NEBDN: Small but perfectly formed

An interview with **Kate Kerslake**, NEBDN's new CEO whose first experience of dentistry was as a dental practice manager.

Q. Congratulations on your appointment to CEO of NEBDN. What was it like to start the job in the week of the Board's 75th birthday?

It was really exciting to be introduced at this point and witness such passion and support for NEBDN. I felt very proud to be celebrating such an important milestone with everyone.

Q. Tell us about your previous jobs and how they have prepared you for this one?

The first half of my career was in retail management with large corporates, which taught me a lot about the type of leader I wanted to be. Moving into a dental practice manager role, I suddenly found a dream job that used all the skills I'd learnt but presented a new challenge to learn about the dental industry. As practice manager I had to understand finance, HR, operations, customer service, regulatory requirements and drive business development.

Ten years later I had experienced new piloted NHS contracts – developed CQC expectations and dental nurse registration; all of which gave me insight as to the impact on dental nursing as a profession. At Oasis Dental Care I moved from Practice Manager to Area Manager, where I then progressed to the Head of Clinical Support as Oasis joined Bupa. During my time at Bupa I led a big team, the majority of whom were dental nurses, supporting over 450 practices on clinical audits and quality assurance. The move to NEBDN is an exciting next step to use my skills and support the dental nurse profession as it develops for the future.

Q. Can you tell us a bit more about the NEBDN?

We are a relatively small, but perfectly formed team of 19 based in Preston, with auditors working nationally with course providers. I directly manage two heads within the Senior Management Team, the Head of Operations, Quality and Standards, and the Head of Strategy and Innovation. The great thing about a team this size is that you still get to connect with different elements of the organisation which is so important. On average we assess over 2,000 candidates per year across the National Diploma and see over 1,000 qualified candidates complete one of our six Post Registration courses, which supports further career development. The first National Certificate ran 75 years ago, and is now named the National Diploma, which was launched in 2010 and has seen over 13,000 candidates take the exam, with over 84% passing to become fully qualified dental nurses.

Q. Volunteers appear to play an important part in the work of the NEBDN.

You're correct, volunteers play a vital part in our work. We are fortunate to have some very dedicated and passionate individuals who contribute to the various committees and others who support with the exam process. I was lucky enough to experience the recent practical assessment (OSCE) in Birmingham, which was one of the five centres running the exam. It was a delight to meet the volunteers, thank them first hand, and witness how much pride and professionalism they take in delivering the exam.

Q. How do you maintain communications around all the different arms of the NEBDN?

We use a variety of methods including newsletters, the website and forums. It is something we are always looking to improve and will be a conscious part of our digital development this year.

NEBDN offices

Q. We touched on your plans for the Board - do you have any longer-term plans?

We will always be directed by the changing needs of the profession in any future plans and we envisage that new qualifications will continue to be developed with the expanding scope of dental nurse duties. We would also like to offer our qualifications to overseas students and we are reviewing how we can be best placed to achieve this.

Q. Can you only ever be the examining board for dental nurses?

We will primarily be supporting dental nurses; however, we also recognise that the career path for a dental nurse is varied and we must look at where this moves into differing professions. Understanding how to partner with other organisations or provide assessment for a wider range of qualifications is a consideration.

Q. Who will you be relying upon to support you as CEO?

Any CEO can only be successful with the full

support of the team. No one person is bigger than that. My job is to keep us all working towards the same goals and maintain passion and drive to achieve them. I will be relying on all team members, but that includes our extended family of examiners, volunteers, trustees and course providers.

Q. Do you have a supportive Board?

We do. With a mix of clinical and lay trustees we are very fortunate to be able to draw on a diverse range of skills. The Board's strength is

NEBDN Board

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NEBDN team

National Examining Board for Dental Nurses

something we are very keen to maintain and skills are carefully considered as part of our annual trustee recruitment process. We consider ourselves very lucky to have such a committed group who volunteer their time because they are passionate about the profession.

Q. Do you think it's important that NEBDN is a charity?

Yes, a charity must always work for the good of its people and raise awareness in whatever

capacity it supports. Likewise, it holds us accountable to the profession and the public, to ensure we deliver a high standard of qualified dental nurses, who have the appropriate expertise to support the changing needs of the UK population.

Q. What do you like to do when you are not at work?

I have a busy family life with my husband, two children (and the dog!), but I like to be a part of my local community and have volunteered for the past several years at the local secondary school as a Governor. Aside from this we live near the Lake District, so when the weather permits it is a great place to get out and enjoy the surroundings.

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