



Charity overwhelmed by number of applications for its dental nursing grant



Karen Coates
from the
Oral Health
Foundation

reports on the popularity of the Janet Goodwin Educational Grant for dental nurses and explores the reasons behind this.

In the summer the Oral Health Foundation, in collaboration with the British Association of Dental Nurse (BADN), launched a new grant opportunity for dental nursing qualifications and training.¹

The Janet Goodwin Educational Grant is a bursary to help dental nurses with their course and examination fees. In memory of the late Janet Goodwin, the grant allows both student dental nurses and registered dental nurses to apply for up to £500 to put towards courses, qualifications, and examinations.

When we first announced the grant, we had little idea of the response that we would receive. What happened next would blow us away. We were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of applications sent into us, with the number of potential candidates far surpassing the sum of grants we were able to award.

Financial barriers associated with upskilling

While the availability of the grant itself has been deemed a tremendous success, it has undoubtedly highlighted a problem for dental nurses working towards initial qualification and post-qualification courses to upskill.

As the lowest paid members of the dental team, often on minimum wage, many dental nurses are simply unable to afford course and examination fees to advance themselves and their dental career. This has been exacerbated during the economic depression and financial crisis.

Most were seeking funding to complete their NEBDN Diploma in Dental Nursing. The struggle to meet the costs of the course and examination fees were cited as the most common barrier towards being unable to achieve the qualification to date. With these costs sitting at around £2,500, it is little wonder why.

The most popular post-qualification courses we received applications for included Oral Health Education, Radiography for Dental Nurses and Application of Fluoride. While these courses and examinations are less costly than the NEBDN Diploma, funding them is still a significant issue for most.

Upskilling the team

Many dental practices, especially large corporate practices, are happy to fund the NEBDN Diploma in Dental Nursing and other post-qualification courses for their staff. However, after hearing the testimonies of many applicants, this investment is not across the board.

In a time when dental nurses are leaving the profession in droves, it has never been more important for practices to appreciate the vital role that they play within the dental team. By helping to fund their dental nurse studies, this could help towards staff loyalty and retention.

The Oral Health Foundation and BADN are appealing for more dental practices to set a ring-fenced budget for upskilling dental nurses working within their practices.

This will improve staff morale, professional pride and staff retention. And remember, an upskilled dental nurse can take over some of a dentist's simpler treatments, saving surgery time. So, it's a win-win situation.



Janet Goodwin

Council (GDC), as well as being a proud long-time member of her professional association – BADN. Janet was a recipient of the BADN Outstanding Contribution to Dental Nursing Award and a BADN Fellow.

Encouraging dental nurses to seek education and relevant dental qualifications to enhance their dental careers was always high on Janet's agenda, so educational bursaries in her name seemed to be the most appropriate use of these funds.

Everybody at the Oral Health Foundation and BADN are honoured to continue Janet's legacy by offering dental nurses an opportunity to achieve their dreams and further their careers.

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Grant legacy

These educational grants were made available by kind donations from Janet Goodwin's many friends and colleagues, and we know this is something that Janet would be so proud of.

Janet began working in dentistry as a dental nurse in 1971, and worked in general practice, community, dental hospitals and further education.

Janet was the very first dental nurse to be elected President of the Oral Health Foundation in the charity's 52-year history, becoming a real voice for dental nurses all over the country. She was also a former Chair of the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) and a former member of the General Dental

Our ambition now is to secure the necessary funding to make these grants an annual opportunity. After all, an effective and thriving dental service would not be possible without the support and skills of dental nurses.

Bursaries for the Janet Goodwin Educational Grant were due to be awarded in September 2023.

References

1. Janet Goodwin Educational Grant launched. *BDJ Team* 2023; 10: 5. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-023-1934-y> (accessed October 2023).

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