



# THE PROFESSIONALS

FORMER ROYAL NAVY DENTAL OFFICER GILLIAN LESLIE TURNED TO THE ASDP TO HELP HER OPEN HER OWN PRACTICE

✎ RICHARD CROASDALE

**W**hen dentist Gillian Leslie decided to open her own practice in 2013, she turned to the Association of Scottish Dental Professionals (ASDP) – an alliance of businesses serving the dental profession, founded by Ian Main of Stark Main & Co Dental Chartered Accountants – to help her plan, finance and develop the new business.

Gillian's professional career to date had been far from conventional: having graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1998, she immediately joined the Royal Navy as a dental officer. She spent 13 years serving in various establishments around the world and was the task group dentist for a fleet of ships engaged in a global tour in 2000.

She then joined the Royal Marines

at the Commando Logistics Regiment and served with them during the first six months of the second Gulf War, treating dental and medical emergencies.

Following this, she was sent to the USA to join the US Navy for a course in exodontia, before returning to the UK and completing her membership with the Royal College of Surgeons of England, with a year at the QA Hospital Maxillofacial department in Portsmouth.

After various other appointments and a year in Brunei, she decided to leave military service following the birth of her daughter.

"I completed two years in general practice to learn the 'civvie' ropes, but decided to try to buy my own practice after realising that I was used to running my own show," she recalled.

Gillian contacted ASDP after finding them on Google, and met with representative Trisha Munro (Strictly Confidential) in early 2013 to register as a client.

"Trisha was very understanding of my need for confidentiality, and was extremely patient about when I could and couldn't be contacted," said Gillian.

Trisha quickly identified a practice that had just come on the market close to Gillian's home town. It was in need of a great deal of work, but Trisha saw real potential and was keen for Gillian to see it for herself.

"Initially when I saw it, I thought there's absolutely no way can I do this, but she was fantastic at painting the picture of how it

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Ian Main



Trisha Munro



Craig Stirling

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could be and giving me confidence that I could in fact, with her help, do it. We had to move very quickly, as my relationship with my existing principal had started to deteriorate and I was keen to move ASAP," Gillian said.

Trisha contacted two big high street lenders and decided to go with the Bank of Scotland – an ASDP member – and account manager Julie McLaren.

While the bank's rates were competitive, Trisha says it was Julie's "can do attitude" that convinced her that she would do everything in her power to help get the business off the ground.

On Julie's advice, Trisha then got in touch with Ian Main of Stark Main & Co Dental Chartered Accountants, to help her work up a business plan with robust cash-flow projections.

"Ian and Julie met me within the week and both gave me invaluable advice on how to proceed.

"Julie, Ian and Trisha worked as a trio at this point to help me formulate my business plan. Julie gave me advice on the kind of things the bank were looking for,

such as local population, competition, and where I saw my business going and growing.

"Ian worked hard to produce a fantastic set of projections, giving more confidence about the viability of the vision, and Trisha helped organise surveys via dental specialist surveyors DM Hall and quotations for dental equipment and consumables.

"After careful review, I selected leading practice management software Exact from Software of Excellence.

"I had my business plan within a couple of weeks and was able to go to the bank with a plan of about 130 pages."

The end of May saw Gillian facing a major setback – despite all her hard work, the bank declined her application. "I was devastated," she recalled. "But we didn't give up and Ian came up with a creative new deal structure for the plan, which they eventually agreed to.

"Trisha had advised me to contact Craig Stirling at Davidson Chalmers at this point, who formally proceeded with the offer. There were a few obstacles in relation to the acquisition that needed to be surmounted, but Craig was a consummate

professional and a genuine dental specialist and managed to deal with everything that was flung at him.

"He was very approachable and would answer emails the day I sent them. I think most people have the idea that a solicitor keeps you at arm's length, but I really felt Craig went out of his way to keep me up to date."

Gillian finally moved into the practice in June as an associate, then officially bought the practice at the end of July. She started renovations as soon she could, closing the practice for two weeks, during which time Trisha helped identify suppliers of equipment and consumables.

With a lot of hard work against some tough deadlines, the business opened after two weeks and had its inspection within three.

"I cannot speak highly enough of Ian Main and the rest of the team at ASDP," said Gillian. "There were a lot of sleepless nights and moments of panic, but they all held my hand throughout it all without stepping on my ideas. I feel my practice is the fruit of my own labour, but without ASDP, I would have really struggled and I doubt I would be where I am today."

