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Benhill Dental Practice

Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out an announced comprehensive inspection on 14 July 2016 to ask the practice the following key questions; Are services safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led?

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

Benhill Dental Practice is located in the London Borough of Sutton. The premises are situated in a converted residential building. There are four treatment rooms, a reception room with waiting area, a second waiting room, a patient toilet, and a staff kitchen and changing room. These are distributed across the ground and first floors of the building.

The practice provides NHS and private services to adults and children. The practice offers a range of dental services including routine examinations and treatment, veneers and crowns and bridges.

The staff structure of the practice consists of a principal dentist, an associate dentist, two dental nurses, a hygienist, a receptionist and a practice manager. There are two, other dental care providers who are also registered at the same location. The reception staff, and some of the governance arrangements, are shared across the three providers.

The practice opening hours are Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm.

The principal dentist is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as an individual registered person. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the practice is run.

Summary of findings

The inspection took place over one day and was carried out by a CQC inspector and a dental specialist advisor.

Thirty-three people provided feedback about the service. Patients were positive about the care they received from the practice. They were complimentary about the friendly and caring attitude of the dental staff.

Our key findings were:

- Patients' needs were assessed and care was planned in line with current guidance such as from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).
- There were effective systems in place to reduce and minimise the risk and spread of infection.
- The practice had effective safeguarding processes in place and staff understood their responsibilities for safeguarding adults and children living in vulnerable circumstances.
- Staff reported incidents and kept records of these which the practice used for shared learning.
- There were effective arrangements in place for managing medical emergencies.
- Equipment, such as the air compressor, autoclave (steriliser), fire extinguishers, and X-ray equipment had all been checked for effectiveness and had been regularly serviced.
- Patients indicated that they felt they were listened to and that they received good care from a helpful and caring practice team.
- The practice ensured staff maintained the necessary skills and competence to support the needs of patients.
- The practice had implemented clear procedures for managing comments, concerns or complaints.
- The provider had a clear vision for the practice and staff told us they were well supported by the management team.
- Governance arrangements and audits were effective in improving the quality and safety of the services.

There were areas where the provider could make improvements and should:

- Review the practice's protocols for the use of rubber dam for root canal treatment giving due regard to guidelines issued by the British Endodontic Society.
- Review the practice's safeguarding training; ensuring it covers both children and adults and that all staff are trained to an appropriate level for their role and are aware of their responsibilities.
- Review the practice's infection control procedures and protocols giving due regard to guidelines issued by the Department of Health - Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices and The Health and Social Care Act 2008: 'Code of Practice about the prevention and control of infections and related guidance.
- Review the practice's sharps procedures giving due regard to the Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013.
- Review the practice's protocols for completion of dental records giving due regard to guidance provided by the Faculty of General Dental Practice regarding clinical examinations and record keeping.

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 in place to minimise the risks associated with providing dental services. There was a safeguarding lead and staff understood their responsibilities in terms of identifying and reporting any potential abuse. There were systems in place for identifying, investigating and learning from incidents relating to the safety of patients and staff members. The practice had policies and protocols, which staff were following, for the management of infection control, medical emergencies and dental radiography. We found the equipment used in the practice was well maintained and checked for effectiveness.

There were some areas where improvements should be made, for example, in relation to the management of environmental cleaning.

No action



Are services effective?

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

The practice provided evidence-based care in accordance with relevant, published guidance, for example, from the General Dental Council (GDC). The practice monitored patients' oral health and gave appropriate health promotion advice. Staff explained treatment options to ensure that patients could make informed decisions about any treatment. The practice worked well with other providers and followed up on the outcomes of referrals made to other providers.

Staff engaged in continuous professional development (CPD) and were working towards meeting the training requirements of the General Dental Council (GDC). Staff had received appraisals within the past year to discuss their role and identify additional training needs.

No action



Are services caring?

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

We received positive feedback from patients through comment cards and by speaking with patients on the day of the inspection. Patients felt that the staff were kind and caring; they told us that they were treated with dignity and respect at all times. We found that dental care records were stored securely and patient confidentiality was well maintained.

No action



Are services responsive to people's needs?

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

Patients generally had good access to appointments, including emergency appointments, which were available on the same day. The culture of the practice promoted equality of access for all. The practice was wheelchair accessible with the treatment rooms situated on the ground floor.

No action



Summary of findings

There was a complaints policy in place and the practice actively sought feedback from staff and patients with a view to monitoring the quality of the care.

Are services well-led?

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

The practice had clinical governance and risk management structures in place. These were well maintained and disseminated effectively to all members of staff. A system of audits was used to monitor and improve performance. There were some areas where improvements could be made in terms of mitigating risk through the use of an assessment process, such as in the use of sharps and rubber dam.

Staff described an open and transparent culture where they were comfortable raising and discussing concerns with the principal dentist or practice manager. They were confident in the abilities of the principal dentist and practice manager to address any issues as they arose.

No action 

Benhill Dental Practice

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the practice was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

We carried out an announced, comprehensive inspection on 14 July 2016. The inspection took place over one day and was carried out by a CQC inspector and a dental specialist advisor.

We reviewed information received from the provider prior to the inspection. During our inspection we reviewed policy documents and spoke with four members of staff. We conducted a tour of the practice and looked at the storage arrangements for emergency medicines and equipment. One of the dental nurses demonstrated how they carried out decontamination procedures of dental instruments.

Thirty-three people provided feedback about the service. Patients were positive about the care they received from the practice. They were complimentary about the friendly and caring attitude of the dental staff.

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 therefore formed the framework for the areas we looked at during the inspection.

Are services safe?

Our findings

Reporting, learning and improvement from incidents

There was an effective system in place for reporting and learning from incidents and accidents. There was an incident reporting policy and an accidents reporting book. Staff understood the process for accident reporting, including the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). There had been any two accidents recorded in the past 12 months. These had been appropriately recorded and reviewed.

The principal dentist was aware of the Duty of Candour. They told us they were committed to operating in an open and transparent manner; they would always inform patients if anything had gone wrong and offer an apology in relation to this. [Duty of candour is a requirement under The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 on a registered person who must act in an open and transparent way with relevant persons in relation to care and treatment provided to service users in carrying on a regulated activity].

Reliable safety systems and processes (including safeguarding)

The practice had a well-designed safeguarding policy which referred to national guidance. One of the provider's registered at the location was the named practice lead for child and adult safeguarding. Information about the local authority contacts for safeguarding concerns was held in each of the treatment rooms.

Staff were able to describe the types of behaviour a child might display that would alert them to possible signs of abuse or neglect. They also had a good awareness of the issues around vulnerable elderly patients who presented with dementia.

There was evidence in staff files showing that some staff had been trained in safeguarding adults and children to an appropriate level. We noted that not all staff members had completed training within the past three years. The principal dentist sent us evidence via email, two days after the inspection, to demonstrate that all relevant staff had now renewed their training.

The practice had carried out a range of risk assessments and implemented policies and protocols with a view to keeping staff and patients safe. For example, we asked staff

about the prevention of needle stick injuries. Following administration of a local anaesthetic to a patient, needles were not resheathed using the hands and a needle guard was used instead. The staff we spoke with demonstrated a clear understanding of the practice policy and protocol with respect to handling sharps and needle stick injuries. Improvements could be made to ensure a written risk assessment, in line with Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 was available.

The practice followed other national guidelines on patient safety. For example, the practice used rubber dam for root canal treatments in line with guidance from the British Endodontic Society. (A rubber dam is a thin, rectangular sheet, usually latex rubber, used in dentistry to isolate the operative site from the rest of the mouth. Rubber dam should be used when endodontic treatment is being provided. On the rare occasions when it is not possible to use rubber dam the reasons should be recorded in patients' dental care records giving details as to how the patient's safety was assured). The dentist described what alternative precautions were taken to protect the patient's airway during the treatment when a rubber dam was not used. Improvements could be made to ensure a risk assessment was routinely documented in each patients' dental care record in those cases where a rubber dam was not used.

Medical emergencies

The practice had arrangements in place to deal with medical emergencies. The practice had an automated external defibrillator (AED), oxygen and other related items, such as manual breathing aids and portable suction, in line with the Resuscitation Council UK guidelines (An AED is a portable electronic device that analyses life threatening irregularities of the heart and delivers an electrical shock to attempt to restore a normal heart rhythm).

The practice held emergency medicines in line with guidance issued by the British National Formulary for dealing with common medical emergencies in a dental practice. The emergency medicines were all in date and stored securely with emergency oxygen in a location known to all staff.

Staff received annual training in using the emergency equipment.

Staff recruitment

Are services safe?

The staff structure of the practice consists of a principal dentist, an associate dentist, two dental nurses, a hygienist, a receptionist and a practice manager.

There was a recruitment policy in place which stated that all relevant checks would be carried out to confirm that any person being recruited was suitable for the role. This included the use of an application form, interview, review of employment history, evidence of relevant qualifications, the checking of references and a check of registration with the General Dental Council.

We checked the staff recruitment records. We found that the practice had followed its recruitment policy and retained all of the relevant documents.

It was practice policy to carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for all members of staff prior to employment and periodically thereafter. We saw evidence that all members of staff had a DBS check in place. (The DBS checks identify whether a person has a criminal record or is on an official list of people barred from working in roles where they may have contact with children or adults who may be vulnerable).

Monitoring health & safety and responding to risks

There were arrangements in place to deal with foreseeable emergencies. We saw that there was a health and safety policy in place. The practice had been assessed for risk of fire and there were documents showing that fire extinguishers had been recently serviced.

There were arrangements in place to meet the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002 (COSHH) regulations. There was a COSHH file where risks to patients, staff and visitors associated with hazardous substances were identified. Actions were described to minimise identified risks. COSHH products were securely stored. Staff were aware of the COSHH file and of the strategies in place to minimise the risks associated with these products.

The practice had a system in place to respond promptly to Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) advice. MHRA alerts, and alerts from other agencies, were received by the practice manager via email. These were disseminated at staff meetings, where appropriate.

There was a business continuity plan in place. There was an arrangement in place to use another local practice for emergency appointments in the event that the practice's own premises became unfit for use.

Infection control

There were effective systems in place to reduce the risk and spread of infection within the practice. There was an infection control policy which included the decontamination of dental instruments, hand hygiene, use of protective equipment, and the segregation and disposal of clinical waste. The practice had carried out practice-wide infection control audits every six months and found high standards throughout the practice.

We observed that the premises appeared clean and tidy. Clear zoning demarked clean from dirty areas in all of the treatment rooms. Hand-washing facilities were available, including wall-mounted liquid soap, hand gels and paper towels in the treatment room, decontamination room and toilet. Hand-washing protocols were also displayed appropriately in various areas of the practice.

We asked one of the dental nurses to demonstrate the end-to-end process of infection control procedures at the practice. The protocols showed that the practice had followed the guidance on decontamination and infection control issued by the Department of Health, namely 'Health Technical Memorandum 01-05 - Decontamination in primary care dental practices (HTM 01-05)'.

The dental nurse explained the decontamination of the general treatment room environment following the treatment of a patient. We saw that there were written guidelines for staff to follow for ensuring that the working surfaces, dental unit and dental chair were decontaminated. This included the treatment of the dental water lines.

Environmental cleaning was carried out by an external contractor using cleaning equipment in accordance with the national colour coding scheme. There was a cleaning schedule for staff to follow which described daily, weekly and monthly tasks.

The cleaning of the treatment rooms and public areas was generally successful although some improvements could be made in the cleaning of the dental chair and cupboard tops. We also noted that some areas of the sideboard and floor were raised or chipped meaning that cleaning these

Are services safe?

areas effectively was more difficult. We discussed the problems we had identified in this room with the principal dentist. They were aware of the need to refurbish the treatment room. The principal dentist assured us that funds were being made available to replace or repair items that represented an infection control risk. They sent us evidence on the day after the inspection confirming that their cleaning contractor had been asked to systematically and thoroughly clean the room.

We checked the contents of the drawers in the treatment rooms. These were well stocked, clean, ordered and free from clutter. All of the instruments were pouched. It was obvious which items were for single use and these items were clearly new. The treatment rooms had the appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves and aprons, available for staff and patient use.

The dental water lines were maintained to prevent the growth and spread of Legionella bacteria (Legionella is a term for particular bacteria which can contaminate water systems in buildings). The practice manager described the method they used which was in line with current HTM 01-05 guidelines. A Legionella risk assessment had been carried out by an external contractor in 2014. The practice was following recommendations to reduce the risk of Legionella, for example, through the regular testing of the water temperatures. A record had been kept of the outcome of these checks on a monthly basis.

The practice did not have a dedicated decontamination room. Each treatment room included equipment for decontamination and instrument processing. The process of cleaning, inspection, sterilisation, packaging and storage of instruments followed a well-defined system of zoning from dirty through to clean.

Instruments were manually cleaned prior to inspection under a light magnification device. Items were then placed in an autoclave (steriliser). When instruments had been sterilized, they were pouched and stored appropriately, until required. All of the pouches we checked had a date of sterilisation and an expiry date.

We saw that there were systems in place to ensure that the autoclaves were working effectively. These included, for example, the automatic control test and steam penetration test. It was observed that the data sheets used to record the essential daily validation checks of the sterilisation cycles were complete and up to date.

The segregation and storage of dental waste was in line with current guidelines laid down by the Department of Health. We observed that sharps containers, clinical waste bags and municipal waste were properly maintained. The practice used a contractor to remove dental waste from the practice. Waste was stored in a separate, locked location within the practice prior to collection by the contractor. Waste consignment notices were available for inspection.

Staff files showed that staff regularly attended training courses in infection control. Clinical staff were also required to produce evidence to show that they had been effectively vaccinated against Hepatitis B to prevent the spread of infection between staff and patients. (People who are likely to come into contact with blood products, or are at increased risk of needle-stick injuries should receive these vaccinations to minimise risks of blood borne infections.)

Equipment and medicines

We found that the equipment used at the practice was regularly serviced and well maintained. For example, we saw documents showing that the air compressor, fire equipment and X-ray equipment had all been inspected and serviced. For example, a Pressure Vessel Certificate for the dental compressor and autoclave had been issued within the past year, in accordance with the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000.

Portable appliance testing (PAT) had been completed in accordance with good practice guidance. PAT is the name of a process during which electrical appliances are routinely checked for safety.

The practice stored small numbers of prescriptions pads for NHS treatment and each dentist correctly wrote out private prescriptions. There was a system for tracking the NHS prescription numbers at the practice for enhanced security.

The expiry dates of medicines, oxygen and equipment were monitored using weekly and monthly check sheets which enabled the staff to replace out-of-date drugs and equipment promptly.

Radiography (X-rays)

There was a well-maintained radiation protection file in line with the Ionising Radiation Regulations (IRR) 1999 and Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 (IRMER). This file contained the names of the Radiation Protection Advisor and the Radiation Protection Supervisor as well as the necessary documentation pertaining to the

Are services safe?

maintenance of the X-ray equipment. Included in the file were the critical examination packs for the X-ray set along with the three-yearly maintenance logs and a copy of the local rules.

We saw evidence in the staff records which showed they had completed radiography and radiation protection training.

Audits on X-ray quality were undertaken at regular intervals.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

Our findings

Monitoring and improving outcomes for patients

The dentists carried out consultations, assessments and treatment in line with recognised general professional guidelines and General Dental Council (GDC) guidelines. The principal dentist described to us how they carried out their assessment. The assessment began with the patient completing a medical history questionnaire covering any health conditions, medicines being taken and any allergies suffered. We saw evidence that the medical history was updated at subsequent visits. This was followed by an examination covering the condition of a patient's teeth, gums and soft tissues and the signs of mouth cancer. Patients were made aware of the condition of their oral health and whether it had changed since the last appointment.

The patient's dental care record was updated with the proposed treatment after discussing options with the patient. A treatment plan was then given to each patient and this included details of the costs involved. Patients were monitored through follow-up appointments and these were scheduled in line with their individual requirements.

We checked a sample of dental care records to confirm the findings. These showed that the findings of the assessment and details of the treatment carried out were recorded appropriately. We saw details of the condition of the gums were noted using the basic periodontal examination (BPE) scores and soft tissues lining the mouth. (The BPE is a simple and rapid screening tool that is used to indicate the level of examination needed and to provide basic guidance on treatment need). These were carried out, where appropriate, during a dental health assessment.

We noted that not all of the medical history forms had been signed and dated by both the dentist and the patient. Some records showed that new forms had not been completed for a number of years, although patients had indicated that there was no change in their medical history.

Health promotion & prevention

The practice promoted the maintenance of good oral health through the use of health promotion and disease prevention strategies. The principal dentist told us they discussed oral health with their patients, for example,

effective tooth brushing or dietary advice. They were aware of the need to discuss a general preventive agenda with their patients and referred to the advice supplied in the Department of Health publication 'Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention'. (This is an evidence-based toolkit used by dental teams for the prevention of dental disease in a primary and secondary care setting). They told us they held discussion with their patients, where appropriate, around smoking cessation, sensible alcohol use and dietary advice. The dentists also carried out examinations to check for the early signs of oral cancer.

There was a hygienist working at the practice. Where required, the dentists referred patients to the hygienist to further address oral hygiene concerns.

We observed that there were health promotion materials displayed in the waiting areas and in the treatment rooms. These could be used to support patient's understanding of how to prevent gum disease and how to maintain their teeth in good condition.

Staffing

Staff told us they received appropriate professional development and training. We checked the staff records and saw that this was the case. The training covered all of the mandatory requirements for registration issued by the General Dental Council. This included responding to emergencies, safeguarding, infection control and radiography and radiation protection training.

There was an induction programme for new staff to follow to ensure that they understood the protocols and systems in place at the practice.

Staff told us they were engaged in an appraisal process on a yearly basis. This reviewed their performance and identified their training and development needs. We checked some of the notes kept from these meetings and saw that each member of staff had the opportunity to put a development plan in place.

Working with other services

The practice had suitable arrangements in place for working with other health professionals to ensure quality of care for their patients.

The principal dentist and reception staff explained how they worked with other services, when required. The

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

dentists were able to refer patients to a range of specialists in primary and secondary care if the treatment required was not provided by the practice. For example, the practice made referrals to other specialists for implants and more complicated extractions.

We reviewed the systems for referring patients to specialist consultants in secondary care. A referral letter was prepared and sent to the hospital with full details of the dentist's findings and a copy was stored on the practices' records system. When the patient had received their treatment they were discharged back to the practice. Their treatment was then monitored after being referred back to the practice to ensure patients had received a satisfactory outcome and all necessary post-procedure care. A copy of the referral letter was always available to the patient if they wanted this for their records.

Consent to care and treatment

The practice ensured valid consent was obtained for all care and treatment. We spoke with the hygienist and the principal dentist about their understanding of consent.

They explained that individual treatment options, risks, benefits and costs were discussed with each patient and then documented in a written treatment plan. They stressed the importance of communication skills when explaining care and treatment to patients to help ensure they had an understanding of their treatment options. Patients were asked to sign formal written consent forms for specific treatments.

All of the staff we spoke with were aware of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. (The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for health and care professionals to act and make decisions on behalf of adults who lack the capacity to make particular decisions for themselves).

The staff we spoke with could describe scenarios for how they would manage a patient who lacked the capacity to consent to dental treatment. They noted that they would involve the patient's family, along with social workers and other professionals involved in the care of the patient, to ensure that the best interests of the patient were met.

Are services caring?

Our findings

Respect, dignity, compassion & empathy

The comments cards we received, and the patients we spoke with, all made positive remarks about the staff's caring and helpful attitude. Patients indicated that they felt comfortable and relaxed with their dentist and that they were made to feel at ease during consultations and treatments. Patients who were nervous about dental treatment indicated that their dentist was calm, worked with them, listened to their concerns, and gave them reassurance throughout the processes of the dental treatments. We also observed staff were welcoming and helpful when patients arrived for their appointment or made enquiries over the phone.

Staff were aware of the importance of protecting patients' privacy and dignity. The treatment rooms were situated away from the main waiting areas and we saw that the doors were closed at all times when patients were having treatment. Conversations between patients and the dentist could not be heard from outside the rooms, which protected patient's privacy.

Staff understood the importance of data protection and confidentiality and had received training in information governance. Patients' dental care records were stored in a paper format in locked filing cabinets.

Involvement in decisions about care and treatment

The practice displayed information in the waiting area and on its website which gave details of the private dental charges or fees.

Staff told us they worked towards providing clear explanations about treatment and prevention strategies. They used a range of visual aids to support patients understanding such as information displayed on computer screens and leaflets which described different treatments. We saw evidence in the records that the dentist recorded the information they had provided to patients about their treatment and the options open to them.

The patient feedback we received via comments cards, and through speaking with patients on the day of the inspection, confirmed that patients felt appropriately involved in the planning of their treatment and were satisfied with the descriptions given by staff.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

Responding to and meeting patients' needs

The practice had a system in place to schedule enough time to assess and meet patients' dental needs. There were set appointment times for routine check-ups and more minor treatments. The dentists could also decide on the length of time needed for their patient's consultation and treatment, particularly in relation to more complex treatment plans. The feedback we received from patients indicated that they felt they had enough time with the dentist and were not rushed.

Staff told us that patients could book an appointment in good time to see the dentist. The feedback we received from patients confirmed that they could get an appointment when they needed one, and that this included good access to emergency appointments on the day that they needed to be seen.

During our inspection we looked at examples of information available to people. We saw that the practice waiting area displayed a variety of information including opening hours and practice policy documents. The practice had a website which reinforced this information. New patients were given a practice leaflet which included advice about appointments, opening hours and the types of services that were on offer.

Tackling inequity and promoting equality

The practice had recognised the needs of different groups in the planning of its service. Staff told us they treated everybody equally and welcomed patients from a range of different backgrounds, cultures and religions. There was an equality and diversity policy which staff were following.

Staff spoke a range of different languages, which supported some patients to access the service. The practice did not have access to a telephone interpreter service, but staff told us they would arrange for such a service if the need

arose. The practice was also able to provide large print, written information for people who were hard of hearing or visually impaired. The practice was wheelchair accessible with access to some of the treatment rooms on the ground floor, although the toilet was not fully accessible.

Access to the service

The practice opening hours are Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm. The practice displayed its opening hours on their premises, on the practice website and in the practice information leaflet available in the waiting area.

We asked the practice manager and reception staff about access to the service in an emergency or outside of normal opening hours. They told us the answer phone message gave details about how to access out-of-hours emergency treatment.

The reception staff told us that patients, who needed to be seen urgently, for example, because they were experiencing dental pain, were seen on the same day that they alerted the practice to their concerns. The feedback we received via comments cards confirmed that patients had good access to the dentists in the event of needing emergency treatment.

Concerns & complaints

Information about how to make a complaint was displayed in the reception area. There was a formal complaints policy describing how the practice handled formal and informal complaints from patients. There had not been any complaints recorded in the past year.

Patients were invited to give feedback through a suggestions box situated in the reception area and through the use of the NHS 'Friends and Family Test'. The practice had also carried out a satisfaction survey in 2015. The most recent results showed that patients were satisfied with their care and likely to recommend the practice to other people.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

Governance arrangements

The practice had governance arrangements and a clear management structure. There were relevant policies and procedures in place. Staff were aware of these and acted in line with them.

Staff told us there were regular staff meetings to discuss ongoing concerns and key governance issues such as infection control. We reviewed minutes from these meetings and saw that they covered a range of topics including safeguarding, infection control and staffing levels.

There were arrangements for identifying, recording and managing risks through the use of risk assessment processes. These were regularly reviewed and staff were following protocols to mitigate risk. There was one area where an additional risk assessment was required in relation to the use of needles during injection procedures.

We also found that infection control procedures were generally robust, but that environmental cleaning in one of the treatment rooms had not been effective. It was made more difficult to maintain due to the state of repair of some of the surfaces, such as sideboards and floors.

Records related to patient care and treatments were kept accurately. Some improvement could be made in relation to the recording of medical history information. Staff records were generally well maintained, although improvements could be made, for example, in relation to the recording of references during any recruitment process.

The principal dentist was responsive to our feedback in these areas. They sent us evidence after the inspection confirming that the issues had been addressed.

Leadership, openness and transparency

The staff we spoke with described a transparent culture which encouraged candour, openness and honesty. Staff said that they felt comfortable about raising concerns with the principal dentist and the practice manager. They felt they were listened to and responded to when they did so.

We found staff to be hard working, caring and committed to their work and overall there was a strong sense that staff worked together as a team.

Staff were being engaged in an appraisal process, at the time of the inspection, to identifying their training needs and overall career goals.

Learning and improvement

The practice had a programme of clinical audit that was used as part of the process for learning and improvement. These included audits for infection control, clinical record keeping, waiting times, antibiotic prescribing, and X-ray quality. Audits were repeated at appropriate intervals to evaluate whether or not quality had been maintained or if improvements had been made

The auditing system demonstrated a generally high standard of work with only small improvements required. We saw notes from meetings which showed that results of audits were discussed in order to share achievements or action plans for improving performance.

All staff were supported to pursue development opportunities. We saw evidence that staff were working towards completing the required number of CPD hours to maintain their professional development in line with requirements set by the General Dental Council (GDC).

Practice seeks and acts on feedback from its patients, the public and staff

The practice gathered feedback from patients through the use of a comments box in the reception area and via the NHS 'Friends and Family Test'. The practice had also carried out a patient survey in 2015 and monitored feedback from website reviews. The majority of feedback had been positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the care provided. The practice had acted promptly in response to any negative feedback. For example, the practice had made changes to the protocols for registering new patients in response to feedback in this area.

Staff told us that the principal dentist was open to feedback regarding the quality of the care. They had also been engaged in a staff survey during the past year. The appraisal system and staff meetings also provided appropriate forums for staff to give their feedback.