

Gentle Dental Care (Droitwich) Limited

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Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced inspection on 23 September 2019 under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. We planned the inspection to check whether the registered provider was meeting the legal requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated regulations. The inspection was led by a CQC inspector who was supported by a specialist dental adviser.

To get to the heart of patients' experiences of care and treatment, we always ask the following five questions:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it caring?
- Is it responsive to people's needs?
- Is it well-led?

These questions form the framework for the areas we look at during the inspection.

Our findings were:

Are services safe?

We found that this practice was providing safe care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Are services effective?

We found that this practice was providing effective care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Are services caring?

We found that this practice was providing caring services in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Are services responsive?

We found that this practice was providing responsive care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Are services well-led?

We found that this practice was providing well-led care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Background

Gentle Dental Care (Droitwich) Ltd is in Droitwich and provides NHS and private dental treatment to adults and children.

The main entrance is accessed by a step. There is access for people who use wheelchairs and those with pushchairs through the rear of the building direct into the treatment room by means of a portable ramp. Patients joining the practice are advised that the toilet is not

Summary of findings

wheelchair accessible due stepped access however there is an accessible toilet in the shopping mall behind the practice. Car parking spaces, including some for blue badge holders, are available near the practice.

The dental team includes four dentists, five dental nurses (three of whom are trainee dental nurses), two receptionists and the practice manager. The practice has two treatment rooms.

The practice is owned by a company and as a condition of registration must have a person registered with the Care Quality Commission as the registered manager. Registered managers have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated regulations about how the practice is run. The registered manager at Gentle Dental Care (Droitwich) Ltd is the practice owner. Gentle Dental Care (Droitwich) Ltd is part of a group of three practices in Worcestershire.

On the day of inspection, we collected 13 CQC comment cards filled in by patients.

During the inspection we spoke with one dentist, two dental nurses (one of whom is a trainee) and the practice manager. We looked at practice policies and procedures and other records about how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

Monday from 9am to 5.15pm

Tuesday from 9am to 5.15pm (7pm alternate weeks)

Wednesday from 9am to 5.15pm

Thursday from 9am to 5.15pm

Friday from 8.30am to 4pm

Saturday from 9am to 12pm

Our key findings were:

- The practice appeared clean and well maintained.

- The provider had infection control procedures which reflected published guidance.
- Staff knew how to deal with emergencies. Appropriate medicines and life-saving equipment were available.
- The provider had systems to help them manage risk to patients and staff.
- The provider had suitable safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The provider had staff recruitment procedures however, not all staff had two references on file.
- The clinical staff provided patients' care and treatment in line with current guidelines.
- Staff treated patients with dignity and respect and took care to protect their privacy and personal information.
- Staff provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health.
- The appointment system took account of patients' needs.
- The provider had effective leadership and culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff felt involved and supported and worked well as a team.
- The provider asked staff and patients for feedback about the services they provided.
- The provider dealt with complaints positively and efficiently.
- The provider had suitable information governance arrangements.

There were areas where the provider could make improvements. They should:

- Implement an effective recruitment procedure to ensure that appropriate checks are completed prior to new staff commencing employment at the practice. In particular ensuring two references are sought for newly recruited staff.

Summary of findings

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Are services safe?

We found that this practice was providing safe care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

No action



Are services effective?

We found that this practice was providing effective care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

No action



Are services caring?

We found that this practice was providing caring services in accordance with the relevant regulations.

No action



Are services responsive to people's needs?

We found that this practice was providing responsive care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

No action



Are services well-led?

We found that this practice was providing well-led care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

No action



Are services safe?

Our findings

We found that this practice was providing safe care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Safety systems and processes, including staff recruitment, equipment and premises and radiography (X-rays)

Staff had clear systems to keep patients safe.

Staff knew their responsibilities if they had concerns about the safety of children, young people and adults who were vulnerable due to their circumstances. The provider had safeguarding policies and procedures to provide staff with information about identifying, reporting and dealing with suspected abuse. We saw evidence that staff received safeguarding training. Staff knew about the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and how to report concerns, including notification to the CQC. There was a dedicated safeguarding folder and local authority contact details were displayed in the management office and staff room. Safeguarding was a standing agenda item for practice meeting discussion.

The provider had a system to highlight vulnerable patients and patients who required other support such as with mobility or communication within dental care records.

The provider also had a system to identify adults that were in other vulnerable situations e.g. those who were known to have experienced modern-day slavery or female genital mutilation.

The provider had a whistleblowing policy. We found that not all external contact details were detailed on the policy, this was amended and sent to us on the day of the inspection. Staff felt confident they could raise concerns without fear of recrimination.

The dentists used dental dams in line with guidance from the British Endodontic Society when providing root canal treatment. In instances where the dental dam was not used, such as for example refusal by the patient, and where other methods were used to protect the airway, we saw this was documented in the dental care record and a risk assessment completed.

The provider had a business continuity plan describing how they would deal with events that could disrupt the

normal running of the practice. The practice was part of a group of three practices in the Worcestershire area and the contingency for loss of premises was to relocate to one of the other practices nearby.

The provider had a recruitment policy and procedure to help them employ suitable staff and had checks in place for agency and locum staff. These reflected the relevant legislation. We looked at eight staff recruitment records. These showed the provider followed their recruitment procedure with the exception of ensuring two references were sought. Most of the files we viewed only had one reference. We discussed this with the practice manager who advised that they would request two references for all future recruited staff.

We noted that clinical staff were qualified and registered with the General Dental Council (GDC) and had professional indemnity cover.

Staff ensured that facilities and equipment were safe, and that equipment was maintained according to manufacturers' instructions, including electrical and gas appliances.

Records showed that fire detection and firefighting equipment were regularly tested and serviced. Fire drills were carried out every six months and lessons learnt were shared at subsequent staff meetings.

The practice had suitable arrangements to ensure the safety of the X-ray equipment and we saw the required information was in their radiation protection file.

We saw evidence that the dentists justified, graded and reported on the radiographs they took. The provider carried out radiography audits every year following current guidance and legislation.

Clinical staff completed continuing professional development (CPD) in respect of dental radiography. The provider funded online training for all employed staff alongside in-house basic life support training.

Risks to patients

There were systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient safety.

The practice's health and safety policies, procedures and risk assessments were reviewed regularly to help manage potential risk. The provider had current employer's liability insurance.

Are services safe?

We looked at the practice's arrangements for safe dental care and treatment. The staff followed relevant safety regulation when using needles and other sharp dental items. A sharps risk assessment had been undertaken and was updated annually.

The provider had a system in place to ensure clinical staff had received appropriate vaccinations, including the vaccination to protect them against the Hepatitis B virus, and that the effectiveness of the vaccination was checked.

Staff knew how to respond to a medical emergency and completed training in emergency resuscitation and basic life support (BLS) every year.

Emergency equipment and medicines were available as described in recognised guidance. We found staff kept records of their checks of these to make sure these were available, within their expiry date, and in working order. We noted that the oxygen cylinder checks were being logged monthly rather than weekly as recommended in published guidance. Following our inspection, the log was amended to ensure that the oxygen was checked daily.

A dental nurse worked with the dentists when they treated patients in line with General Dental Council (GDC) Standards for the Dental Team.

The provider had suitable risk assessments to minimise the risk that can be caused from substances that are hazardous to health.

The provider had an infection prevention and control policy and procedures. They followed guidance in The Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices (HTM 01-05) published by the Department of Health and Social Care. Staff completed infection prevention and control training and received updates as required.

The provider had suitable arrangements for transporting, cleaning, checking, sterilising and storing instruments in line with HTM 01-05. The records showed equipment used by staff for cleaning and sterilising instruments was validated, maintained and used in line with the manufacturers' guidance. There were suitable numbers of dental instruments available for the clinical staff and measures were in place to ensure they were decontaminated and sterilised appropriately.

We found staff had systems in place to ensure that any work was disinfected prior to being sent to a dental laboratory and before treatment was completed.

We saw staff had procedures to reduce the possibility of Legionella or other bacteria developing in the water systems, in line with a risk assessment completed in February 2019. All recommendations had been actioned and records of water testing and dental unit water line management were in place.

We saw cleaning schedules for the premises. The practice was visibly clean when we inspected.

The provider had policies and procedures in place to ensure clinical waste was segregated and stored appropriately in line with guidance. We noted that a pre-acceptance waste audit had not been completed. This was completed on the day of our inspection.

The infection control lead carried out infection prevention and control audits twice a year. The latest audit completed in June 2019 showed the practice achieved a score of 99% which demonstrated that they were meeting the required standards.

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

Staff had the information they needed to deliver safe care and treatment to patients.

We discussed with the dentist how information to deliver safe care and treatment was handled and recorded. We looked at a sample of dental care records to confirm our findings and noted that individual records were written and managed in a way that kept patients safe. Dental care records we saw were complete, legible, were kept securely and complied with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

Patient referrals to other service providers contained specific information which allowed appropriate and timely referrals in line with practice protocols and current guidance.

Safe and appropriate use of medicines

The provider had reliable systems for appropriate and safe handling of medicines.

Are services safe?

There was a suitable stock control system of medicines which were held on site. This ensured that medicines did not pass their expiry date and enough medicines were available if required.

The practice held NHS prescriptions, documented in the patient's clinical care records the prescription number when issued and stored them securely. We found that prescriptions were not recorded and logged prior to being issued. This prevented the practice from being able to track all prescriptions and audit them. Following our inspection, the practice created a prescription tracking log to rectify this.

The dentists were aware of current guidance with regards to prescribing medicines.

Antimicrobial prescribing audits were carried out annually. The most recent audit indicated the dentists were following current guidelines.

Track record on safety, and lessons learned and improvements

There were comprehensive risk assessments in relation to safety issues. Staff monitored and reviewed incidents. This helped staff to understand risks, give a clear, accurate and current picture that led to safety improvements.

In the previous 12 months there had been no safety incidents. The practice manager had systems in place should any incidents occur to ensure that they were investigated, documented and discussed with the rest of the dental practice team to prevent such occurrences happening again in the future.

There were adequate systems for reviewing and investigating when things went wrong. The practice learned, and shared lessons identified themes and acted to improve safety in the practice.

There was a system for receiving and acting on safety alerts. Staff learned from external safety events as well as patient and medicine safety alerts. We saw they were shared with the team and acted upon if required.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

Our findings

We found that this practice was providing effective care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Effective needs assessment, care and treatment

The practice had systems to keep dental practitioners up to date with current evidence-based practice. We saw that clinicians assessed patients' needs and delivered care and treatment in line with current legislation, standards and guidance supported by clear clinical pathways and protocols.

Helping patients to live healthier lives

The practice was providing preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health in line with the Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit.

The dentists prescribed high concentration fluoride toothpaste if a patient's risk of tooth decay indicated this would help them. They used fluoride varnish for patients based on an assessment of the risk of tooth decay.

The dentists where applicable, discussed smoking, alcohol consumption and diet with patients during appointments. The practice had a selection of dental products for sale and provided health promotion leaflets to help patients with their oral health.

Staff were aware of national oral health campaigns and local schemes in supporting patients to live healthier lives. For example, local stop smoking services. They directed patients to these schemes when necessary.

The dentist described to us the procedures they used to improve the outcomes for patients with gum disease. This involved providing patients preventative advice, taking plaque and gum bleeding scores and recording detailed charts of the patient's gum condition. Where appropriate the dentists would refer patients to a dental hygienist.

Records showed patients with more severe gum disease were recalled at more frequent intervals for review and to reinforce home care preventative advice.

The practice carried out detailed oral health assessments which identified patient's individual risks. Patients were provided with detailed self-care treatment plans with dates for ongoing oral health reviews based upon their individual need and in line with recognised guidance.

Consent to care and treatment

Staff obtained consent to care and treatment in line with legislation and guidance.

The practice team understood the importance of obtaining and recording patients' consent to treatment. The dentists gave patients information about treatment options and the risks and benefits of these, so they could make informed decisions and we saw this documented in patient records. Patients confirmed their dentist listened to them and gave them clear information about their treatment.

The practice's consent policy included information about the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The team understood their responsibilities under the act when treating adults who might not be able to make informed decisions. The policy also referred to Gillick competence, by which a child under the age of 16 years of age may give consent for themselves. Staff were aware of the need to consider this when treating young people under 16 years of age.

Staff described how they involved patients' relatives or carers when appropriate and made sure they had enough time to explain treatment options clearly.

Monitoring care and treatment

The practice kept detailed dental care records containing information about the patients' current dental needs, past treatment and medical histories. The dentists assessed patients' treatment needs in line with recognised guidance.

We saw the practice audited patients' dental care records to check that the dentists recorded the necessary information.

Effective staffing

Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles. For example, the practice manager was also a qualified nurse and two trainee dental nurses had recently qualified and were awaiting GDC registration at the time of our inspection.

Staff new to the practice had a period of induction based on a structured programme. We confirmed clinical staff completed the continuing professional development required for their registration with the GDC.

Staff discussed their training needs at annual appraisals and informally. We saw evidence of completed appraisals

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

and how the practice addressed the training requirements of staff. For example, following staff feedback through appraisal the working hours were changed on Fridays so that staff started and finished earlier.

Co-ordinating care and treatment

Staff worked together and with other health and social care professionals to deliver effective care and treatment.

The dentists confirmed they referred patients to a range of specialists in primary and secondary care if they needed treatment the practice did not provide.

Staff had systems to identify, manage, follow up and where required refer patients for specialist care when presenting with dental infections.

The provider also had systems for referring patients with suspected oral cancer under the national two week wait arrangements. This was initiated by NICE in 2005 to help make sure patients were seen quickly by a specialist.

Staff monitored all referrals to make sure they were dealt with promptly.

Are services caring?

Our findings

We found that this practice was providing caring services in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Kindness, respect and compassion

Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.

Staff were aware of their responsibility to respect people's diversity and human rights.

Patients commented positively that staff were helpful, reassuring and professional. We saw that staff treated patients respectfully and were friendly towards patients at the reception desk and over the telephone.

Patients said staff were compassionate and understanding. Patients could choose whether they saw a male or female dentist.

Several patients told us staff were kind and helpful when they were in pain, distress or discomfort. Comments included 'top job removing a bad tooth with no pain, everyone was so helpful as I am not good with the dentist', 'Great! As someone with a phobia of the dentist this practice makes me feel calm and safe. Treatment was as painless as it can be' and 'The staff are fab! Very reassuring and kept me calm. The dentist explained exactly what they were going to do and how it was going to feel which was really reassuring and helpful'.

Information folders and thank you cards were available for patients to read.

Privacy and dignity

Staff respected and promoted patients' privacy and dignity.

Staff were aware of the importance of privacy and confidentiality. The layout of reception and waiting areas provided privacy when reception staff were dealing with patients. If a patient asked for more privacy, staff would

take them into another room. The reception computer screens were not visible to patients and staff did not leave patients' personal information where other patients might see it.

Staff password protected patients' electronic care records and backed these up to secure storage. They stored paper records securely.

Involving people in decisions about care and treatment

Staff helped patients to be involved in decisions about their care and were aware of the Accessible Information Standards and the requirements under the Equality Act.

The Accessible Information Standard is a requirement to make sure that patients and their carers can access and understand the information they are given. We saw:

- Interpreter services were available for patients who did not speak or understand English.
- Staff communicated with patients in a way that they could understand, and communication aids and easy read materials were available.

Staff gave patients clear information to help them make informed choices about their treatment. Patients confirmed that staff listened to them, did not rush them and discussed options for treatment with them. A dentist described the conversations they had with patients to satisfy themselves they understood their treatment options.

The practice's website and information leaflet provided patients with information about the range of treatments available at the practice.

The dentist described to us the methods they used to help patients understand treatment options discussed. These included for example photographs, models, X-ray images and diagrams.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

We found that this practice was providing responsive care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Responding to and meeting people's needs

The practice organised and delivered services to meet patients' needs. It took account of patient needs and preferences.

Staff were clear on the importance of emotional support needed by patients when delivering care.

For example, where patients were nervous longer appointments were scheduled so that the dentist could take their time explaining what the treatment entailed.

Patients described high levels of satisfaction with the responsive service provided by the practice.

The practice currently had some patients for whom they needed to make adjustments to enable them to receive treatment.

The practice had made reasonable adjustments where possible for patients with disabilities. The practice was in a grade two listed building which constrained full adaptations being made such as an accessible toilet. Wheelchair users were informed of this and directed to the facilities in the shopping mall next to the practice.

Adjustments in place included wheelchair access via a portable ramp direct into the treatment room at the rear of the building, a hearing loop, a magnifying glass and grab rails next to steps for patients with limited mobility.

A disability access audit had been completed and an action plan formulated to continually improve access for patients.

Staff telephoned all patients with an appointment time in excess of 20 minutes on the morning of their appointment to make sure they could get to the practice. Every patient who had consented received an email appointment reminder 72 hours before their appointment and a text message reminder 48 hours before their appointment.

Timely access to services

Patients could access care and treatment from the practice within an acceptable timescale for their needs. The practice offered extended hours appointments opening late on alternate Tuesdays until 7pm. The practice opened on Saturdays from 9am to 12pm.

The practice displayed its opening hours in the premises and included it in their information leaflet and on their website.

The practice had an appointment system to respond to patients' needs. Patients who requested an urgent appointment were offered an appointment the same day. Patients had enough time during their appointment and did not feel rushed. Appointments ran smoothly on the day of the inspection and patients were not kept waiting.

The practice had an emergency on-call arrangement with the NHS 111 out of hour's service. The practice's website, information leaflet and answerphone provided telephone numbers for patients needing emergency dental treatment during the working day and when the practice was not open. Patients confirmed they could make routine and emergency appointments easily and were rarely kept waiting for their appointment.

Listening and learning from concerns and complaints

The practice manager took complaints and concerns seriously and responded to them appropriately to improve the quality of care.

The provider had a policy providing guidance to staff on how to handle a complaint. The practice information leaflet explained how to make a complaint.

The practice manager was responsible for dealing with these. Staff would tell the practice manager about any formal or informal comments or concerns straight away so patients received a quick response.

The practice manager aimed to settle complaints in-house and invited patients to speak with them in person to discuss these. Information was available about organisations patients could contact if not satisfied with the way the practice manager had dealt with their concerns.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

We looked at comments, compliments and complaints the practice received over the past 12 months. These showed the practice responded to concerns appropriately and discussed outcomes with staff to share learning and improve the service.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

We found that this practice was providing well-led care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Leadership capacity and capability

We found leaders had the capacity and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care. Leaders demonstrated they had the experience, capacity and skills to deliver the practice strategy and address risks to it.

The practice manager was knowledgeable about issues and priorities relating to the quality and future of services. They understood the challenges and were addressing them.

Leaders at all levels were visible and approachable. Staff told us they worked closely with them and others to make sure they prioritised compassionate and inclusive leadership.

We saw the provider had effective processes to develop leadership capacity and skills, including planning for the future leadership of the practice. The practice manager met regularly with the two managers from the other practices within the group to share ideas and support one another.

Culture

The practice had a culture of high-quality sustainable care.

Staff stated they felt respected, supported and valued. They were proud to work in the practice. One staff member we spoke with told us they felt supported and loved their job.

The staff focused on the needs of patients. Due to there being a step from the treatment room to reception appointments were made and payments were taken in the treatment room for wheelchair users.

We saw the provider had systems in place to deal with staff poor performance.

Openness, honesty and transparency were demonstrated when responding to incidents and complaints. The provider was aware of and had systems to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Duty of Candour.

Staff could raise concerns and were encouraged to do so, and they had confidence that these would be addressed.

Governance and management

There were clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to support good governance and management.

The practice manager had overall responsibility for the management and clinical leadership of the practice. The practice manager was also responsible for the day to day running of the service. Staff knew the management arrangements and their roles and responsibilities.

The provider had a system of clinical governance in place which included policies, protocols and procedures that were accessible to all members of staff and were reviewed on a regular basis.

We saw there were clear and effective processes for managing risks, issues and performance.

Appropriate and accurate information

Staff acted on appropriate and accurate information.

Quality and operational information was used to ensure and improve performance. Performance information was combined with the views of patients.

The provider had information governance arrangements and staff were aware of the importance of these in protecting patients' personal information.

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

Staff involved patients, the public, staff and external partners to support high-quality sustainable services.

The provider used patient surveys, online feedback and verbal comments to obtain patients' views about the service. We saw examples of suggestions from patients the practice had acted on. For example, at the time of our inspection the provider was in the process of moving reception to enable more than one receptionist to assist patients following patient feedback. The practice manager had also changed staff lunch hours to a staggered rota, to ensure reception was not closed during the lunch period.

Patients were encouraged to complete the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT). This is a national programme to allow patients to provide feedback on NHS services they have used.

The practice regularly completed their own patient satisfaction surveys to seek feedback and gather possible improvement ideas from patients. They collated results for

Are services well-led?

the most recent survey which was completed in August 2019. The results showed that of the 10 respondents 100% of patients were satisfied with the service provided and 100% of patients were satisfied with the quality of treatment.

The provider gathered feedback from staff through meetings, appraisals, and informal discussions. Staff were encouraged to offer suggestions for improvements to the service and said these were listened to and acted on.

Continuous improvement and innovation

There were systems and processes for learning, continuous improvement and innovation.

The provider had quality assurance processes to encourage learning and continuous improvement. These included audits of dental care records, radiographs and infection prevention and control. They had clear records of the results of these audits and the resulting action plans and improvements.

The provider showed a commitment to learning and improvement and valued the contributions made to the team by individual members of staff. Online training was funded for all employed staff members.

The dental nurses and reception team had annual appraisals. They discussed learning needs, general wellbeing and aims for future professional development. We saw evidence of completed appraisals in the staff folders.

Staff completed 'highly recommended' training as per General Dental Council professional standards. This included undertaking medical emergencies and basic life support training annually. The provider supported and encouraged staff to complete CPD.