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an insight into what it means to be deaf, and learned how to understand and remove the common barriers to communication.'

By the end of the course, the DCPs were able to recognise different types of deafness; address, greet and take leave of a deaf sign user; understand the technologies used by deaf people, as well as spell the alphabet in British Sign Language.

DCP feedback

Of the training programme Sian Evans, the Dental Nurse Tutor, recounts: 'The training was important as more needed to be done to make employees deaf aware and, more importantly, it is vital that deaf patients are able to give consent and understand clearly what treatment is planned. It is no longer acceptable for deaf patients to experience a compromised service to their hearing counterparts because of communication issues. DeafWise goes some way to ensure that any imbalance is redressed'.

As part of its ongoing commitment to raise organisational awareness of the deaf community and equip DCPs to deliver an exemplary service to all of their patients, DeafWise created a series of one-day workshops that took place throughout the UK in October and November. Taking place in Bournemouth, Winchester, Brighton, Crawley and Chichester, each course combined a mixture of theory, discussions and practical exercises to help reduce unintentional discrimination, aid compliance with DDA guidelines and improve staff confidence.

Spencer concludes, 'DeafWise is in a unique position in that we understand the challenges currently facing both sides. We understand an organisation's need to comply with the DDA and its desire to deliver excellent service to its customers, just as we understand the frustrations and requirements often experienced by the deaf community. If we can play a part in helping organisations meet these challenges then we have



done our job. Not only that, but we would have helped the deaf community receive the level of service they deserve.'

For more information on DeafWise, or to find out more about the forthcoming regional workshops, visit www.deafwise.co.uk to download a leaflet or phone 0845 466 7153.

HOTSPOT



Name: Gemma Deakin

Age: 26

Town: Ash Vale, Surrey

Loves: Laughing

Hates: Arrogance

Hobbies: Cooking, socialising, singing and playing guitar

Job? Orthodontic Nurse

How did you get your job? My current employer, Tony, was practising orthodontics in many practices in the South of England and I nursed for him once a month at the practice I used to work. When I decided to start looking for a dental nursing position at another practice, I heard that Tony had decided to start up his own practice limited to orthodontics. I approached Tony and jokingly asked him if he needed a nurse. To my surprise he did.

How did you end up working in dentistry? I trained as a beauty therapist when I left school, but decided that it wasn't for me. I saw the dental nursing job advertised in the paper, and because I had the knowledge of cross infection control and anatomy of the face and neck from my beauty therapy course, I thought I would apply. That was eight years ago and I still love everything about it.

What do you enjoy most about your job? How long have you got? There are so many parts of my job that I love. With ortho, we get to see our patients every five weeks, so you build up a relationship with them. As

we work mainly with teenagers, we get to see them grow into young adults, and to see the grins on their faces when their braces come off fills you with an indescribable feeling. I also love talking to them about how they feel about braces, and explaining to them how it works and putting their minds at rest about any concerns they may have.

What is the most challenging part of your job? Probably when I first meet a new patient. They are usually quite nervous as they are not sure what to expect, so breaking the ice is always quite tricky. After a few jokes though, they normally warm to us quite quickly.

Would you recommend a career in dentistry? Yes, yes, yes. I have never had such job satisfaction from dentistry. I'm even planning on training as an orthodontic therapist!