

# 'If you really want something then go for it'



In 2014 Sharon Grant, who started her career as a dental nurse and went on to become a dental therapist and radiography tutor, was balancing working in a practice with running a dental nurse training company.<sup>1</sup> **Kate Quinlan** caught up with Sharon, five years after she featured in *BDJ Team* (<https://go.nature.com/2XKu0Ua>).

## We last spoke to you in 2014 when you were living in Blackpool. Can you describe where work and life has taken you since then?

I gave up practice two years ago to focus on DELTA, the training company, which meant I can work from anywhere so we moved house to South Lakeland in Cumbria, basically to please the husband.

## How much time was the training company taking up two years ago?

It had got to the point where I couldn't effectively manage the business as I was otherwise occupied three days out of the five working in surgery. The phone wasn't being answered and messages were not being responded to quickly enough. Coupled with having to do administrative chores in the evenings after being in surgery all day, I decided things had to change and opted to take the risk and commit to the business full time.

## Did you move into new premises as the training company expanded?

No, at the moment the business is still being managed from home but three homes now rather than just one! We are considering getting an office base in the future.

## Did you also change the name of the training company? How did you choose the new name?

The name of the company changed in 2014 from SMG Training to Delta Dental. Given my radiography geek status, the name Delta came about as it is the fourth letter in the Greek alphabet after alpha, beta and gamma (which are all types of radiation) but also lent itself to being the acronym for the Dental Education Learning and Training Academy, which is what we are registered as.

## How many tutors and students do you have now?

We have 14 amazing tutors now and three support staff, and over 300 active students.

## How many courses do you offer and is it just for dental nurses?

We have six Awards which are short courses based on the General Dental Council (GDC) extended duties/scope of practice. These are Suture Removal, Rubber Dam, Fluoride Application, Plaque Scoring and Impression Taking with another in Cone Beam CT.

We have the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) courses in Orthodontic Nursing, Implant Nursing and Special Care, and we have our brand new DELTA courses in Advanced Oral Health Practice, Dental Imaging (Radiography), Dental Sedation (accredited by IACSD) and two new subjects, Minor Oral Surgery and Paediatric Dental Nursing.

All of our courses are for dental nurses, delivered by dental nurses.



Sharon with some of the DELTA tutor team



### How is the course accreditation process going?

We have completed the accreditation process with the IACSD (Intercollegiate Advisory Committee for Sedation in Dentistry - a branch of the Royal College of Surgeons) which means our Sedation programme is now fully accredited. We also have the backing of two well-known dental corporate companies which is amazing. We have worked with both for a long time and they know how grateful we are for their support.

of the office for at least an hour every day for a breather. The dogs are very therapeutic and also good sounding boards for when I want to talk through new ideas to myself! I just talk to them.

### Are you looking forward to the 2020s?

Well it is going to happen whether we like it or not! But it is exciting times for us at DELTA so yes, we are looking forward to the challenges ahead.

We have been around for 15 years this year and have established some great relationships, so we are hoping the dental profession has the faith to make the leap with us. We are looking forward to working with them.

### Are you pleased with your career in dentistry to date?

Yes, it hasn't done too badly on the whole! I have done a lot of things. It is important to have ambition, and if you really want something then go for it. That is what DELTA is all about,

*‘The dogs are very therapeutic and also good sounding boards for when I want to talk through new ideas to myself! I just talk to them.’*

### How did the company become an awarding organisation?

We have been driven by the lack of opportunities for dental nurses in some areas of the profession, most notably, minor oral surgery. In 2009 the GDC extended the role of the dental nurse and we have worked hard to provide the training for nurses to encourage them to take up additional responsibilities. We have our own ideas of the training we would like to provide and the best way to do this is to become an awarding organisation. With the help of the Federation of Awarding Bodies and Ofqual, we have created a separate arm to the company made up of individuals who are not in any way connected to the design or delivery of the programmes and can assess and award independently. We wanted to create new courses and improve on existing ones to incorporate up to date aspects such as Cone Beam CT and elements of the GDC Scope of Practice.

This was a company decision - all the tutors had their say - and those that want to be involved are; those that are happy with the way they currently work can continue in this role.

All aspects of all courses will be online, including the exam and any workplace portfolio relevant to the course. We are aiming to streamline the learner experience and take out all the bureaucracy while maintaining a quality assured, standardised, fair and reliable service to our students.

### What is happening in January?

We are very excited for the launch of our new website, and the first student cohort on the new courses as our own awarding organisation.

### Are you a hands-on tutor still or more of a behind the scenes manager?

Very much a tutor; it will take a lot to prise me away from the teaching side. I am delegating some responsibility to other members of the team when we launch as I cannot remain impartial as a tutor and as a manager of the Awarding Organisation, so I will continue to teach and leave the hard work to someone else!

### Do you miss general practice?

I do locum from time to time to keep up the skills and am still registered of course. I don't really miss it though if I am honest!

### Do you have time to fully enjoy your proximity to the Lake District? I bet your dogs love it?

I make time, although I am considered something of a workaholic (which any self employed person can relate to) so it is important to take time out. I always make sure I get out

we can help nurses with the ambition and drive to succeed. I would like to be an inspiration to dental nurses with what I have achieved; it's all out there for them, just go and get it!

### Do you think dental nurses have better professional recognition these days? Do you think there are a lot more opportunities for them?

This is a difficult question; if you ask 200 dental nurses you would get 100 different answers. There are so many variables in the environments that nurses work in. There are more opportunities with the extended duties, and courses like our potential new ones - it is whether they are in a position to do it. Some practices value and use their dental nurses better than others. I don't think there is one definitive answer.

### Reference

1. Quinlan K A. ‘The important thing is to move with the times’ *BDJ Team* March 2014. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/bdjteam20141> (accessed November 2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-019-0206-3>