



# Scope of practice: dental therapists

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 therapists

Dental therapists are registered dental professionals who carry out certain items of dental treatment direct to patients or under prescription from a dentist and can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- Obtain a detailed dental history from patients and evaluate their medical history
- Carry out a clinical examination within their competence
- Complete periodontal examination and charting and use indices to screen and monitor periodontal disease
- Diagnose and treatment plan within their competence
- Prescribe radiographs
- Take, process and interpret various film views used in general dental practice
- Plan the delivery of care for patients
- Give appropriate patient advice
- Provide preventive oral care to patients and

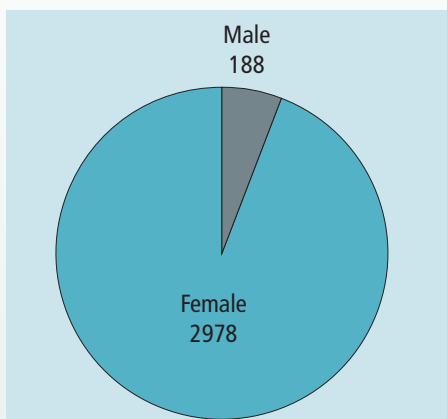


Fig. 1 Dental therapists on the GDC register (March 2018)

liaise with dentists over the treatment of caries, periodontal disease and tooth wear

- Undertake supragingival and subgingival scaling and root surface debridement using manual and powered instruments
- Use appropriate anti-microbial therapy to manage plaque related diseases
- Adjust restored surfaces in relation to periodontal treatment
- Apply topical treatments and fissure sealants
- Give patients advice on how to stop smoking
- Take intra and extra-oral photographs
- Give infiltration and inferior dental block analgesia
- Place temporary dressings and re-cement crowns with temporary cement
- Place rubber dam
- Take impressions
- Care of implants and treatment of peri-implant tissues

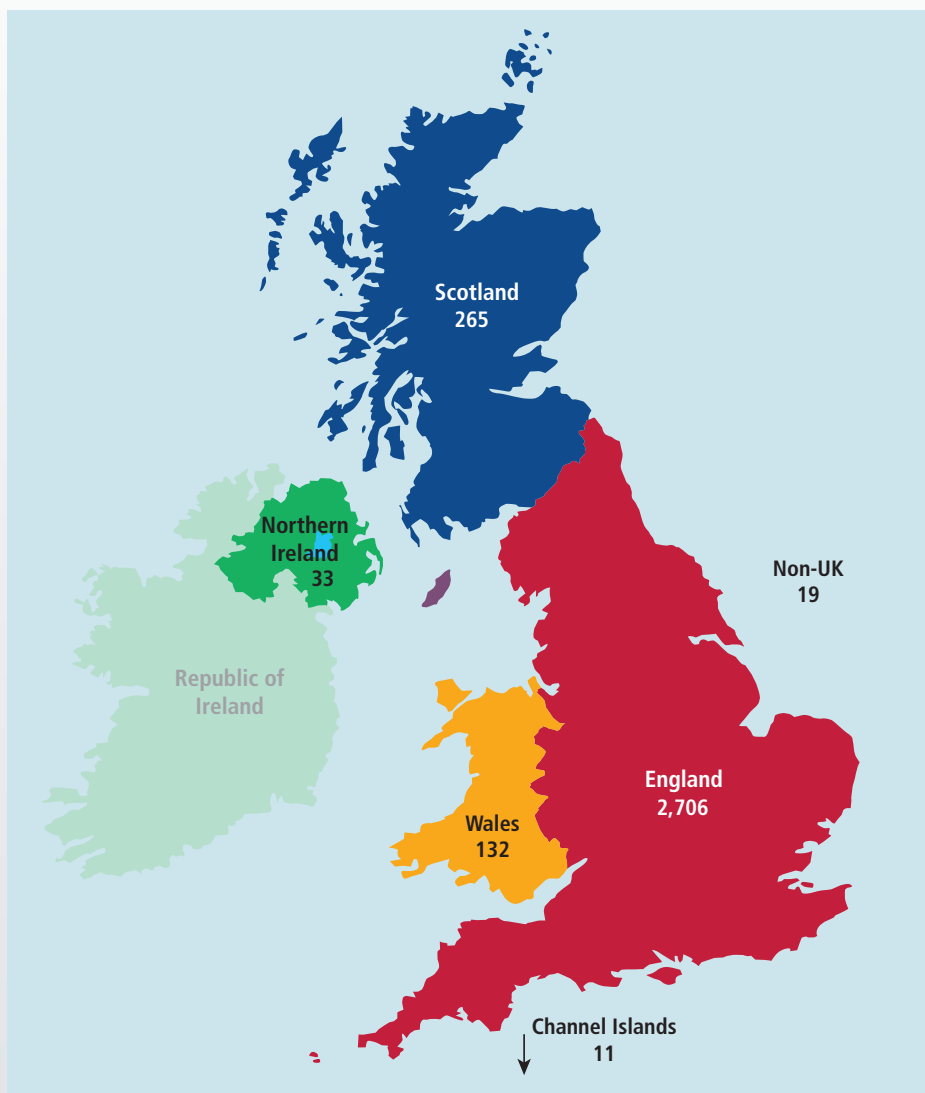


Fig. 2 Dental therapists by UK region (March 2018)

**‘DENTAL THERAPISTS ARE REGISTERED DENTAL PROFESSIONALS WHO CARRY OUT CERTAIN ITEMS OF DENTAL TREATMENT DIRECT TO PATIENTS OR UNDER PRESCRIPTION FROM A DENTIST.’**

- Carry out direct restorations on primary and secondary teeth
- Carry out pulpotomies on primary teeth
- Extract primary teeth
- Place pre-formed crowns on primary teeth
- Identify anatomical features, recognise abnormalities and interpret common pathology
- Carry out oral cancer screening
- If necessary, refer patients to other healthcare professionals
- Keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- If working on prescription, vary the detail but not the direction of the prescription according to patient needs; for example, the number of surfaces to be restored or the material to be used.

Additional skills that dental therapists could develop include:

- Carrying out tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist
- Administering inhalation sedation
- Removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist.

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

	Dental Therapist
Clinical Dental Technician	0
Dental Hygienist	2,946
Dental Nurse	711
Dental Technician	13
Orthodontic Therapist	15

All other skills are reserved to orthodontic therapists, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians or dentists.

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