

Mr. Mark Dixon

The White House Dental Practice

Inspection Report

57 Pensby Road
Heswall
Wirral
CH60 7RB
Tel: 0151 3422793
Website: www.thewhitedental.co.uk

Date of inspection visit: 17 November 2015
Date of publication: 24/12/2015

Overall summary

We carried out an announced comprehensive inspection on 17 November 2015 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

The practice is situated in Heswall, an affluent area of Wirral. The practice has been refurbished to a high standard. The practice has one principal dentist, an associate dentist, three dental hygienists, a practice manager, six qualified dental nurses and a receptionist. The practice provides primary dental services to private patients only. The practice is open Monday – Thursday 8.30am – 5pm, and Friday 8.30am – 1pm.

The principal dentist is the registered provider. A registered provider is registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Registered providers have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the practice is run.

We received feedback from 49 patients about the service. The comment cards seen and patients spoken to reflected positive comments about the staff and the services provided. Patients commented that the practice appeared very clean and they found the staff very caring and friendly. They had trust and confidence in the dental

Summary of findings

treatments and said explanations from clinicians were clear and understandable. Emergency appointments were available on the same day and appointments usually ran on time.

Our key findings were:

- The practice recorded and analysed accidents, incidents and complaints and cascaded learning to staff when they occurred.
- Staff had received safeguarding training and knew the processes to follow to raise any concerns.
- There were sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of patients.
- Staff had been trained to deal with medical emergencies and emergency medicines and emergency equipment were available.
- Infection control procedures were in place.
- Patients' care and treatment was planned and delivered in line with evidence based guidelines, best practice and current legislation.
- Patients received clear explanations about their proposed treatment, costs, benefits and risks and were involved in making decisions about it.
- Patients were treated with dignity and respect and their confidentiality was maintained.
- The appointment system met the needs of patients and waiting times were kept to a minimum.
- The practice staff felt involved and worked as a team.
- The practice took into account any comments, concerns or complaints and used these to help them improve.

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

- Improving the significant clinical event reporting system to distinguish between clinical events and accidents.
- Review how patient safety and other relevant alerts and guidance are followed and actions taken are recorded.
- Reviewing and updating policies and procedures including recruitment policies and procedures to ensure they meet relevant guidelines and legislation.
- Obtaining and assessing written references for newly employed staff.
- Storing temperature sensitive materials in an appropriate fridge that is monitored and maintained to ensure it remains effective.
- The use of an illuminated magnifying glass to inspect dental equipment after cleaning.
- Obtaining documented evidence of clinical staff's immunisation status.
- Implementation of a business continuity plan.
- Undertaking regular fire safety training and fire drills.

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 in place to ensure care and treatment was carried out safely. In the event of an incident, accident or complaint occurring, the practice documented, investigated and learnt from it. Clinical and non clinical events were recorded on the same system and not distinguished as different events. At the time of inspection not all safety alerts were received by the practice. They registered immediately to ensure they were in receipt and could action all alerts where relevant.

Infection prevention and control procedures were in place and staff had received training in infection control. Radiation equipment was suitably sited and used by trained staff. Local rules were displayed where X-rays were carried out. Emergency medicines in use at the practice were stored safely and checked to ensure they did not go beyond their expiry dates. Sufficient quantities of equipment were available at the practice and were serviced and maintained at regular intervals.

There were sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff working at the practice. Staff had received safeguarding training and were aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Are services effective?

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

Patients received an assessment of their dental needs including recording and assessing their medical history. Explanations were given to patients in a way they understood and risks, benefits, options and costs were fully explained. The practice kept detailed dental records of oral health assessments; treatment carried out and monitored any changes in the patients' oral health. The practice placed an emphasis on the promotion of good health and provided regular oral health advice and guidance to patients.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), national best practice and clinical guidelines were considered in the delivery of dental care and treatment for patients. The treatment provided for the patients was effective, evidence based and focussed on the needs of the individual. Patients were referred to other services in a timely manner. The staff received professional training and development appropriate to their roles and learning needs. Staff were registered with the General Dental Council (GDC) and were meeting the requirements of their professional registration

Are services caring?

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

Patients were treated with dignity and respect and their privacy maintained. Patients spoke highly of the care and treatment given. We found that treatment was clearly explained and patients were provided with information regarding their treatment and oral health. Patients who were nervous or anxious about attending the dentist were cared for with compassion that helped them feel more at ease.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

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

The service practice was aware of the needs of the local population and took those these into account in how the practice as run. Patients had good access to appointments at the practice and emergency/urgent appointments were

Summary of findings

usually available on the same day. There were good dental facilities in the practice and there was sufficient well maintained equipment to meet patients' needs. Appointment times were convenient and met the needs of patients and they were seen promptly. The practice was accessible and accommodated patients with a disability or lack of mobility, including providing a disabled access toilet and ground floor treatment rooms.

There was a clear complaints' system in place.

Are services well-led?

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

There was an effective leadership structure evident and staff felt supported by the principal dentist, manager and other staff. Staff were supported to maintain their professional development and skills. Staff met regularly to review aspects of the delivery of dental care and the management of the practice. Patients and staff were able to feedback compliments and concerns regarding the service.

The practice had clinical governance and risk management structures in place. Clinical audits took place. Health and safety risks had been identified and risk assessments were in place and reviewed.

The White House 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.

The inspection took place on 17 November 2015 and was conducted by a CQC inspector and a dental specialist advisor.

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.

Prior to the inspection we asked the practice to send us some information which we reviewed. This included any complaints they had received in the last 12 months, their latest statement of purpose, the details of their staff members, their qualifications and proof of registration with their professional bodies.

We also reviewed information we held about the practice and found there were no areas of concern. During the inspection we spoke with the dentists, hygienist, dental nurses and the practice manager. We reviewed policies, procedures and other documents. We reviewed 45 CQC comment cards that we had left prior to the inspection, for patients to complete, about the services provided at the practice and spoke to four patients on the day of inspection.

Are services safe?

Our findings

Reporting, learning and improvement from incidents

The practice had procedures in place to investigate, respond to and learn from accidents, incidents and complaints. Staff were aware of how to report accidents and incidents and were encouraged to bring safety issues to the attention of the dentists. Clinical and non-clinical incidents/significant events were reported through the same reporting system. There was not a clearly defined process for dealing with clinical events, however we found that clinical events were reported and analysed using the accident reporting system and feedback given to all staff through practice meetings and face to face. The practice had a no blame culture and policies were in place to support this.

We found that patient safety alerts were not being received by the practice, however on discussion we were told that they would register immediately to ensure safety alerts and notices were received and then actioned.

Reliable safety systems and processes (including safeguarding)

One of the dentists had a lead role in safeguarding to provide support and advice to staff and to oversee safeguarding procedures within the practice. The practice had a local policy and procedures in place for the protection of vulnerable adults and children. There were flow charts and guidance of what to do in the event of concerns regarding child and vulnerable adult abuse; however they were embedded within the policies and would be better accessed if displayed for staff to refer to easily. Staff were able to demonstrate that they understood the different forms of abuse and how to raise concerns. Training records showed that all staff had received safeguarding training for both vulnerable adults and children to level two. Information was available that contained telephone numbers of who to contact outside of the practice if there was a need, such as the local authority responsible for investigations.

During our visit we found that the dental care and treatment of patients was planned and delivered in a way that ensured patients' safety and welfare. Dental care records were electronic and contained a medical history that was obtained and updated prior to the commencement of dental treatment and at regular interval

of care. The clinical records we saw were all well-structured and contained sufficient detail to demonstrate what treatment had been prescribed or completed, what was due to be carried out next and details of possible alternatives.

Computers were password protected and data regularly backed up to secure storage. Screens at reception were not overlooked which ensured patients' confidential information could not be viewed at reception. We noted that the paper records were stored in filing cabinets behind reception. However these were not lockable and therefore dental treatment records were not as secure as they could be. The practice said that this would be addressed as part of the ongoing refurbishment plan for the practice.

We discussed with the dentists and found that a rubber dam was routinely used in all root canal treatments. This was clearly documented in the dental records we reviewed where root canal treatment had been undertaken. A rubber dam is a thin rubber sheet, used in dentistry to isolate the operative site from the rest of the mouth and protect the patient's airway.

Medical emergencies

The practice had procedures in place for staff to follow in the event of a medical emergency and all staff received basic life support training annually. Staff we spoke with were able to describe how they would deal with medical emergencies.

Emergency medicines and oxygen were available. This was in line with the Resuscitation Council UK and British National Formulary guidelines. The practice had an automated external defibrillator (AED) as part of their equipment. (An AED is a portable electronic device that analyses life threatening irregularities of the heart including ventricular fibrillation and is able to deliver an electrical shock to attempt to restore a normal heart rhythm). AEDs are recommended as standard equipment for use in the event of a medical emergency by the Resuscitation Council UK. We found that medicines and equipment were checked to monitor stock levels, expiry dates and ensure that equipment was in working order. These checks were recorded.

Staff recruitment

Are services safe?

The practice had recruitment procedures however they did not have a recruitment policy in place that was in line with current guidance and regulations.

Staff records we reviewed demonstrated that all clinical staff had undertaken a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Clinical staff had evidence of registration with their professional body the General Dental Council (GDC) and medical insurance. The GDC is the organisation which regulates dentists and dental care professionals in the United Kingdom. We found that staff files generally contained the information required relating to workers except for written references for the person. A number of staff had worked at the practice for a long period of time; however the most recently employed staff did not have documented evidence of references.

Newly employed staff had a period of induction to familiarise themselves with the way the practice ran, before being allowed to work unsupervised. Staff told us they had received an induction and there was documented evidence in staff records.

There were sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and skilled staff working at the practice. A system was in place to ensure that where absences occurred they would cover for their colleagues.

Monitoring health & safety and responding to risks

A health and safety policy and risk assessments were in place. These identified risks to staff and patients who attended the practice. The risks had been identified and control measures were in place to reduce them. There were also other policies and procedures in place to manage risks at the practice. These included infection prevention and control, COSHH, a Legionella risk assessment, and fire safety risk assessment and procedures. A Legionella risk assessment is a report by a competent person giving details as to how to reduce the risk of the legionella bacterium spreading through water and other systems in the work place.

Processes were in place to monitor and reduce risks so that staff and patients were safe. We saw records to demonstrate that fire detection and fire fighting equipment such as fire alarms and fire extinguishers were regularly tested. However, fire drills and fire safety training had not taken place in the last 12 months.

The practice had emergency contact details and numbers accessible for staff to refer to; however they did not have an emergency and business continuity plan.

Infection control

The practice was visibly clean, tidy and uncluttered. The practice had been furnished to a high standard and the treatment rooms had units, work surfaces and furniture that promoted good infection prevention and control. There was an overarching infection control policy in place and supporting policies and procedures which detailed decontamination and cleaning. General cleaning was undertaken by a contracted cleaner however there was no cleaning schedule in place that was monitored. Responsibility for cleaning the clinical areas in between patient treatments was identified as a role for the dental nurses and they were able to describe how they undertook this.

There was a nominated dental nurse who had responsibility for infection control and was the lead for decontamination in the practice. Staff had received training in infection prevention and control as part of their continuous professional development. We saw evidence that the practice undertook regular six monthly infection control audits and demonstrated compliance with current Department of Health's guidance, Health Technical Memorandum 01-05 (HTM 01-05): Decontamination in primary care dental practices (HTM01-05). An action plan was in place to address any issues identified.

We found that there were adequate supplies of liquid soaps and paper hand towels throughout the premises. Posters describing proper hand washing techniques were displayed throughout the practice. There was a policy and procedure for dealing with inoculation /sharps injuries. Sharps bins were properly located, signed, dated and not overfilled. A clinical waste contract was in place. Clinical waste was stored securely until collection.

We looked at the procedures in place for the decontamination of used dental instruments. The practice had a dedicated decontamination room that was in line with published guidance. (HTM01-05) The decontamination room had defined dirty and clean zones in operation to reduce the risk of cross contamination. Staff wore appropriate personal protective equipment during the process and these included disposable gloves, aprons and protective eye/face wear.

Are services safe?

We found that instruments were being cleaned and sterilised in line with published guidance (HTM 1-05). On the day of our inspection, a dental nurse demonstrated the decontamination process to us and used the correct procedures. The practice cleaned their instruments manually and with an automatic washer. Instruments were then rinsed and examined, however there was no illuminated magnifying glass which would enable closer inspection of instruments after cleaning. Instruments were then sterilised in an autoclave. At the end of the sterilising procedure the instruments were correctly packaged, sealed, stored and dated with an expiry date. We looked at the sealed instruments in the surgeries and found that they all had an expiry date that was within the recommendations of the Department of Health.

The equipment used for cleaning and sterilising was checked, maintained and serviced in line with the manufacturer's instructions. Daily, weekly and monthly records were kept of decontamination cycles to ensure that equipment was functioning properly. Records showed that the equipment was in good working order and being effectively maintained.

Staff were well presented and wore clean uniforms. We saw and were told by patients that they wore personal protective equipment when treating patients. We did not see any documented evidence that clinical staff had received inoculations against Hepatitis B or had received regular blood tests to check the effectiveness of that inoculation. People who are likely to come into contact with blood products and are at increased risk of needle-stick injuries should receive these vaccinations to minimise risks of blood borne infections. The practice had not had any incidents of needle stick injuries and assured us they would obtain documented evidence of staff's immunisation status as soon as possible.

The practice had a legionella risk assessment in place and conducted regular tests on the water supply.

Equipment and medicines

We found that all of the equipment used in the practice was maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This included the equipment used to clean and sterilise the instruments and the X-ray sets. There were processes in place to ensure tests of equipment were carried out appropriately and there were records of service histories for each of the units and equipment tested.

We found that portable appliance testing (PAT) was completed in accordance with good practice guidance. PAT is the name of a process which electrical appliances are routinely checked for safety.

Emergency medical equipment was monitored regularly to ensure it was in working order and in sufficient quantities. Records of checks carried out were recorded for evidential and audit purposes. Emergency medicines were stored safely and checked to ensure they did not go beyond their expiry date. We found that one of the emergency medicines and tooth whitening agents were stored in a domestic style fridge which was not monitored to ensure temperatures remained within a safe range to maintain effectiveness of the product.

Radiography (X-rays)

X-ray equipment was used and X-rays were carried out safely and in line with local rules that were relevant to the practice and equipment. We noted that local rules were displayed in areas where X-rays were carried out. We were shown a well maintained radiation protection file in line with the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1999 and Ionising Radiation Medical Exposure Regulations 2000 (IRMER). This file contained the names of the Radiation Protection Advisor and the Radiation Protection Supervisor and the necessary documentation pertaining to the maintenance of the X-ray equipment. Included in the file were the critical examination packs for each X-ray set along with the three yearly maintenance logs and a copy of the local rules. The maintenance logs were within the current recommended interval of 3 years.

The dental care records we saw showed that dental X-rays were justified and reported on every time. X-rays were taken in line with current guidelines by the Faculty of General Dental Practice of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and national radiological guidelines. These findings showed that practice was acting in accordance with national radiological guidelines and patients and staff were protected from unnecessary exposure to radiation. We saw patient X-rays of a high quality. These findings showed that practice was acting in accordance with national radiological guidelines and patients and staff were protected from unnecessary exposure to radiation. The dentist monitored the quality of the X-ray images on a regular basis and records were maintained.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

Our findings

Monitoring and improving outcomes for patients

The clinical staff were familiar with, and used current professional guidance for dentistry. Patients attending the practice for a consultation received an assessment of their dental health which began with the patient completing a medical history questionnaire disclosing 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 then made aware of the condition of their oral health and whether it had changed since the last appointment.

Following the clinical assessment the diagnosis was then discussed with the patient and treatment options explained in detail. Details of the treatment were also documented and included local anaesthetic details including type, the site of administration and batch number and expiry date.

The staff we spoke with and evidence we reviewed confirmed that care and treatment was aimed at ensuring each patient was given support to achieve the best outcomes for them. We found from our discussions that staff completed, in line with The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and national dental guidelines, assessments and treatment plans and these were reviewed appropriately.

The dentist and patients we spoke with told us that each patient's diagnosis was discussed with them and treatment options were explained. Preventative dental advice and information was given in order to improve the outcome for the patient. This included dietary advice and general dental hygiene procedures. Where appropriate, dental fluoride treatments were prescribed and referrals to dental hygienists were made. The patient's notes were updated with the proposed treatment after discussing options with the patient. Patients were monitored through follow-up appointments and these were scheduled in line with their individual requirements.

Patients were referred appropriately and in a timely manner for example in the case of suspected oral cancers and for specialised orthodontic treatments.

We reviewed 45 comment cards and spoke to four patients on the day of inspection. Feedback we received reflected that patients were satisfied with the assessments, explanations and the quality of the treatment.

Health promotion & prevention

The prevention of dental disease was at the heart of the practice's philosophy. To facilitate this philosophy, the practice used the services of three dental hygienists who worked under the prescription of the dentists working at the practice. They provided a variety of treatments including simple scaling and polishing of teeth to more complex gum treatments for patients suffering from the more aggressive forms of gum disease. They would also provide tailored preventative advice and treatments where necessary.

The waiting room and reception area at the practice contained literature that explained the services offered at the practice in addition to information about effective dental hygiene and how to reduce the risk of poor dental health. Adults and children attending the practice were advised during their consultation of steps to take to maintain healthy teeth. Tooth brushing techniques were explained to them in a way they understood, smoking and alcohol advice was also given to them. This was in line with the Department of Health guidelines on prevention known as 'Delivering Better Oral Health'. The sample of dental care records we observed demonstrated that dentists had given oral health advice to patients. Oral Health products such as tooth brushes, inter dental cleaning aids and fluoridated tooth paste were for sale and available at the reception desk.

Staffing

The practice has one principal dentist, an associate dentist, three dental hygienists, a practice manager, six qualified dental nurses and a receptionist. Dental staff were appropriately trained and registered with their professional body. Staff were encouraged to maintain their continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain their skill levels and had access to various role related courses both online and face to face. CPD is a compulsory requirement of registration as a general dental professional and its activity contributes to their professional development.

The practice provided access to update training and training courses. We saw evidence of a variety of training courses having taken place such as in infection control and

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

decontamination, basic life support and safeguarding. Staff we spoke with told us that they were supported in their learning and development and to maintain their professional registration.

The practice had procedures in place for appraising staff performance and staff told us that appraisals had taken place. Staff spoken with said they felt supported and involved in discussions about their personal development. They told us that the dentist and managers were supportive and always available for advice and guidance.

Working with other services

The principal dentist explained how they worked with other services. Dentists were able to refer patients to a range of specialists in secondary and tertiary care services if the treatment required was not provided by the practice. Referral letters were prepared and then sent to the hospital with full details of the dentist's findings and was stored on the practice's computer dental software system. When the patient had received their treatment they would be discharged back to the practice for further follow-up and monitoring. A copy of the referral letter was always available to the patient if they wanted this for their records. We observed one such a letter had been scanned into the patient's computerised records.

Consent to care and treatment

Staff we spoke with on the day of our visit had a clear understanding of patient consent issues. The principal dentist stressed the importance of communication skills when explaining care and treatment to patients to help ensure they had an understanding of their treatment

options. They explained how individual treatment options, risks, benefits and costs were discussed with each patient and then documented in a written treatment plan. We observed that these findings were recorded in detail. We also noted that in instances where treatment plans were more complex the patient was provided with a written statement of the individual findings in language that they could understand.

The practice described how they routinely used a special intra oral camera to take photographs of the teeth prior, during and at the end of dental treatment. This included the condition of teeth requiring treatment, the appearance of the gums and of the soft tissues. These photographs not only aided the consent process but also provided a means of patient education. They also were a means of preventing medico-legal problems in cases where patients could dispute the dentist's findings and treatment outcomes.

The practice had a policy on consent to care. This referred to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and supporting guidance from the British Dental Association was available. We saw evidence that patients were presented with treatment options and consent forms and treatment plans were signed by the patient. The principal dentist explained how they would obtain consent from a patient who suffered with any mental impairment which might mean that were unable to fully understand the implications of their treatment. They explained that they would involve relatives and carers to ensure that the best interests of the patient were served as part of the process. This followed the guidelines of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Are services caring?

Our findings

Respect, dignity, compassion & empathy

We observed that staff at the practice treated patients with dignity and respect and maintained their privacy. The reception area gave privacy and a separate room was available should patients wish to speak in private. Treatment rooms were situated away from the main waiting area and we saw that doors were able to be closed at all times when patients were with dentists and hygienists. Conversations between patients and dentists could not be heard from outside the rooms which protected patients' privacy.

Patients reported they felt that practice staff were kind, helpful and caring and they were treated with dignity and respect at all times. Comments also told us that staff always listened to concerns and provided patients with good advice to make appropriate choices in their treatment.

Staff were clear about the importance of emotional support needed when delivering care to patients who were very nervous or fearful of dental treatment. This was

supported by patients' comments reviewed which told us that they were well cared for when they were nervous or anxious and this helped make the experience better for them.

Involvement in decisions about care and treatment

The principal dentist stressed the importance of communication skills when explaining care and treatment to patients. They explained that they would not normally provide treatment to patients on the first appointment unless they were in pain or their presenting condition dictated otherwise. The dentists felt that patients should be given time to think about the treatment options presented to them. This made it clear that a patient could withdraw consent at any time and that they had received a detailed explanation of the type of treatment required, including the risks, benefits and options. Costs were made clear in the treatment plan. We reviewed a number of records which confirmed this approach had taken place.

Patients' comments told us that the staff were professional and care and treatments were always explained in a language they could understand. Information was given to patients enabling them to make informed decisions about care and treatment options.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

Responding to and meeting patient's needs

The practice's information leaflet and information displayed in the waiting area described the range of services offered to patients and included information in relation to the complaints procedure. The practice provided private treatment and the costs were clearly displayed. The practice's website also included information for patients about dental care and treatments and costs.

Each patient contact was recorded in the patient's dental care record. New patients completed a medical history and dental questionnaire. This enabled the practice to gather important information about their previous dental, medical and relevant social/lifestyles history. They also aimed to capture the patient's expectations in relation to their needs and concerns which helped direct dentists to provide the most effective form of care and treatment.

Tackling inequity and promoting equality

The practice had an equality and diversity policy. Staff we spoke with were aware of these policies. The practice had good facilities and was accessible to patients with reduced mobility and those using wheelchairs. There were disabled access toilet facilities and some treatment rooms were located on the ground floor.

Access to the service

Appointment times and availability met the needs of patients. Patients were able to book in person or by

telephone. Patients were able to get an urgent appointment on the same day if needed. The arrangements for obtaining emergency dental advice outside of normal working hours were detailed on the practice answerphone message and in the information leaflet and website. We looked at the appointment schedules for patients and found that patients were given adequate time slots for appointments of varying complexity of treatment.

Patients we spoke with and comments we received told us that there was no concerns regarding waiting times and that appointments usually ran on time. Patients commented that they had sufficient time during their appointment for discussions about their care and treatment and for planned treatments to take place.

Concerns & complaints

The practice had a complaint policy and procedure that explained to patients the process to follow, the timescales involved for investigation and the person responsible for handling the issue. It also included the details of external organisations that a complainant could contact should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or feel that their concerns were not treated fairly. Staff we spoke with were aware of the procedure to follow if they received a complaint.

From information received prior to the inspection we saw that there had been two complaints received in the last 12 months. These had been documented and responded to appropriately.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

Governance arrangements

The practice had governance arrangements in place for monitoring and improving the services provided for patients. Staff we spoke with were aware of their roles and responsibilities within the practice.

The practice carried out a number of clinical audits. These included for example, infection control, clinical records, safe use of radiographs and assessing the quality of X-ray films. Audits were completed on a regular annual basis. Health and safety risk assessments were in place to help ensure that patients received safe and appropriate treatments.

There was a range of policies and procedures in use at the practice. These included health and safety, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, infection prevention control, consent and treatment and human resources. Staff were aware of the policies and they were readily available for them to access. Staff spoken with were able to discuss many of the policies and this indicated to us that they had read and understood them. The policies were localised to the practice.

Leadership, openness and transparency

The culture of the practice encouraged candour, openness and honesty. Staff told us that they could speak with the practice's dentists or manager if they had any concerns. They told us that there were clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the practice and that they were encouraged to report any safety concerns. The principal dentist had a good understanding and gave examples of their responsibilities under the Duty of Candour.

All staff were aware of whom to raise any issue with and told us that the dentists and other staff listened to their concerns and acted appropriately. We were told that there was a no blame culture at the practice and that the delivery of high quality care was part of the practice ethos.

The practice had a statement of purpose. Staff could articulate the values and ethos of the practice to provide high quality dental care.

Management lead through learning and improvement

Staff told us the practice supported them to maintain and develop through training, development and mentoring. We saw that regular appraisals took place and staff told us they valued the process.

The practice carried out a number of team based training days and sessions. These included dealing with common medical emergencies in the dental practice, the provision of root canal treatment and the more complex forms of gum disease. Day long training courses were provided for the practice team in preventive dentistry, cross infection and treatment approaches based on a patient journey approach. The dentist also explained that the nursing staff organised for themselves 'lunch and learn' sessions in a variety of subjects to facilitate the provision of quality care.

The principal dentist had a special interest in the provision of dental implants. When patients required this type of treatment, they worked in conjunction with a specialist in oral surgery who provided mentorship and supervision to the dentist in more complex cases. This ensured that patients received high quality care at all times and the dentist in turn developed and maintained their surgical skills at a high level.

All dentists and nurses who worked at the practice were registered with the General Dental Council (GDC). The GDC registers all dental care professionals to make sure they are appropriately qualified and competent to work in the UK. Staff were encouraged and supported to maintain their continuous professional development as required by the GDC.

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

The practice staff told us that patients could give feedback at any time they visited. They undertook patient satisfaction surveys and had systems in place to review the feedback from patients who had cause to complain.

The practice held monthly documented meetings at which clinical and practice management issues were discussed. We saw that feedback from complaints and accidents and were shared at these meetings also.