



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... A DENTAL OFFICER

By Jeena Patel

Community Dental Services CIC patients are some of the most vulnerable in society; including people with learning disabilities, mental health issues and severe dental anxiety, referred by GDPs and other health and social care professionals. CDS also delivers evidence based oral health improvement programmes to improve oral health in many different communities and settings.

I have worked for CDS for over a year. I did my DFT year in 2018-2019. Following this I took up a job as an associate GDP in South East London from September 2019 to May 2020, however, I quickly realised I wanted to do something different which is when I applied for my current job as a Dental Officer with CDS.

I had completed five years at Dental School for a BDS Degree at University of Liverpool. I then carried out my DFT in North East London and completed my MFDS exam. The core skills of being a dental officer I feel are good communication and teamwork – these are essential for a role in community dental services, it is also important to be adaptable and have the qualities to be a good leader and manage day to day tasks efficiently. My first day with CDS was during the middle of COVID-19 so we were busy setting up to triage patients remotely and offer some patient support whilst we worked hard to put in place what was necessary to open the Urgent Dental Care Centres. I realised I had made the best decision to take this job and join CDS. I was attracted to working for CDS because I had

always wanted to work with children who were anxious as I felt I was able to help them when I worked in my two previous jobs. I wanted to also get a feel of what happened to my referrals I would've sent as a GDP.

My typical day sees me coming into the clinic where I check my emails for 15-20 mins. I gather my patient files, perform an x-ray machine check and carry out a team talk. Due to COVID-19 we have seen multiple emergencies with pain and therefore carrying out multiple extractions and restorations. We also do multiple sedations through the day as well to help our patients with treatment. I then have lunch, see some more patients and do any necessary admin after which I head home.

I enjoy working with my team every day. The job satisfaction I get from this role is second to none and I look forward to waking up every day to come to work which is something I had not experienced before. It excites me that I can help patients who cannot receive care on the high street, including getting them out of pain or giving them the extra time they may need and successfully completing treatment on challenging patients. The people I work with have been very supportive every step of the way, especially my line manager and the rest of my wider team. Due to this I feel I have been able to do lots of different things in a very short space of time being at CDS.

I have also been working at raising awareness of career options for young dentists through my series of *Instagram* podcasts. I aim to educate young dentists to ensure they

don't feel limited in direction and choice of work when it comes to dentistry. The podcasts were born as a result of my own experience after I realised that there were aspects around general dentistry I didn't gel with. There are set pathways in dentistry and there's much more than GDP or DCT. I really want to highlight the options available, and I talk with other professionals about how they got into their specific roles, the application processes, the job satisfaction as well and the pros and cons. In the future I am also planning to write a supporting article as I want to show young dentists it's ok to not be happy with your job, and to make them aware of the career pathways which exist and how to access them.

*CDS CiC is an award winning, employee owned, social enterprise providing community dental services to the NHS across much of the East of England and the Midlands and Central England.*

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You can also catch Jeena's Instagram podcasts at @jeena.p\_

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