

NEW PROGRAMME TO HELP REVERSE DENTAL NURSE STAFF SHORTAGE

Clyde Munro Dental Group in Scotland is developing a new dental nurse trainee programme in a bid to tackle major staff shortages in the sector.

Twenty individuals across the country have been enlisted in a 12-month course, working towards qualifications in dental nursing.

The Glasgow firm's Strive Programme – which commenced at the end of last year – aims to introduce people new to the industry to the fundamentals of the profession, from chairside assistance skills to patient journeys.

The programme comes after the number of qualified nurses in Scotland was dropping, and from starting the programme last year to February 2022, there have been a further 311 drop off the register.

Charlie McGill, 23, from Kilwinning is one of the 20 dental nurses currently taking part in the training programme. Charlie

(pictured), who is stationed at Kilwinning dental practice, said: "The whole programme so far has been fantastic. I've learnt so much and the senior team at my practice could not have been more helpful and supportive.

"While I'm the only trainee in my practice, all the trainees on the programme meet up once a month and we're able to stay connected to other practices through Clyde Munro's Beekeeper app. It's so helpful to be able to speak with people who are in the same position as myself.

Charlie completed an undergraduate degree in History and Politics at Glasgow Caledonian University before working full-time in a call centre, but had always had an interest in dental care.



After the 12-month programme, the newly qualified dental nurses will go through a formal graduation with the group and then will have the opportunity to continue their development with further courses which will enable them to progress a career pathway within the dental group.

Research to examine role dentists can play in tackling obesity crisis

A new study being led by Loughborough University will look at the role dentists can play in reducing obesity in the UK.

Over 50% of the global population are living with being overweight and are at increased risk of developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

GPs and practice nurses have for some time used their patient consultations to raise the subject of weight management. But despite dentists already delivering behaviour change messages for oral health during their consultations – for example smoking cessation and reducing the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages – the role they can play in tackling obesity has so far been overlooked.

Now researchers from Loughborough will be working directly with dentists to assess how they can provide weight management interventions to their patients.

It will look at what can be learnt from the NHS Making Every Contact Count Campaign, providing training for dentists on how to have constructive conversations about weight management with their patients.

The study is being led by Amanda Daley, a Professor of Behavioural Medicine based in the University's Centre for Lifestyle Medicine and Behaviour (CLiMB).

Professor Daley said: "The case for dentists to be involved in reducing population obesity is strong. Like GPs, dentists are part of primary care health services and are ideally positioned to screen and intervene to reduce obesity.

"They typically consult with most of the population at least yearly, meaning they could routinely embed efficient monitoring of weight into dental health services and offer interventions at scale to both adults and children.

"If we are serious about reducing obesity in the population it will require an "all hands-on deck" approach, including active advocacy from dental health professionals.

Jessica Large, a dentist working with the project team, said: "It is important that we look at how all health professionals are able to contribute to reducing obesity in the public, and dentists might be able to help in a positive way to achieve this.

"Routine body mass index screening for children and healthy weight discussions are already ongoing in some hospital dental settings, with positive feedback from families and dental teams. I am looking forward to exploring the wider acceptability amongst the profession and public."

The research is being funded via the



National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Professorship programme and will run for two years. Any dentists interested in being part of the project should contact the CLiMB team at climb@lboro.ac.uk.

Professor Daley has published an opinion piece on the role dentists have to play in tackling obesity in the *BDJ: Time to get our teeth into reducing obesity: should dentists screen and deliver interventions to reduce obesity in the population?*¹

Reference

1. Daley A J. Time to get our teeth into reducing obesity: should dentists screen and deliver interventions to reduce obesity in the population? *Br Dent J* 2022; **232**: 78–79.