline Leadership and Management and in 2014 I graduated from Stirling University with a Pg Cert in Tertiary Education (with a Teaching Qualification in Further Education). I also hold qualifications in assessing and internal verification and completed a range of modules in infection prevention and control from various MSc programmes. Eventually I'd like to go back to university to do further studies, I'm just trying to decide what to do next.

My current roles can involve a lot of travelling so it can involve long days with early starts and late finishes. NES operate a flexi policy so it does balance out. When I'm in the office I do try to stick to office hours.

I like the variety that my posts offer; I'm involved in a lot of different projects. I also enjoy teaching and delivering training out in practice. Juggling all my different roles means that managing my time can be a challenge.

As I have three distinct roles I work with a lot of people. The QliPT team currently has 13 members strategically placed across the country (ten tutors, a decontamination advisor, an infection control nurse advisor, and very importantly, our administrator who keeps us all right!).

The local DCP team I work with is very small; where I'm based there are another three DCP tutor colleagues along with a Lead DCP Tutor. I also work closely with my other DCP tutors in our other centres.

I was an examiner with the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) and I recently became a Trustee of the same organisation. As a Trustee I'm currently not allowed to examine but I hope to go back to it once I complete my term of office.

When it's not one of my restricted [diet] days I'll take in something I've prepared from home for lunch and I'll either go for a walk or I'll sit and read/listen to music. I try as far as possible to get away from my desk at lunchtime.

To me personal development is incredibly important and CPD is a crucial element of that. My employer gives me time off to do CPD if I apply for it and it is relevant to my role and in my personal development plan (PDP) but I accept that sometimes CPD has to be done in my own time and at my own expense. We are living and working in very challenging times and there aren't pots of money to go around so I think we have to be a bit realistic. As an NHS organisation we use eKSF and iMatter systems to help identify and support our development and organisational needs. At the end of the day I firmly believe that as GDC registrants we are ultimately responsible for ensuring we meet the requirements for registration including CPD.

I try to be home for 6:30 pm but due to the nature of my roles and travel and so on that doesn't always happen. Occasionally I manage to get away at 4 pm.

Outside work I enjoy the usual things most people do, such as cooking and gardening. I also play bowls and I like spending time with my family. The occasional bit of retail therapy doesn't go amiss. I play the drums in a Pipe-band which takes up a fair bit of my time and I'm also involved in children's/youth work.

I like to travel/go on holiday as well. So far I've nothing booked for this year so I think I need to get focussed and a bit more organised!

At the weekend I usually try to go on at least one long walk. I would like to walk the West Highland Way [a 96 mile footpath running from Milngavie north of Glasgow to Fort William in the Scottish Highlands] at some point in the future but I'm not sure if that will be this year, we'll just have to see how it goes...

I am careful with my diet and my oral health regime but I don't think I'm obsessive about them. As I follow the 5:2 diet plan [eat what you want for five days and much less for two], on two days of the week I'm restricted to 600 calories so I'll have breakfast and dinner and nothing in between. The other days I'll eat sensibly but I don't really restrict what I eat, although I do keep an eye on my calories. I use the Myfitnesspal app to keep an eye on my calorie intake and log my food; I also log my exercise and use my phone to count my daily steps. This lifestyle change has helped me to shed quite a lot of weight.

I try to be in bed by 11 pm at the latest.

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