



## *The dental nurse who sings in a band*

**Josie Malone-Griffiths**, 36, combines being a dental nurse with motherhood, bartending, and being the lead singer in a band.

**I** leave for work at 7 am. I live with my husband, a college lecturer, and our children Melody, aged four, and Matthew, 21 months, in sunny Weston Super Mare. I have a 70-minute commute to work as a dental nurse in the maxfax/oral surgery department at Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath. Leaving so early I'm not usually ready to eat first thing but if I stop for fuel on the way I occasionally grab a cheeky croissant.

I work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8.30 am until 5 pm at RUH. I also work in a local hotel a couple of evenings a week behind the bar and at weekends I sing lead vocals with my five-piece cover band in the Bristol area.

I fell into a trainee dental nurse role in 2005 when I had returned home from a summer season at a holiday park in need of a job. I was looking for something long term and where I could gain qualifications and progress in a profession. I started in a mixed NHS and private practice which included all dentistry from orthodontics to implants. I then had several years' experience in private practice and went on to gain my radiography qualification in 2009. I also worked in orthodontic practices, private cosmetic practices and then hospitals.

I always wanted to be a singer/entertainer since school; I spent many years entertaining holidaymakers in Cyprus and the UK. Once I got into dentistry I was able to continue performing in amateur dramatic shows and function bands around my dental nurse job.

Once I had my first child I then decided that being a locum dental nurse was the best job at the time as it enabled me to work part



time, self-employed around my daughter. I continued doing this until my second child was nine months old and saw the opportunity to work at RUH Bath three days a week. It was an opportunity I did not want to miss as I had always enjoyed my hospital role in the past.

The variety of treatment and patient care is what I enjoy most about my job. I enjoy seeing the transformation in orthodontics and learning all things related to biopsies and oral surgery along with orthognathic surgery. The most challenging part of my job would have to be the changes we have recently had to make due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Full PPE can make the job very tiring and extremely hot! The fallow time after treatments and staff shortages also make the job quite demanding.

We are quite a large team which consists of consultants, staff reg, SHOs, orthodontists, postgraduates, lab technicians, dental nurses, registered nurses, head nurse and manager.

I was actually on maternity leave when the pandemic hit and I have to admit I had many doubts in returning to work as a dental nurse during this time. I was locum at the time of my return and found it extremely difficult due to every practice doing slightly different things with regards to treatments, fallow time and systems. Once I had made the move to RUH I found it much easier to learn one system. However, this was and still is a scary time to be working in this environment. I think dentists and dental care professionals have often been forgotten about during the pandemic.

Overall I am happy with the current working conditions for my role. My only worry is we always seem to be short of dental nurses; having spoken to many dental nurse friends it seems this is extremely common at the moment. I don't think many students or young people often hear about a dental nursing career and what options there are available. After all, I happened to fall into it myself.

Gaining the radiography qualification has been extremely helpful in my career and I have used it very often. In our department one nurse a day will run the x-ray room so it keeps us well practised and up to speed.

These days with two little ones I very rarely get organised enough to prep my lunch for work and often purchase meals in one of the restaurants in the hospital. I am going to try and change this and become a little more organised as every little penny adds up, and sometimes I can end up spending £5 a day on lunch - usually a panini, sarnie or jacket potato. By lunch time I'm starving, especially if I skipped breakfast which is 90% of the time.

We are lucky enough to be given some CPD courses at work and I am also registered with some online sites to ensure all core subjects are

covered. We are often given training time at work which is great help for the team to keep up to date together.

On the three days a week I work at the hospital I get home around 6.30 pm. I hate missing the school run but look forward to it on the other two days. I'm one of the lucky ones as I have my mother to help with childcare two days a week and a great friend on the other day. My daughter Melody who has just started school has a very long day on a Wednesday and does breakfast club from 8 am and then after school club until 5.30 pm. Mum guilt is definitely strong on Wednesdays.

To make the extra pennies I work a couple of evenings in a hotel bar. I enjoy this because I know I'm not missing out on anything with my children as they are in bed when I start work.



sometimes so it can be hit or miss. Having said that I'm always checking their teeth and they have never drunk anything other than water. Their diets have been extremely good for their teeth and long may that continue. Melody doesn't even want to try squashes or fruit juices and has never had sweets. She is a chocoholic though! We try to keep this to around mealtimes as advised, again not always the case but we try.

I usually go to bed before 10.30 pm unless I'm working the bar which is often 11.30 pm/ midnight although this is on evenings I do not



*'At weekends you will often find me singing with my five-piece covers band. This gives me chance to let my hair down and release my inner diva!'*

At weekends you will often find me singing with my five-piece rock/pop/dance and funk covers band (The Coyote Kings). This gives me chance to let my hair down, not just be Mummy, and release my inner diva! Oh and I get to wear my gig shoes! We play at all sorts of events from weddings to pubs, clubs and festivals. It's great fun and I enjoy meeting lots of interesting people. You may also find me as part of a singing waiters team. This is where we pretend to be waiters at weddings or parties and break out into song in the middle of service, getting the guests going and ready for a fun filled evening. This is the ultimate party surprise and usually a real hit with the guests.

With my family our oral health regime is often great but can be a challenge. My hubby and I are very good; however, the children can be totally against having their teeth brushed

have to nurse the next day - that would be too challenging.

We have finally been given a mortgage in principle (all the hard work finally paying off!) so we are hoping to get out of renting and find our family home.

I'm unsure where my dental nurse career will lead from here. Who knows if I will add more qualifications or even university to study hygiene like many fellow nurses do; am I too old? Or will I be when my children are in school? For now, I am happy with my secure and stable job, a job that will never be at risk and a job that is needed everywhere whilst watching my little ones grow and I'm still learning every day.

**Interview by Kate Quinlan**

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