



The recruitment market as it stands today

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In February – what feels like a lifetime ago – discussions were ongoing over how the dental workforce would look once the Brexit transition period was complete, with some anecdotal evidence suggesting testing times lay ahead.

Fast forward to September and life has drastically changed. Social distancing is now a firm part of the everyday lexicon, and dentistry is a shadow of its former self. I spoke to *BDJ* Classified Advertising Team Leader, **Joseph Hughes** and Classified Advertising Executive **Charley Sheppard** to find out how the recruitment market had been affected by COVID-19.

What impact has the COVID-19 crisis had on the recruitment sector?

CS COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the recruitment sector. With the majority

of dental practices closing completely, and others offering emergency only treatments, the demand for dentists has decreased massively as running a practice required a much smaller team of staff than would usually be required.

'As things start to return to something approaching normality, we have seen some figures that suggest a recovery is possible.'

Due to the high level of uncertainty around COVID-19 and the 'return to normal' it also means that the level of dentists looking for work has also decreased. Understandably,

many do not wish to leave their current position when there is no guarantee of a post available for them elsewhere. I believe it will take a significant amount of time and recovery before we see the recruitment sector return to its previous capacity.

JH From the moment the UK officially went into lockdown on 23 March up until dental practices were allowed to reopen on 8 June, we saw an 83% decrease in the number of jobs being posted compared to the same period in 2019. It goes without saying the impact was catastrophic on the sector.

So how will the pandemic affect the recruitment sector in the long-term?

JH During lockdown we saw job views increase but applications go down compared to the same period in 2019. Since 8 June, we have seen views and applications per listing increase, although there are fewer jobs on the site compared to last year.

CS We would expect to see the number of positions available to be lower for some time whilst dental practices aren't able to see the number of patients that they could have pre-COVID-19.

JH Charley is right. The main factor we'd attribute to the slow recovery in the dental recruitment sector is that practices are still not operating in the same way as they did pre-COVID-19, which is understandable. Practices are having to see less patients to ensure they are adhering to government guidance. If practices are seeing fewer patients, the urgency to recruit new associates decreases.

As things start to return to something approaching normality, we have seen some figures that suggest a recovery is possible. Since practices were allowed to safely re-open on 8 June, we have seen a 3% year on year increase in the number of jobs being posted, which is a positive sign.

CS We have also noticed that there has been a significant increase in the amount of jobseekers looking at job listings, but not always applying for the role. I believe many are interested in other opportunities but still see a big risk in the dental sector and would rather stay in the position that they have which provides security than move to a new opportunity.

Are there any green shoots of recovery on the horizon?

CS The amount of interest we see in terms of views on job postings is definitely a

positive sign that the recruitment sector will return to something approaching normal. The interest from dentists is there, but obviously the unknown is when that may happen. Once there is more certainty surrounding the pandemic itself and how we are able to operate, we could potentially see a situation where applications will increase significantly. From my knowledge of the dental corporate groups and recruitment agencies, they are receiving some high numbers of applications consistently and high-quality candidates which is very positive for that area of the sector.

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JH The number of jobseekers on our site has remained consistent throughout the pandemic, whereas recruiters are only starting to come back to advertise post-lockdown. As Charley suggests, once some of the uncertainty that shrouds our profession subsides, we'd expect to see some upward ticks. Until then we have to proceed with caution. We appreciate the financial impact closing has had on practice owners and how unpredictable this period of returning to normality can be, so we have created a bespoke recruitment package for employers which will be launched in September and be running until the end of the year.

In what sectors are you seeing demand for jobs?

CS The biggest demand for roles we are seeing is in the independent dental practices – the number of postings has increased significantly over the last few weeks. The private dental sector has seen an even bigger increase in interest than what was an already high level, and as previously mentioned many dentists appear to be more interested in the corporate dental sector and the job security they are

able to provide than previously. These are all positives.

It is a difficult time, but I would encourage jobseekers to have faith in the dental sector and its ability to cope through this pandemic and come out of the other side. Moving roles is always a risk and the advantages and disadvantages should be weighed up to make sure that the decision is right for you – that principle is no different to pre-pandemic times.

There are plenty of resources available out there to offer you employment advice and also to find out about the employer you are looking at applying for a position with. Seeking out advice from other dentists who work in the area of the sector you are looking at is also invaluable.

What tools do you have at your disposal to help jobseekers?

JH If you are currently out of work, there are plenty of quality roles available on *BDJ Jobs* right now. If you are considering your next career move, I'd recommend browsing our jobs board to find out what types of roles are out there at the moment, and signing up for job alerts, which will ensure you never miss out on newly posted listings which fits the criteria you are looking for.

CS We know jobseekers like tailored listings. Beyond Joe's recommendation to sign up to alerts, using the filter setting will help you find something you want – different sectors, practice types and contract types, for example. I would also recommend using the 'Search Recruiter' feature on the website where the employer is able to upload information about their practice and the team that work there, this is an excellent starting point to gather more information about who you could be working for.

We also have the CV database which is live now for you to upload your CV and have employers contact you about positions that may be suitable. You are able to select certain criteria which means your CV will only be visible to those where the role would be a suitable match.

To search the listings and for more information visit www.bdjjobs.com

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