

Orthodontic Therapist Apprenticeship

In 2007 the General Dental Council permitted the registration of Orthodontic Therapists, after a rigorous curriculum and methods of assessment had been agreed. In 2018 there are now over 600 registrant orthodontic therapists. To date the funding for orthodontic therapist training has largely been met by employers, and occasionally by students. However, that could change with the introduction of an orthodontic therapist apprenticeship which is being supported along with several other dental care professional apprenticeships by Health Education England working in conjunction with Skills for Health and the British Orthodontic Society.

Moving to an apprenticeship does not change the current model, entry criteria or curriculum for orthodontic therapist training. The curriculum is set by the General Dental Council; this remains the same, the current method of delivery by all providers which is based on didactic teaching in study blocks and development of clinical skills in the teaching environment, supported by close supervision in a primary or secondary care environment in which the apprentice is already employed remains the same. The General Dental Council will still regulate and inspect training providers to the current standards.

In moving to an apprenticeship one of the small changes is that the final assessment known as the End Point Assessment has to be agreed by all three current awarding bodies, (currently Royal College of Surgeons (Eng), Royal College of Surgeons (Ed) and the University of Warwick. For these organisations to remain as awarding bodies and quality assure the programmes and end point assessment, they must register to become End Point Assessment Organisations through the Institute of Apprenticeships (IfA), they would need to be aligned to an education provider that is on the register of apprenticeship training providers. A large number of Universities and NHS trusts are already on this register.

The most significant change to the orthodontic therapy programme as an apprenticeship is the funding. As outlined above to date no funding has generally been available. Once the Orthodontic Therapist Apprenticeship End Point Assessment is fully agreed by the IfA, it is then placed into a funding band e.g. band 17 which is £14,000. This is just an example as the level of amount of funding is still to be decided. This is the amount per apprentice the IfA will pay the training provider for the delivery and assessment of the programme to meet the standards set by the GDC and IfA. The funding does not cover salaries.

This funding is drawn from the apprenticeship levy which all large NHS organisations, Universities and large companies (such as the large dental body corporates) have been paying into since 2017. Because of this an apprentice orthodontic therapist from an NHS trust or large corporate body does not have to pay any fees for their training, as this is met through the apprenticeship levy, provided they remain an employee while undertaking the apprenticeship.

Small orthodontic practices are still supported by the apprenticeship levy, the only difference is that they contribute 5% towards the training costs e.g. a dental nurse from an orthodontic practice trains as an orthodontic therapist the cost to their employers is only £700, which is 5% of £14,000, the remaining £13,300 is made up by the apprenticeship levy funding.

(Please note all figures used in this document are for illustration only. The actual funding for Orthodontic Therapist will be determined when the standard and assessment plan are approved for delivery and signed off by the minister. You can read more about apprenticeship funding [here](#) and [here](#)).