

Gentle Dental Care (Worcester) Limited

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Inspection report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced focused inspection on 10 August 2021 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 Care Quality Commission, (CQC), inspector who was supported by a specialist dental adviser.

As part of this inspection we asked:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- 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 this practice was providing safe care in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Are services effective?

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

Are services well-led?

Summary of findings

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

Background

Gentle Dental Care (Worcester) Ltd provides NHS and private dental care and treatment for adults and children.

There is level access to the practice for people who use wheelchairs and those with pushchairs. Car parking spaces are available in pay and display car parks near the practice. There is one dedicated parking bay for patients that are blue badge holders in the practice car park.

The dental team includes three dentists, six dental nurses, four receptionists and a practice manager. The practice has four treatment rooms.

The practice is owned by a company and as a condition of registration must have a person registered with the CQC as the registered manager. Registered managers have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated regulations about how the practice is run. The registered manager at Gentle Dental Care (Worcester) Ltd is the principal dentist.

During the inspection we spoke with two dentists, one dental nurse, the practice manager and a supporting practice manager from the sister practice in Evesham. We looked at practice policies and procedures and other records about how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

Monday from 9am to 7.30pm.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am to 5.30pm.

Friday from 9am to 5pm.

Saturday from 9am to 12pm.

Our key findings were:

- The provider had infection control procedures which reflected published guidance. However, we found two stools with small tears in the upholstery which meant they could not be cleaned effectively. Both stools were removed, and replacement stools were ordered during the inspection.
- Staff knew how to deal with emergencies. Appropriate medicines and life-saving equipment were available.
- The provider had systems to help them manage risk to patients and staff.
- The provider had safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The provider had staff recruitment procedures which reflected current legislation.

Summary of findings

- The clinical staff provided patients' care and treatment in line with current guidelines.
- Staff provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health.
- The provider had effective leadership and a culture of continuous improvement. We found that antimicrobial prescribing audits had not been completed. These had been scheduled for completion in the next two months.
- The provider dealt with complaints positively and efficiently.
- The provider had information governance arrangements.
- We identified shortfalls with stock control management systems during our inspection. The provider responded swiftly and following our inspection we were sent evidence to demonstrate that these shortfalls had been addressed.

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

- Improve the practice's infection control procedures and protocols taking into account the guidelines issued by the Department of Health in the Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices and having regard to The Health and Social Care Act 2008: 'Code of Practice about the prevention and control of infections and related guidance'. In particular ensuring dental stools are impervious and able to be cleaned effectively.
- Implement audits for prescribing of antibiotic medicines taking into account the guidance provided by the Faculty of General Dental Practice.
- Implement an effective system for identifying, disposing and replenishing of out-of-date stock.

Summary of findings

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We asked the following question(s).

Are services safe?	No action	✓
Are services effective?	No action	✓
Are services well-led?	No action	✓

Are services safe?

Our findings

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

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

Staff had clear systems to keep patients safe.

Staff knew their responsibilities if they had concerns about the safety of children, young people and adults who were vulnerable due to their circumstances. The provider had safeguarding policies and procedures to provide staff with information about identifying, reporting and dealing with suspected abuse. We saw evidence that staff had received safeguarding training. Staff knew about the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and how to report concerns, including notification to the CQC. A flow chart with internal and external safeguarding lead contacts was displayed in the reception area.

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

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

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

The provider had 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 provider had suitable numbers of dental instruments available for the clinical staff and measures were in place to ensure they were decontaminated and sterilised appropriately.

The staff had systems in place to ensure that patient-specific dental appliances were disinfected prior to being sent to a dental laboratory and before treatment was completed.

We saw staff had procedures to reduce the possibility of Legionella or other bacteria developing in the water systems, in line with a risk assessment which had been completed in March 2021. All recommendations in the assessment had been actioned and records of water testing and dental unit water line management were maintained.

We saw effective cleaning schedules to ensure the practice was kept clean. When we inspected we saw the practice was visibly clean.

The provider had policies and procedures in place to ensure clinical waste was segregated and stored appropriately in line with guidance.

The infection control lead carried out infection prevention and control audits twice a year. The latest audit completed in June 2021 showed the practice was meeting the required standards and did not highlight the ripped stools. We discussed this with the practice manager who advised they only checked the patients' dental chairs and would amend their audit to include the dentists' and nurses' stools.

The provider had a Speak-Up policy. Staff felt confident they could raise concerns without fear of recrimination.

Are services safe?

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

The provider had a recruitment policy and procedure to help them employ suitable staff and had checks in place for agency and locum staff. These reflected the relevant legislation. We looked at four staff recruitment records. These showed the provider followed their recruitment procedure.

We observed that clinical staff were qualified and registered with the General Dental Council and had professional indemnity cover.

We found local anaesthetic was stored outside of blister packs and some out of date filling materials in one of the treatment rooms. This highlighted that the system for identifying, disposing and replenishing of out-of-date stock was not effective. The local anaesthetic cartridges and out of date filling materials were disposed of during the inspection. The practice manager gave assurance that these shortfalls would be investigated to prevent reoccurrence. We were sent a copy of a staff meeting that had been held following the inspection where these shortfalls had been discussed with the team.

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

A fire risk assessment was carried out in line with the legal requirements. We saw there were fire extinguishers and fire detection systems throughout the building and fire exits were kept clear.

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

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

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

Risks to patients

The provider had implemented systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient safety.

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

We looked at the practice's arrangements for safe dental care and treatment. The staff followed the relevant safety regulation when using needles and other sharp dental items. A sharps risk assessment had been undertaken and was updated annually. We found one sharps bin in the practice that had been in use for over three months. This was discussed with the practice manager during the inspection and the sharps bin was appropriately disposed of and replaced.

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

Staff had completed sepsis awareness training. Sepsis prompts for staff and patient information posters were displayed throughout the practice. This ensured staff triaged appointments effectively to manage patients who presented with a dental infection and where necessary referred patients for specialist care.

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

Are services safe?

Emergency equipment and medicines were available as described in recognised guidance. We found staff kept records of their checks of these to make sure they were available, within their expiry date, and in working order.

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

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

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

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

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

The provider had systems for referring patients with suspected oral cancer under the national two-week wait arrangements. These arrangements were initiated by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to help make sure patients were seen quickly by a specialist.

Safe and appropriate use of medicines

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

There was a 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.

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

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

Antimicrobial prescribing audits had not been undertaken. The provider gave assurance that this audit had been scheduled for completion within two months.

Track record on safety, and lessons learned and improvements

The provider had implemented systems for reviewing and investigating when things went wrong. There were comprehensive risk assessments in relation to safety issues. Staff monitored and reviewed incidents. This helped staff to understand risks which led to effective risk management systems in the practice as well as safety improvements.

In the previous 24 months there had been four safety incidents and accidents recorded. These safety incidents had been investigated, documented and discussed with the rest of the dental practice team to prevent such occurrences happening again.

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

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

Our findings

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

Effective needs assessment, care and treatment

The practice had systems to keep dental professionals up to date with current evidence-based practice. We saw 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 provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health in line with the Delivering Better Oral Health toolkit.

The dentists prescribed high concentration fluoride products if a patient's risk of tooth decay indicated this would help them.

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

Staff were aware of and involved with national oral health campaigns and local schemes which supported patients to live healthier lives, for example, local stop smoking services. They directed patients to these schemes when appropriate.

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

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

Consent to care and treatment

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

The practice team understood the importance of obtaining and recording patients' consent to treatment. The staff were aware of the need to obtain proof of legal guardianship or Power of Attorney for patients who lacked capacity or for children who were looked after. The dentists gave patients information about treatment options and the risks and benefits of these, so they could make informed decisions. We saw this documented in patients' records. Patients confirmed their dentist listened to them and gave them clear information about their treatment.

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

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

The provider had quality assurance processes to encourage learning and continuous improvement. Staff kept records of the results of these audits, the resulting action plans and improvements.

Effective staffing

Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles. The provider funded online training for new staff members to ensure they had access to core training topics. The practice manager had developed a training matrix which ensured they had complete oversight and monitoring of staff learning and development needs.

Staff new to the practice received a structured induction programme. We confirmed clinical staff completed the continuing professional development required for their registration with the General Dental Council.

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 for treatment the practice did not provide.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

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

Leadership capacity and capability

We found leaders had the capacity, values and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care. They were knowledgeable about issues and priorities relating to the quality and future of the service. They understood the challenges and were addressing them.

Leaders at all levels were visible and approachable. The provider owned two dental practices, and the practice manager from the sister practice was present during the inspection to support the practice manager. Staff told us they worked closely with them to make sure they prioritised compassionate and inclusive leadership.

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

The provider had a strategy for delivering the service which was in line with health and social priorities across the region. Staff planned the services to meet the needs of the practice population. The practice manager informed us they were attending a local authority webinar that evening to discuss system challenges with referring patients outside of their clinical commissioning group area and the current access issues.

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 team had all contributed to a wall collage in the practice managers office where one wall had been completely covered in black and white photographs of staff members and their families. This had been implemented as part of a well-being and team building initiative.

Staff discussed their training needs at an annual appraisal, one to one meeting and through informal discussion. They also discussed learning needs, general wellbeing and aims for future professional development. We saw evidence of completed appraisals in the staff folders.

The staff focused on the needs of patients.

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

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

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

Governance and management

Staff had clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to support good governance and management.

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

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

Are services well-led?

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

Appropriate and accurate information

Staff acted on appropriate and accurate information.

Quality and operational information, for example NHS performance information, surveys, audits and external body reviews were used to ensure and improve performance. Performance information was combined with the views of patients.

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

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

Staff involved patients, the public, staff and external partners to support the service.

The provider used online feedback and encouraged verbal comments to obtain patients' views about the service. Patient satisfaction surveys and the suggestions box feedback were paused due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The practice manager discussed examples of suggestions from patients that they had acted on.

Patients were encouraged to complete the NHS Friends and Family Test. This is a national programme to allow patients to provide feedback on NHS services they have used. This had been paused through the pandemic and reinstated in July 2021.

The provider 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

The provider had systems and processes for learning, continuous improvement and innovation.

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

The practice manager showed a commitment to learning and improvement and valued the contributions made to the team by individual members of staff. The practice manager told us about incentives including paid days off that were awarded to staff with exemplary sickness absence records.

Staff completed 'highly recommended' training as per General Dental Council professional standards. The provider supported and encouraged staff to complete continuing professional development.