

FEATURED APPRENTICE LAUREN CORK DENTAL NURSE (INTEGRATED) APPRENTICEHIP

Meet Lauren Cork, a Level 3 Dental Nurse (integrated) apprentice working at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust.

We spoke with Lauren about her journey to become a Dental Nurse apprentice, keep reading to find out more.



1. Lauren, tell us about yourself and the apprenticeship you are doing?

I've been working as an apprentice at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust since May 2021. I am on a Level 3 Dental Nurse (integrated) apprenticeship to become a Dental Nurse within the Wolverhampton Social Care Dental Service. I am thoroughly enjoying my apprenticeship and developing well in my team, which is evident from the positive feedback I receive from my dental nurse colleagues and clinicians. I feel my apprenticeship is going really well.

In July a huge change in my personal life posed what seemed an impossible challenge that could easily have ended my apprenticeship. Instead, I used my apprenticeship as a source of positivity to overcome the tough challenges I faced. Although I had only been in my role for 2 months, I'd developed some great working relationships within the team, so I was able to talk openly about my situation and seek their support which they were happy to give.

During this time my manager, Clare Faulkner, was incredibly supportive and helped me to reach out to people within the Trust for further support. People like Shelley Baker of the Apprenticeships team who also supported me at this difficult time. Both Clare and Shelley ensured I had the time I needed to meet the demands of my apprenticeship, such as coursework and off-the-job training. This enabled me to stay focused. Having this time and support allowed me to focus on my college work and not be overcome by my personal situation. I'm so grateful to have come out the other side of what has been a chaotic time, while still being an apprentice at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and thriving in a job I love doing.

2. Which dental nursing activities do you enjoy most?

The part of the job I enjoy most is interacting with the patients. I have always worked in public facing environments so interacting with people has always been something I have loved. I enjoy having a positive impact on their experience in a dental setting which is something that many people struggle with. Due to the nature of the service I work within, my colleagues and I are able to spend more time building rapport with them, getting to know the best ways to make them feel comfortable and most importantly getting them to feel happy coming to see the dentist. It is always great to see how a patient can progress from their first appointment to the end of their treatment.



You can access the **Level 3 Dental Nurse (integrated) apprenticeship standard** [here](#).

Dental nurses work primarily in private dental practices, NHS organisations or the military. The dental surgery consists of a dental chair, x-ray unit and various equipment and instruments required for dentistry. Apprentices work alongside a dentist and other members of the dental team to see a range of patients undergoing different procedures. Dental Nurses prepare and maintain the clinical environment, carry out infection control procedures, prepare materials and equipment and keep accurate patient records.

3. Which dental nursing skills have been hardest to learn?

There are so many factors involved in becoming a dental nurse that can be challenging especially coming into it with no previous dental knowledge, so starting from scratch was difficult at first. Learning the basics such as the names and uses of instruments was confusing initially but once I saw how they were used I was able to make sense of it. Another difficult part was learning the processes of all the treatments we offer. Learning what was needed and in what order so that I can support the dentist in the best way, knowing what to hand them next before they ask for it. Although at first it was all a bit confusing, working in the environment on a daily basis has enabled me to develop these skills and gain confidence in my knowledge. Where I may still be unsure, I am surrounded by a team of people with so much experience that any questions I have can be answered.

4. What has been the best part?

The support I have received has had a significant positive impact on me and my progress and was crucial to me continuing my apprenticeship. I owe a huge thank you to Clare, Shelley, and everyone in the Dental Team for all their support and being there to listen to me whenever I needed advice or guidance. I am immensely proud to be an apprentice within the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and to be part of a team that has made me feel so valued.