

Alpha Dental Studio Great Ayton

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Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced inspection on 3 June 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

Alpha Dental Studio Great Ayton is part of the Alpha dental group and is based in the centre of the village of

Summary of findings

Great Ayton. The practice provides mainly NHS dental treatment to adults and children with some private options for patients. Parking is available outside the practice with access to public transport nearby.

The practice is based on the first floor. Access is not possible for people who use wheelchairs or who have limited mobility. Alternative dental practices with disabled access are available nearby.

The dental team includes five dentists (one of whom is a foundation training dentist), six dental nurses/receptionists and a practice manager. The practice has three treatment rooms and a decontamination room.

The practice is owned by a partnership 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 Alpha Dental Studio Great Ayton is the operations manager for the group.

On the day of inspection, we collected 74 CQC comment cards filled in by patients. All the comment cards were extremely positive about the service and care received.

During the inspection we spoke with three dentists, four dental nurses, registered manager 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 to Thursday 8.30am to 5.15pm and Friday 8.30am-4.15pm.

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.
- The provider had suitable safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The practice had staff recruitment procedures in place.
- 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 were providing preventive care and supporting patients to ensure better oral health.
- The appointment system took account of patients' needs.
- The provider had effective leadership and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff felt involved and supported and worked well as a team.
- The provider asked patients for feedback about the services they provided.

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.

The practice had systems and processes to provide safe care and treatment. They used learning from incidents to help them improve.

Staff received training in safeguarding people and knew how to recognise the signs of abuse and how to report concerns.

Staff were qualified for their roles and the practice completed essential recruitment checks.

Premises were clean. The practice followed national guidance for cleaning, sterilising and storing dental instruments.

The staff had suitable training for dealing with medical and other emergencies.

No action



Are services effective?

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

The dentists assessed patients' needs and provided care and treatment in line with recognised guidance. Patients described the treatment they received as excellent and consistently good.

The dentists discussed treatment with patients, so they could give informed consent and recorded this in their records.

The practice had clear arrangements when patients needed to be referred to other dental or health care professionals.

The provider supported staff to complete training relevant to their roles and had systems to help them monitor this.

No action



Are services caring?

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

We received feedback about the practice from 74 people. Patients were positive about all aspects of the service the practice provided. They confirmed staff were kind, thoughtful and friendly.

They said that they were given informative and clear explanations about dental treatment and said their dentist listened to them.

We saw that staff protected patients' privacy and were aware of the importance of confidentiality. Patients said staff treated them sensitively and with respect.

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



Summary of findings

The practice's appointment system took account of patients' needs. Patients could get an appointment quickly if in pain.

Staff considered patients' different needs. This included providing facilities for patients with families with children. The practice had access to interpreter services.

The practice took patients views seriously. They valued compliments from patients and responded to comments or concerns quickly and constructively.

Are services well-led?

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

The practice had arrangements to ensure the smooth running of the service. These included systems for the practice team to discuss the quality and safety of the care and treatment provided. There was a clearly defined management structure and staff felt supported and appreciated.

The provider monitored clinical and non-clinical areas of their work to help them improve and learn. This included asking for and listening to the views of patients.

No action 

Are services safe?

Our findings

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

The practice 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 practice 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.

The practice had a system to highlight vulnerable patients on records e.g. children with child protection plans, adults where there were safeguarding concerns, people with a learning disability or a mental health condition, or who require other support such as with mobility or communication.

The practice had a whistleblowing policy. 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.

The provider told us they had a business continuity plan describing how they would deal with events that could disrupt the normal running of the practice.

The practice had a recruitment policy and procedure to help them employ suitable staff. We looked at two staff recruitment records. These records confirmed the practice followed their recruitment procedure.

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

Records showed that fire detection equipment, such as smoke detectors and emergency lighting, were regularly tested and firefighting equipment, such as fire extinguishers, were regularly serviced. A fire risk assessment had been completed.

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

Clinical staff completed continuing professional development (CPD) in respect of dental radiography.

The practice had arrangements to ensure the safety of the X-ray equipment. They met current radiation regulations and had the required information in their radiation protection file. They had registered their practice's use of dental X-ray equipment with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in line with the Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017 (IRR17).

Risks to patients

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

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

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.

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. Staff kept records of their checks of these to make sure these were available, within their expiry date, and in working order. We confirmed with the provider the checks on emergency medical equipment should be undertaken weekly.

A dental nurse worked with the dentists when they treated patients in line with 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.

Are services safe?

The practice 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 practice 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.

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

The practice had procedures to reduce the possibility of Legionella or other bacteria developing in the water systems, in line with a risk assessment. All recommendations had been actioned and records of water testing and dental unit water line management were in place. Staff had completed training in legionella awareness.

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.

The practice carried out infection prevention and control audits twice a year. The latest audit scored 99% and showed the practice was meeting the required standards. We saw that an action plan was in place following the audit. We discussed that actions completed following an audit should also be recorded.

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 dentists 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.

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.

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 stored and kept records of NHS prescriptions as described in current guidance.

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

Track record on safety and Lessons learned and improvements

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

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.

Safety incidents were investigated, documented and discussed with the rest of the dental practice team to prevent such occurrences happening again in the future. The Alpha group shared incidents with all their practices to further improve learning within the organisation.

There was a system for receiving and acting on safety alerts. The practice 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

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 supporting 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 children and adults based on an assessment of the risk of tooth decay.

The clinicians 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.

The practice was 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 dentists described to us the procedures they used to improve the outcomes for patients with gum disease. This involved providing patients preventative advice and recording detailed charts of the patient's gum condition

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

Consent to care and treatment

The practice 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. Each patient signed their treatment plan and received their own copy. 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 may 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. The 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. We were unable to review any action plans for the audits as these were unavailable. We discussed with the registered manager who explained these were held by the clinical lead.

Effective staffing

Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles.

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 General Dental Council.

Staff told us they discussed their training needs at annual appraisals.

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.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

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

The practice 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.

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

Are services caring?

Our findings

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 caring and friendly. We saw that staff treated patients with dignity and respect.

Patients said staff were kind, compassionate and understanding.

Privacy and dignity

The practice 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 some privacy when reception staff were dealing with patients. If a patient asked for more privacy, staff would take them into a spare surgery or the office. 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:

- Interpreter services were available for patients who did not use English as a first language.
- Staff communicated with patients in a way that they could understand, and easy read materials were available.

The practice 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 dentists described to us the methods they used to help patients understand treatment options discussed. These included for example pictures, models and X-ray images which were shown to the patient or relative to help them better understand the diagnosis and treatment.

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

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

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.

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

A disability access audit had been completed.

Depending on the patient's preference they were sent text message, postal reminders or were telephoned about upcoming appointments.

Timely access to services

Patients could access care and treatment from the practice within an acceptable timescale for their needs.

The practice displayed its opening hours outside the premises, patient information folder and website.

The practice had an appointment system to respond to patients' needs. Patients who requested an urgent

appointment were seen 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's website 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 took complaints and concerns seriously. The practice had a policy providing guidance to staff on how to handle a complaint. The practice displayed their complaints procedure in the patient information folder, which was in the waiting room. This described how patients could make a complaint. The operations manager would be responsible for dealing with these. Staff would tell them about any formal or informal comments or concerns straight away so patients received a quick response.

We looked at comments, compliments received in the past 12 months.

These showed the practice responded to feedback appropriately and discussed outcomes with staff to share learning and improve the service.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

Leadership capacity and capability

We found the practice leaders had the capacity and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care.

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

All staff we spoke with were engaged throughout the inspection, they welcomed feedback and were responsive during discussion.

Leaders at all levels were visible and approachable. They worked closely with staff and others to make sure they prioritised compassionate and inclusive leadership.

The practice had effective processes to develop leadership capacity and skills, including planning for the future leadership of the practice.

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.

The practice focused on the needs of patients.

Openness, honesty and transparency were demonstrated when responding to incidents and complaints. Staff were aware of and there were systems in place to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Duty of Candour.

Staff could raise concerns and were encouraged to do so. 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 clinical manager was responsible for clinical support to the clinicians and the registered manager was responsible for the day to day running of the practice. 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.

Appropriate and accurate information

The practice 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 practice 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

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

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.

We also reviewed the practice's own customer satisfaction surveys. The results were positive and confirmed in 2018 that 98% of patients would recommend the practice to others.

The practice gathered feedback from staff through meetings, surveys, 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 practice had quality assurance processes in place. These included audits of dental care records, prescribing, radiographs and infection prevention and control. We were not able to fully assess learning and continuous improvement from radiographs and dental care records as these were not available at the practice.

Are services well-led?

The practice manager showed a commitment to learning and improvement and valued the contributions made to the team by individual members of staff.

All staff 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 principal dentist supported and encouraged staff to complete CPD.