

Preparing a personal development plan for all members of the dental team

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In brief

Draws attention to upcoming changes to GDC enhanced CPD requiring a personal development plan (PDP) for all members of the dental team.

Explains how to develop a PDP.

Gives examples of objectives to be included within a PDP.

Personal development plans (PDPs) have been a requirement for NHS hospital staff, Foundation Training and Dental Core Training for some years; however, the General Dental Council (GDC) are changing continuing professional development (CPD) requirements in 2018 (enhanced CPD) making a PDP a requirement for all members of the dental team. A PDP consists of objectives for targeting CPD most relevant to your practice or intended practice to undertake over a defined period to maximise the improvement of your professional development. The aim of this article is to explain how to prepare a PDP ahead of the requirement to utilise its benefits in training and performance for the dental team. This article references a template for all members of the dental team to record their PDP.

Introduction

The General Dental Council (GDC) are changing continuing professional development (CPD) requirements in 2018 (enhanced CPD) making a personal development plan a requirement for all members of the dental team.¹

What is a PDP?

'Personal development is a continuous lifelong process of nurturing, shaping and improving skills and knowledge to ensure maximum effectiveness and ongoing employability.'² A personal development plan (PDP) records further training objectives, enabling the entire dentally qualified team to optimise the potential benefits of suitable CPD on an individual level for improving performance. This structured framework for recording learning

needs which have been identified can then be prioritised concerning actionable objectives for each CPD cycle, and be updated as necessary with regards to providing safe and high-quality dental care in the UK.

Why is this now a requirement?

Personal development plans have been a requirement for NHS hospital staff, Foundation Training and Dental Core Training for some years; however, the General Dental Council are changing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, called the enhanced CPD scheme, starting in 2018.¹ There are some changes for all members of the dental team, such as including increasing the number of verifiable CPD hours over a five-year cycle, having a minimum number of hours every two years, and having a PDP.

The GDC have published work they commissioned regarding how PDPs have the potential to provide a good evidence source in order to support the formative aims of continuing assurance – provided they have clear objectives which are relevant to practice, include an action plan and are focused on professional development.³ Reliance upon PDP use for a

summative process such as revalidation was regarded less positively, due to the reliance on self-reflection and the risk of selecting only positive evidence for inclusion.³

The GDC have stated registrants will identify their CPD needs using a PDP, which will help to plan learning objectives in accordance with their scope of practice either individually or along with colleagues or indeed employers such as through an appraisal, and taking into account elements of clinical governance such as patient feedback, audit or significant event analysis.¹ The GDC has provided a helpful tool to explain the CPD requirements for individual cycles which can be used online.⁴

Developing a PDP

When starting a PDP, dentally qualified professionals should reflect on their learning and current performance to help identify areas for further development, taking into consideration how aspirations of future jobs or clinical roles may require training which could take place sooner as well as their current role within the team. After undertaking a range of planned learning activities, this professional should be

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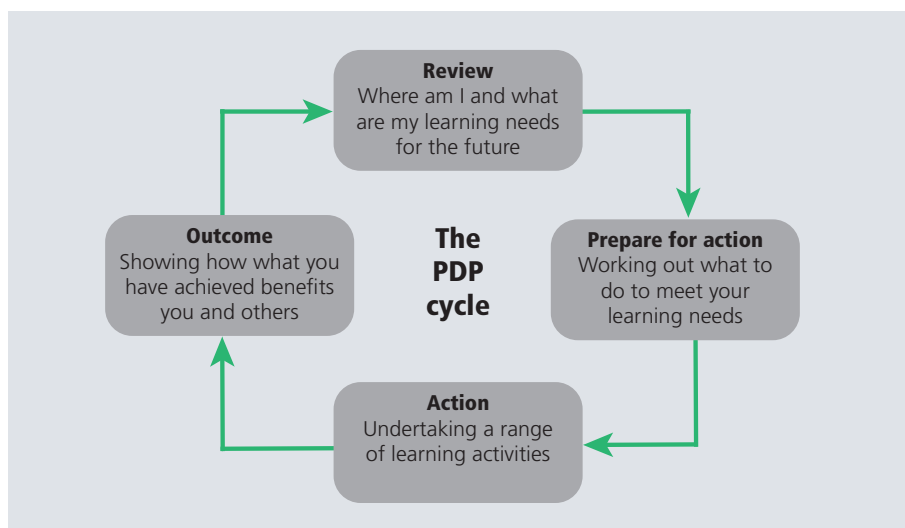


Fig.1 The PDP Cycle

able to demonstrate they have achieved this objective with a certificate and reflect on how this training has benefited themselves as well as others.⁵ The PDP cycle, shown in Figure 1, illustrates how this is a continual process of refinement and improvement.

When setting goals, it is important that these use the SMART framework: being specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.⁶ Failing to achieve goals may be due to poor quality planning within a PDP: while there may be some obstacles to overcome the objective should be achievable to the individual.⁷ When choosing goals, the dental professional could look at a range of sources to identify strengths and development areas which could include the following:

- The GDC's *Standards for the dental team* document outlines the nine principles dental professionals must keep to at all times⁸
- Those colleagues in a training programme, such as Foundation Training, should refer to the curriculum in their e-portfolio or guidance documents from Health Education England or Postgraduate Deanery elsewhere in the UK
- Qualitative feedback from patients including relevant compliments or complaints, colleagues using tools such as 360-degree feedback assessment and any previous appraisal from employers or educational supervisors
- Aspects of practice which are non-clinical such as research, teaching, audits, quality improvement projects, management and leadership. For leadership skills, the dental professional can review

the clinical leadership competency framework which is published on behalf of the NHS Leadership Academy and applies to every dental professional at all stages of their professional journey.⁹

Each dental professional should organise their goals in order of priority, with essential learning needs being prioritised. The exact number of goals is dependent on the individual's choice, their needs and any resources available. However, more guidance on this from the GDC may be given in due course. It is critical to balance goals which are easy to achieve and those which drive an ambitious dental professional with further aspirations.

Example of objectives

1. *To be able to restore a dental implant following its placement before my next review with my clinical supervisor.* I aim to achieve this through attending a certified clinical course, observing experienced colleagues and getting an experienced colleague to supervise me restoring a dental implant with a subsequent workplace based assessment. I will be able to prove this through the certificate of attendance as well as reflections and the workplace based assessment results
2. *To update my knowledge regarding decontamination requirements in dental practice within the next six months.* I will undertake a certified training course within that timescale with defined learning objectives, and complete the questionnaire upon completion to obtain a certificate. Reflection on the course outcomes will be included within

my PDP to ensure this event is best suited for my clinical practice and if or when a refresher course should be undertaken.

These objectives are explicit to meet defined criteria, with a measurable outcome to identify when the goal has been achieved. These are also achievable for specific dental professionals, with both examples relevant a suitably qualified dentist, however, could be adapted for nursing or other colleagues. A template to follow for recording your PDP has been provided by Health Education England.¹⁰

Discussion

Carrying out an assortment of CPD activities to achieve specific learning objectives is likely to be more successful than one-off occasions.¹¹ However, study leave from training or clinical practice is limited in nature due to contractual restrictions, clinical work requirements and the financial considerations involved with attending various events, so dental professionals should examine what they will acquire through attending the event or course which gives verifiable CPD. Each Royal College and dental faculty produce guidance on what courses or activities are suitable for dental specialities and primary dental care.

The various methods of achieving learning objectives include the following:

- Attending conferences which can be regional, national or international
- Attending suitable courses or events
- Completing online learning or in-person training
- Completing workplace-based assessments or other forms of clinical assessment
- Learning from colleagues through observation, shadowing
- Completing log books of clinical work carried out.

To demonstrate that the learning objectives have been achieved, certificates provided by course or training attendance, or other assessment documents as proof of completion should be kept. Once the dental professional has completed the goals set out in their PDP, these should be reflected upon to ascertain how useful the new knowledge or training was, how it can be applied to current or future practice, and to identify potential areas for future development or learning needs. The individual would ideally also reflect upon the method used to achieve these objectives

so that it aids future learning decisions. This strategic thinking ensures that time and energy is directed towards learning activities that address the goals or objectives which need to be challenged.

Applying the knowledge obtained from these CPD events can bring positives to the individual such as job satisfaction, boosting self-confidence and potentially appreciation from other dental colleagues and patients. Starting to think about other educational opportunities should be driven by the dental professional motivated to continually improve. PDPs are continuously updated documents, going in the cycle process as described above. The dental profession is constantly advancing regarding new technology, materials and legislation, and it is every dental professional's responsibility to update themselves in areas of new development and avoid becoming complacent.¹² Through gaining more competencies, the individual should also consider whether they would like to progress along another career pathway which is open to them, such as teaching or providing more specialised clinical care.

Conclusion

Every dental professional will need to be aware of the updated requirements from the GDC, which includes having a PDP from 2018. Using this article, each dental professional should start to develop their PDP, encouraging all members of the team to take a proactive approach, and ultimately reminding each other that this document will need to be continuously updated.

The PDP framework will continue to be improved, and dental professionals should be eagerly looking forward to further guidance from the GDC on how this will continue to be developed uniquely for our profession.

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