*'We are a
fantastic
and close-knit
team'*

Wendy Leach

introduces *Vital* to her second home, Stradbrook Dental Centre, where she is part of a dental team who has clocked up 510 years collectively and is still going from strength to strength...

Whirlwind Wendy

'I thrive on challenge and am willing to try anything,' says Wendy Leach of Stradbrook Dental Centre in Tonbridge, Kent. Wendy is so enthusiastic about her multi-faceted role in dentistry that she has already written an article for *Vital* readers¹ and appeared in a hotspot.² It seemed only fair that Wendy should grace the cover as well!

An opportunity to visit Wendy on site arose when she wrote telling me about Stradbrook Dental Centre's plans to run courses to enable dental nurses to earn CPD. This is in addition to new skin and facial rejuvenation treatments being introduced to the practice, and the unveiling of a brand new dental implant centre.

Wendy, 44, describes her job title at Stradbrook as 'Clinical IT Coordinator, New Patient Coordinator, Dental Nurse, Assistant Radiation/Laser Supervisor and Receptionist'. She started at Stradbrook ten years ago as a part-time receptionist and has been collecting job titles ever since, it seems.

'When I started work here I had young children,' says Wendy, 'but my hours and duties have expanded as my family have grown older.' She qualified as a dental nurse in 2002 and completed training in radiography in 2007.

'My youngest son Sam, 18, has Asperger's syndrome, so this made things a little more difficult to manage, but luckily my family and especially my husband Martin are very supportive. I owe much of my career development to Martin.' Wendy has three children (Annie is

'The dental team at Stradbrook seem so content that "no-one ever leaves!"'

23 and Joe is 21) and is excited about becoming a grandmother for the first time in November.

On the job

When asked what a typical day at Stradbrook entails for Wendy, she declares: 'There's no such thing as a typical day; each day I'm doing different things. Today for instance I videoed implant surgery on a patient who had previously had a bone graft, and edited the footage into a lecture-length film. I am also designing a pre-opening flyer for our new skin and facial rejuvenation business, AND working on reception at the new implant centre.'

Sharon Chapman

Job title: Dental Nurse

Has worked at Stradbrook: 20 years

What do you like best about Stradbrook? The people.

The best part of my job is...
Meeting people and implant treatments.

If I was a flavour of icecream...
Toffee honey crunch - because it's sweet like me!

The main challenge Wendy considers herself to be faced with is 'when everyone wants everything done yesterday'. She explains, 'I have to decide which task to prioritise and which to delegate...'. She works clinically as a dental nurse when needed but otherwise divides her time between her other roles.

Wendy is certain that her love of people and good sense of humour help when it comes to being on reception. As for the IT side of

things, she says that she 'loves all things IT' (she couldn't live without her Macbook) and thinks that it helps that she pays close attention to detail, has a flair for creativity, endless patience and the ability to be versatile.

Stradbrook Dental Centre

Wendy is one of a huge team at Stradbrook: 11 dentists, seven dental hygienists, dental practice manager Carole, a head receptionist, three

for non-verifiable CPD and Wendy also tots up some extra hours designing the CPD course material.

'We have staff meetings and I think that we are an excellent team, although obviously with so many people working different times and days, communication can be an issue,' says Wendy. 'I produce a monthly newsletter to try

'We all pull together and have a diverse range of skills and abilities.

The three partners are lovely, and enable us to embrace ongoing training with support if we so desire.'

other receptionists and ten dental nurses. The practice caters for all kinds of patients and treatments and is one of Kent's leading specialist referral centres.

'We are a fantastic and close-knit team who have collectively some 510 years working in the practice,' says Wendy. 'We all pull together and have a diverse range of skills and abilities. The three partners are lovely, and enable us to embrace ongoing training with support if we so desire.'

Staff at Stradbroke are encouraged fully to undertake continuing professional development (CPD). Some training is held in-house or staff are free to attend courses externally as long as they arrange cover. A wide range of reading material is provided in the practice

Anita West

Job title: Dental Nurse

Has worked at Stradbroke: Just over a year

What do you like best about Stradbroke? Everyone who works here is so friendly. As there are so many different dentists, there is so much you can learn. People have worked here for so long that they know most of the patients. I get a lot of job satisfaction.

The best part of my job is... Meeting people; how some of the things we can do can change someone's life - from changing their appearance to removing pain. Being able to offer patients specialist treatments at Stradbroke and meeting new people from other referring practices is also once of the best parts of working here.

If I was a flavour of icecream... I would be cherry - it's my favourite.

Michelle Anderson

Job title: Treatment Coordinator/
Dental Nurse

Has worked at Stradbrook: 9 years

What do you like best about Stradbrook? The support from my employers and team to strive to learn new skills/techniques and increase knowledge.

The best part of my job is... The constant diversity in my day - I am left to work through my tasks as and when I want and I am still acquiring new skills/knowledge on a daily basis even after nine years!

If I was a flavour of icecream...
I'd be vanilla - a good all rounder!

to let everyone know what is going on and we have regular social activities. Sometimes it's just going out for a drink, sometimes dog walking in the park and occasionally something more glamorous. This year we went to the Denplan Ball.' Wendy adds that the dental team at Stradbrook seem so content that 'no-one ever leaves!'

Dental nurse CPD

Stradbrook has been running courses for dentists who refer to them for some time. The dentists visit Stradbrook for an evening to learn restorative techniques for various implant

surgery from a nurse's point of view: setting up and cleaning down, assisting, specialist equipment, implant systems and prosthetics. Wendy has been involved through filming many different surgical procedures which have been edited into training films that can be used to show the dental nurse what to expect during implant surgery.

Initially the dental nurse training sessions will be promoted in local practices and through dentists who already refer to Stradbrook, but eventually the plan is to advertise the courses across a wider area.

Bowls Club Barbie

At the end of a busy day at such a proactive dental practice, Wendy likes to unwind through walking and running with her three dogs. She and husband Martin are members of an indoor bowls club ('my daughter calls me Bowls Club Barbie,' says Wendy) and also like to watch and support their two sons' bands whenever possible.

'I am delighted at the way my career has evolved,' says Wendy, 'and I am happy to see where the future takes me. As the implant centre and the skin centre expand, other skills will be needed and I am willing to develop in whatever way I need to.' In the meantime Wendy is preparing herself for a more immediate challenge: embracing grannyhood!

1. Leach W. Have you got the IT factor? *Vital* winter 2008; 40-41.
2. Hotspot. *Vital* autumn 2008; 7.

Interview by **Kate Maynard**.

Carole Holland

Job title: Practice Manager

Has worked at Stradbrook: 23 years

What do you like best about Stradbrook? I have been here a long time and I think it goes without saying that I enjoy my job.

The best part of my job is... The variety of dealing with staff and patients and I also like the finance side of my job.

If I was a flavour of icecream...
I would be honeycomb - because I am honest and thoughtful and I like honeycomb best.

'The experienced team at Stradbrook hope to offer evening sessions approaching implant surgery from a nurse's point of view...'

systems, view a live patient demonstration and have a hands-on session with implant impression materials and components. Often the dentists' dental nurse colleagues attend with them, so it was decided that it would be very useful to introduce specially designed courses at Stradbrook for dental nurses wishing or needing to learn about implant surgery.

The experienced team at Stradbrook hope to offer evening sessions approaching implant