

**'I want to help as many people as possible'**



In 2017, dental nurse Sian Rolls was awarded the

Ann Felton scholarship, a free place on the British Dental Association's (BDA's) Oral Health Education course. The scholarship was developed to recognise the contribution that Ann Felton, a dental nurse and hygienist, made to the dental profession. Sian qualified as an oral health educator in 2018. She has worked at Abbey Dental Surgery for ten years. Sian tells **Kuljeet Battoo** about how she found the scholarship process, the online course, and her career so far.

**How did you first get into dentistry and what appealed to you about it?**

**Sian:** I applied to be a trainee dental nurse back in 2012 after seeing an advert in the newspaper. I had always been interested in healthcare after previously working in a pharmacy. I was intrigued about oral health, and I felt like it was a great career to be able to help others.

**What interested you in Oral Health Education (OHE)?**

Working in a high needs area, I see many patients who are high risk and need lots of dental treatment, especially children. I feel that patient and parent education is such an important factor in helping to reduce the rate of those always needing dental treatment. I think OHE was a great way for me to

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expand my knowledge and enable me to see patients on a one-to-one basis, to focus on maintaining their oral health and be able to continue their routine at home.

### Why did you decide to apply for the Ann Felton scholarship?

Reading about Ann Felton, I admired her passion to help both patients and dental care professionals. She believed that dental nurses should be given more opportunities to extend their career. Once I completed my dental nursing course, I knew that I wanted to further my knowledge, as well as do more to help our patients. When I read about the scholarship, I felt like I connected with Ann and her dedication to help patients, so I applied initially in 2015/6. I was unsuccessful but it did not stop me reapplying again as I knew this was what I wanted to do.

main patient group that I see at my practice.

### Did the course require a lot of study time?

I set aside myself a few modules a week which I ended up doing either an hour or two in the evenings or in the mornings over the weekend. I set a timetable that I could easily follow – it made it a lot easier to break everything down.

### Was the course user-friendly?

Very. The online log-in was simple, and all the resources were laid out well in a readable format. The presentations and quizzes were also user friendly.

### Did the online course format suit you?

Yes. It meant that I could keep everything online and not have paperwork everywhere. The only paper I ended up using were flash

cards for revision. Using an online course kept everything organised and together in one place.

### Has the qualification benefitted your career?

Yes, massively. I did not think when I first started as a dental nurse that I would get all these opportunities or that I would discover my passion for OHE. Now I have the qualification, I feel like I want to help as many people as possible and this gives me great job satisfaction.

### Would you recommend the scholarship and course to other dental nurses?

I would definitely recommend the OHE course. If you are passionate about your patients and are dedicated to helping them improve their oral health, then this is for you. The scholarship was a huge help for me to be able to do the course for which I will always be grateful.

### What further career plans do you have?

Since the OHE course I have carried out the BDA Radiography course and I also became assistant manager of my practice.

Now COVID-19 restrictions have eased I hope to be able to establish more relationships with local schools, care homes and other sectors who would benefit from OHE as well as continuing my sessions with patients at my practice.

**To find out more about the Ann Felton scholarship and the BDA's OHE course, visit <https://cpd.bda.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>.**

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### What did you think of the scholarship process?

The process was very simple. I wrote a small piece of writing (250 words) explaining how I would use the course in my work and practice and submitted this to the BDA.

### How did you feel when you found out that you won the scholarship?

I saw the email very late at night saying I was successful. I was overjoyed but I could not tell anyone as everyone was asleep! So, the next morning I was ecstatic to tell my family and my principal dentist and manager who knew that I had been wanting to win the scholarship and take the OHE course. I felt proud that I had been selected and could not wait to get started.

### What did you think of the OHE course?

I found the course very in-depth and interesting. When you are learning about something you are passionate about it almost does not feel like studying. I particularly liked the parts where I learnt about how to deliver patient sessions to children as they are the

cards for revision. Using an online course kept everything organised and together in one place.

### On your scholarship application, you said that you work in a ‘high needs’ area, where there are many patients who suffer from caries and periodontal disease. Has the scholarship helped you to provide OHE for these groups of patients?

Yes, without a doubt. My practice became part of the Starting Well scheme which was aimed at children aged 0–5 with the highest decay rates in the country. With this, along with my OHE qualification, I have arranged open days for children to be seen and for parents to be educated. As part of these open days, we have games and goody bags to make it an enjoyable experience. One of these open days was attended by our local MP.

I have also established relationships with local schools and provided them with toothbrushes and toothpaste for them to implement brushing in school time. They have also asked me to do parent workshops to educate parents. I believe this has helped and



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