

'You have to love it to do it'



Dental hygienist and therapist Laura Marshall, 24, from West Yorkshire, works for two dental practices, teaches student dental nurses and is currently developing CPD courses. Interview by **Kate Quinlan.**

I get up between 6 am and 6.30 am at home in Halifax, West Yorkshire. I drive to work which takes between 15 and 30 minutes. I usually have porridge for breakfast at home before rushing out to set off.

I work five days a week, Monday to Friday. I'm a little all over the place, balancing my time working as a dental hygienist and dental therapist in two dental practices (Carr Wood House and Rayner Dental Practice), and teaching at the Northern Dental Education Centre Bradford.

At Carr Wood House I work with a dental team of ten: two dentists, two hygienists, a practice manager and dental nurses. At Rayner Dental Practice it is a bigger team as there are two different practices so the team rotates; there are six dentists, two dental therapists, a practice manager and five dental nurses working at the practice when I am there but they have more dental nurses at the sister practice.

I originally took an interest in dentistry due to my dad. He doesn't have a dental background but is a graphic designer. When I was little he was designing a logo for a dental practice and the dentist would let me play in the dental chair during their meetings. I didn't understand why other children at school were so scared of the dentist; to me it was fun.

When I was in high school I started gaining experience in dentistry through visiting practices and dental labs and I fell in love with the dental community. I enjoy meeting and talking to people.

I trained as a dental nurse for a year and with support from my practice I had the great opportunity to study Dental Hygiene and Therapy at Leeds University. It was tough to get a place. Twenty-five candidates are offered a place from thousands of entries from all over the world.

It is a challenging course - I definitely spent a lot of time studying and it was 100% worth it. I absolutely loved my time at Leeds.

I qualified with a surprising distinction in 2016, soon returning to work part time with my original practice family.

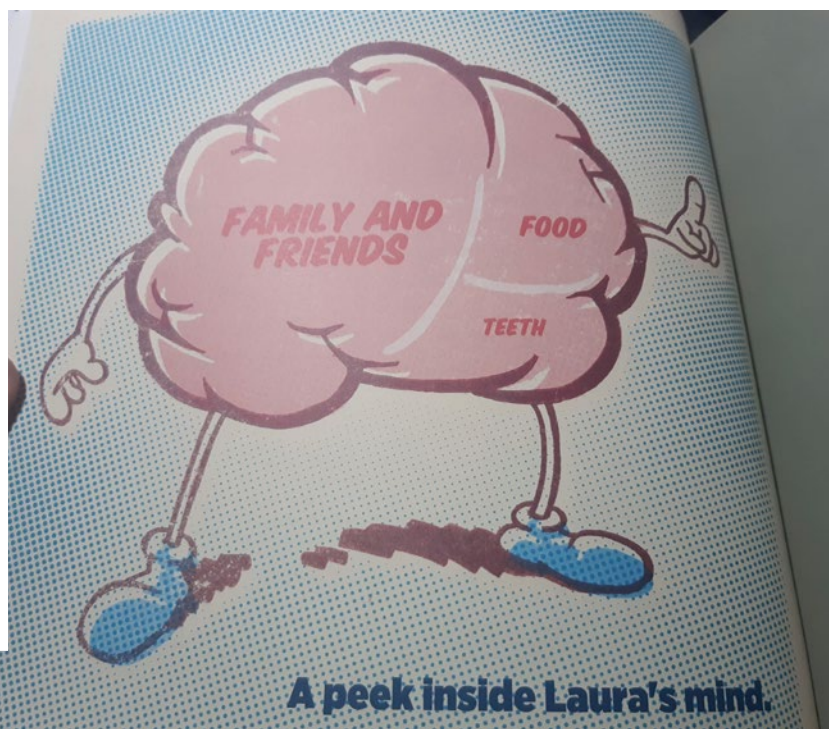
I work with a good range of patients, from children and teens to adults and the elderly. I have some patients with disabilities and

the patient has conditions beyond their control or perhaps just hasn't taken on your advice. It can feel disheartening if patients are struggling.

I had heard about the Northern Dental Education Centre (NORDEC) Bradford building opening in 2017 in the news. The centre was opened by the MP Judith Cummins as a new state of the art dental training centre. It was big news to the community as the area is recognised as one of the highest dental decay areas in the UK. The building was opened with the aim of training passionate and skilled

dental professionals. I love that I get to be a part of that. My dad saw an advertisement for a lecturing role and suggested I give it go. I went for an interview and was asked to do a presentation on the GDC standards. I was originally offered the job full time but I negotiated to get it part time because I didn't want to give up my dental hygiene and therapy in practice.

I went straight into a teacher training course, working during the day and taking evening classes for the course. I have recently received a Distinction in my Certificate in Education and Training, graduating this year. I love teaching. When I first meet the dental

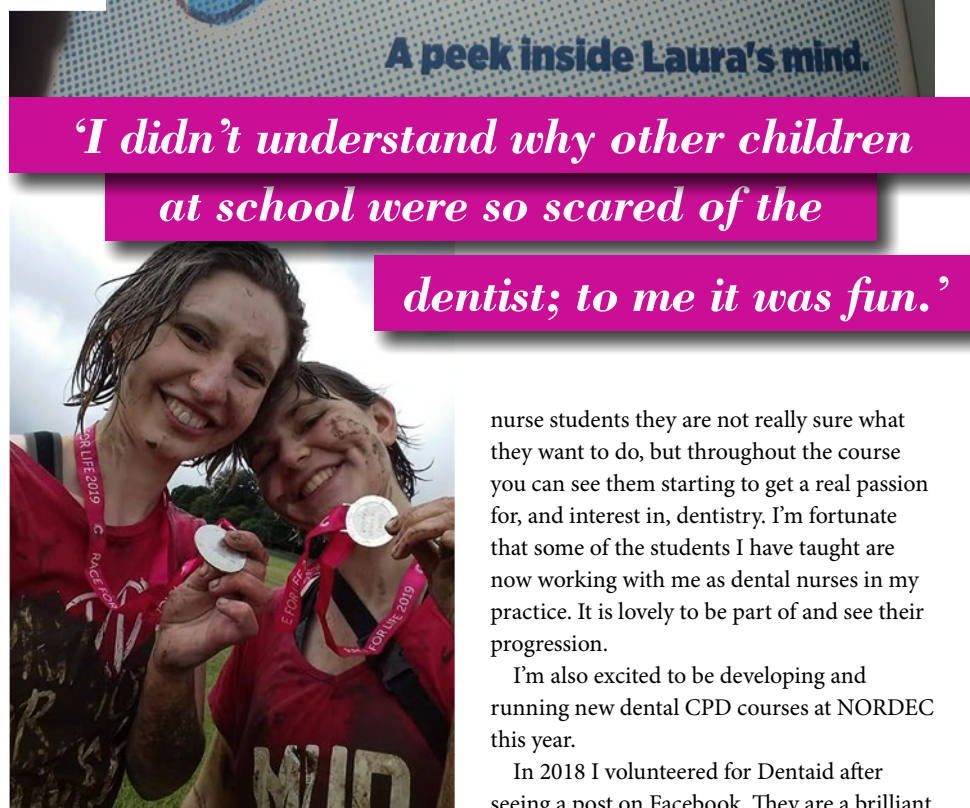


learning difficulties. My patients come from a range of different cultural backgrounds but the majority of the patients live in the local area so you get to know them well.

As a dental hygienist and therapist, I like the feeling of helping someone. I love the feeling that I'm increasing someone's confidence in themselves and their smile. It must be a terrible thing not to feel like you can smile if you're self-conscious of your teeth. I get to help people with that. The therapy side is great if you are creative and like to challenge yourself shaping and moulding fillings. It is a real skill. It is hard work but such a rewarding job. You have to love it to do it.

The more challenging elements of my job(s) for me are the time management and job juggling. I don't like rushing at all so it is challenging keeping up with the time of appointments. I like giving the patient enough appointment time for treatment and advice.

The main thing is when something has not worked for whatever reason, whether



nurse students they are not really sure what they want to do, but throughout the course you can see them starting to get a real passion for, and interest in, dentistry. I'm fortunate that some of the students I have taught are now working with me as dental nurses in my practice. It is lovely to be part of and see their progression.

I'm also excited to be developing and running new dental CPD courses at NORDEC this year.

In 2018 I volunteered for Dentaid after seeing a post on Facebook. They are a brilliant

organisation that does incredible work for people in need. I helped treat the homeless and vulnerable in the Leeds St George's Crypt using Dentaaid's mobile dental unit. Dentaaid is truly a fantastic and necessary charity.

I'm still working on achieving a good work-life balance. Work does dominate a lot of my time but I do try to step back from it. I try keep my weekends for me but occasionally a project does come along. I spend a lot of time with my family and meeting up with different friends. I rotate between friends from high school (surprisingly still in contact), uni friends, friends from work and people I've met along the way. Everyone is in the same position trying our best to find time to catch up with each other.

I'm very close to my sister so we tend to do a lot together most weekends. We did the



'I love the feeling that I'm increasing someone's confidence in themselves and their smile. It must be a terrible thing not to feel like you can smile if you're self-conscious of your teeth.'

'Pretty Muddy Race for Life' last year. We're always up to something.

I like to try lots of new things: bouldering, kayaking... last year I learnt to surf! When the weather warms up I will try to keep that up. Where I live in Yorkshire is beautiful so I like walking. I've hiked Snowdon and Pen-y-ghent last year. I'm slowly making my way to complete the Yorkshire Three Peaks. I like going to the theatre and cinema. I am a huge Marvel and Avengers fan. I like going on holiday and trips to places I haven't been before, Budapest last year, Australia this year! I also do yoga every Sunday, which I really love.

I usually get home between 6 and 7 pm. As regards my diet, I'm a bit of a chocolate hypocrite. I have a bad reputation for chocolate peanuts and people have definitely picked up on this. My friends and nurses surprise me with chocolate peanuts at my station if we're celebrating or had a tricky day. But I am careful and limit the number of acid attacks a day. I have the chocolate peanuts all at once!

I keep up with my oral hygiene regime and never miss brushing. I have definitely nagged

my family about tooth brushing and will continue to do so!

I turn a quarter of a century soon, so to celebrate I have booked indoor skydiving. The most exciting aspect of 2020 though is my planned visit to Australia for the first time in July. I'm staying with a friend in Adelaide and we are going to travel a little and explore South Australia.

I really love working in dental. I'm progressing my lecturing skills at the moment but may look into working more with the community and paediatrics in the future as I really love working with children. At some point in my life I may try something completely different and new (no idea what

this will be, something creative maybe) but I think I will probably keep some dental aspect in there too.

The three things I could not live without are family/friends, food and teeth. My friend gave me a 'Book of Laura' for my 21st birthday with a picture of 'Laura's brain' (pictured); she had personalised this to include these three things and I think it is pretty accurate.

At the end of the day I love getting in bed for 9 pm if I can. But it is normally 10.30 pm.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-019-0211-6>