So, you think you might like to do specialty training in Dental Public Health, but you are somewhat bamboozled by exactly how you might navigate yourself through the recruitment process?

Well, that’s exactly how I felt in your position last year. But, by considering the steps I went through, I hope I might be able to illustrate for you what to expect. The process is likely to change year-on-year and so please only use the below tips as a preliminary rough guide.

Step 0  
Determine that the specialty is something that you are genuinely interested in.

Whilst this will involve doing some desktop research, it might be a good idea to attend conferences like BASCD and most importantly talking to a variety of Dental Public Health specialty trainees and consultants about their roles. Even within the relatively small specialty of Dental Public Health there exists many different types of training and many different types of consultant posts.

Step 1  
Prepare your CV.

Look at a job specification for specialty training in Dental Public Health (like the one uploaded with this document) and make note of the essential criteria and desirable criteria. Work with your educational supervisor, or line manager, on a Personal Development Plan for the criteria which you feel you may need to achieve, improve or consolidate.

Step 2  
Find out what the timescales are.

There is a Dental Recruitment Applicant Handbook (see the one for 2019 entry with this document) which provides an overview of applying for specialty training. However, it is important to use some parts of this with caution. The guide advises that dental specialties open for applications in January, and if you were to follow this advice you would miss the application deadline for Dental Public Health.

The recruitment process for Dental Public Health specialty training is handled by Health Education England North East and so their website would be the best place for the most accurate information. However, my experience has been that recruitment information might be posted relatively late and so it requires a degree of organisation on your part to keep checking. It is their website that will host the documentation outlining the recruitment process as well as the job descriptions for each of the various posts. Please also be aware that job descriptions for posts might be uploaded that are subsequently deleted without any form of communication. (An example job description is available with this document).

Candidates apply for specialty training through the NHS job application website called Oriel and so if you do not have an Oriel account then be sure to create one. Moreover, it is also a good idea to be regularly checking Oriel as well as the HEE NE website. Unfortunately, when I applied it was not possible to set email alerts for Oriel to advise when certain job types might become available (and I believe it still is not possible) and so I’m afraid it is just down to regular, manual checking.

Step 3  
Complete the application form.

For my recruitment year this was around November (mirroring the timescales of the general public health specialty training application). My application form was similar to the application forms for Dental Core Training whereby you are expected to provide information about your past training and references etc, however unlike some other dental specialties there were no extended written questions.

Step 4  
Attend assessment centre.

If you are successful in being shortlisted, then you will be invited to attend an assessment centre (which for me took place in early January). This will be a computer test up to three hours long and was held in Pearson Vue test centres (similar to the Situational Judgement Test part of the recruitment process for Dental Core Training). This will involve being given a login for Pearson Vue and booking a timeslot at a test centre to complete the assessment centre tests. Test centres are available across the UK as they are the test centres that are also used for driving theory tests. When I completed the test, there were in fact a very limited number of test centres available abroad e.g. in Australia, New Zealand and some other places, however these required a separate booking process.

The test is the same as that taken by the applicants for general public health specialty training and so you may find those applicants present for the same test at the same time. Across the UK each year there are hundreds of applicants for the general public health specialty training and so this volume of people taking the test also helps to benchmark the results of those applying for Dental Public Health.

The test for me comprised of three parts:  
- situational judgement test: where the questions were posed from the perspective of being a specialty trainee in general public health  
- critical thinking tests (Watson Glaser)  
- numerical reasoning tests (Rust Advanced)  
Please find some documents uploaded which give examples of the sorts of questions that might be asked.

The general public health specialty training recruitment process continues apace with their selection centre taking place in February. For this reason, the results from the assessment centre may be emailed to you around this time but without any other communication about what this means or whether you have reached the next stage or not. Do not worry as the selection centre for Dental Public Health only takes place in May and you are likely not to receive any communication for months.

Step 5  
Attend selection centre.

Confusingly this is often also referred to as the assessment centre. For my year of national recruitment, we were advised that we would only find out if we had been invited to interview **no more** than one week in advance. For this reason, it is essential that you have already booked time off for the expected selection centre date to avoid the risk of not being allowed to take leave / cancel clinics at such short notice.

The selection centre follows a station format and the instructions for my year of recruitment have been uploaded. We had four stations:  
- a portfolio station in which we were given the opportunity to talk about our applicable experiences as well as motivations for the specialty.   
- a written exercise concerning the assimilation and communication of information.   
- a critical appraisal station where you were given time to read an abridged paper and then asked questions about the paper.   
- a presentation station where you had a prompt and a flipchart with time allotted to prepare and then give a presentation related to the prompt.

It is likely that these stations will change but this should give a good idea of what you might expect on the day.

Another important reason to take stock of this document in advance is to think about preparing your portfolio. It would be a mammoth task to collate all the requested information and documents with the (less than) one week’s notice that was given and doing so would clearly detract from other preparation you would perhaps want to be doing instead.

Step 6  
Await the result of the selection centre.

All selection centre attendees will receive feedback from each of their stations and so if you are unsuccessful in being deemed appointable then you will be able to analyse where you can improve if you were to apply again in future.

Those applicants deemed appointable will be ranked, with the applicant ranking first being offered their top choice of post, and the second ranked applicant being offered their top choice that has not already been taken. It is possible to rank highly but still not be offered a post due to the limited number of posts available. However, it is still possible that candidates are uplifted into posts if other candidates decline their offers.

I hope what I have communicated above helps you to make sense of the process and hopefully help to guide you towards success in whatever you choose to do.