

Aligned Dental Care Limited

Aligned Orthodontics

Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced inspection on 6 March 2020 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.

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

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

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

Our findings were:

Are services safe?

We found 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 caring?

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

Are services responsive?

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

Are services well-led?

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

Background

Aligned Orthodontics is in Swinton and provides NHS and private orthodontics treatments for adults and children.

Due to the nature of the premises full wheelchair access would not be possible. Access for small wheelchairs or pushchairs is possible. Car parking spaces are available near the practice.

The dental team includes three orthodontists, two dental nurses and an office manager. The practice has three treatment rooms.

Summary of findings

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 Aligned Orthodontics is the principal orthodontist.

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

During the inspection we spoke with two orthodontists, two dental nurses and the office manager. We looked at practice policies and procedures and other records about how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

Tuesday from 10am to 6pm

Thursday from 8:30am to 4:30pm

Friday from 9am to 5pm

Our key findings were:

- The practice appeared to be visibly clean and well-maintained.
- The provider had infection control procedures which reflected published guidance.
- Staff knew how to deal with emergencies. Appropriate medicines and life-saving equipment were available.
- The provider had systems to help them manage risk to patients and staff.

- The provider had safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The provider had staff recruitment procedures which reflected current legislation.
- The clinical staff provided patients' care and treatment in line with current guidelines.
- Staff treated patients with dignity and respect and took care to protect their privacy and personal information.
- Staff provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health.
- The appointment system took account of patients' needs.
- The provider had effective leadership and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff felt involved and supported and worked as a team.
- The provider asked staff and patients for feedback about the services they provided.
- The provider dealt with complaints positively and efficiently.
- The provider had information governance arrangements.






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

- Implement an effective recruitment procedure to ensure that appropriate checks are completed prior to new staff commencing employment at the practice.

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?	No action	
Are services effective?	No action	
Are services caring?	No action	
Are services responsive to people's needs?	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.

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

The provider also had a system to identify adults that were in other vulnerable situations 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. 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 showed the practice was meeting the required standards.

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

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 three staff recruitment records. These showed the provider generally followed their recruitment procedure. We noted there was no Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for one new member of staff and no associated risk assessment. We were told a DBS check had been applied for.

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

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.

Are services safe?

We saw evidence the orthodontists 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.

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 helped ensure staff made triage appointments effectively to manage patients who present with dental infection and where necessary refer 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.

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 orthodontists 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 orthodontists 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.

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

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 12 months there had been no safety incidents. Staff told us that any safety incidents would be investigated, documented and discussed with the rest of the dental practice team to prevent such occurrences happening again. We reviewed a historical incident and there was good evidence of learning which had been identified and actions put in place to prevent reoccurrence.

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 the orthodontists 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.

The specialist orthodontists carried out a patient assessment in line with recognised guidance from the British Orthodontic Society. An Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need was recorded which would be used to determine whether a patient was eligible for NHS orthodontic treatment. The patient's oral hygiene was also assessed to determine if the patient was suitable for orthodontic treatment. We noted that whilst the orthodontic assessment was comprehensive, the dental care records lacked detail of the examination and screening stage of treatment. We discussed this with the principal orthodontist who told us this would be addressed.

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.

One of the dental nurses had completed extended duty training in oral health education. They provided oral health education and support to all patients undergoing a course of orthodontic treatment. This included how to ensure they cleaned around their brace correctly and dietary advice.

The practice had a selection of dental products for sale and provided leaflets to help patients with their oral health.

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 are looked after. The orthodontists 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 orthodontist 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 orthodontists assessed patients' treatment needs in line with recognised guidance.

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.

Staff new to the practice had 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 orthodontists confirmed they referred patients to a range of specialists in primary and secondary care for treatment the practice did not provide.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

The practice was a referral clinic for orthodontics and we saw staff monitored and ensured the orthodontists were aware of all incoming referrals daily. Staff monitored referrals through an electronic referral system to ensure they were responded to promptly.

Are services caring?

Our findings

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

Kindness, respect and compassion

Staff treated patients with kindness, respect and compassion.

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

Patients commented positively that staff were caring, respectful and friendly. We saw staff treated patients with dignity and respect and were friendly towards patients at the reception desk and over the telephone.

Patients said staff were compassionate and understanding.

Privacy and dignity

Staff respected and promoted patients' privacy and dignity.

Staff were aware of the importance of privacy and confidentiality. The layout of reception and waiting areas provided privacy when reception staff were dealing with patients. If a patient asked for more privacy, the practice would respond appropriately. The reception computer screens were not visible to patients and staff did not leave patients' personal information where other patients might see it.

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

Involving people in decisions about care and treatment

Staff helped patients to be involved in decisions about their care. They were aware of the Accessible Information Standard and the requirements of the Equality Act. The Accessible Information Standard is a requirement to make sure that patients and their carers can access and understand the information they are given. We saw:

- Interpreter services were available for patients who did not speak or understand English.
- Staff communicated with patients in a way they could understand, and a communication aid was available.

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

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

The orthodontists described to us the methods they used to help patients understand treatment options discussed. These included for example photographs, study models, videos and X-ray which could be shown to the patient and relative to help them better understand the diagnosis and treatment.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

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

Responding to and meeting people's needs

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

Staff were clear about the importance of emotional support needed by patients when delivering care. They conveyed a good understanding of supporting more vulnerable members of society such as patients with a learning difficulty.

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

Two weeks before our inspection, CQC sent the practice 50 feedback comment cards, along with posters for the practice to display, encouraging patients to share their views of the service.

Seven cards were completed, giving a patient response rate of 14%.

100% of views expressed by patients were positive.

Common themes within the positive feedback were the friendliness of staff, the cleanliness of the practice and the flexibility of appointment times.

We shared this with the provider in our feedback.

Due to the nature of the premises step free access is not possible. We were shown plans the practice had made which included measures to make the practice fully accessible. Some adjustments had been made including a hearing loop and a ground floor toilet. Patients were made fully aware of the accessibility restrictions prior to booking an appointment.

Staff telephoned some patients on the morning of their appointment to make sure they could get to the practice.

Timely access to services

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

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

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

Patients requiring emergency treatment outside normal working hours were signposted to the NHS 111 out of hour's service.

The practice's information leaflet and answerphone provided telephone numbers for patients needing emergency dental treatment during the working day and when the practice was not open. Patients confirmed they could make routine and emergency appointments easily and were rarely kept waiting for their appointment.

Listening and learning from concerns and complaints

Staff told us the provider took complaints and concerns seriously and responded to them appropriately to improve the quality of care.

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

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

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

The service had not received any complaints in the last 12 months. We reviewed a historical complaint which showed the practice responded to concerns appropriately.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

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

The practice demonstrated a transparent and open culture in relation to people's safety. There was strong leadership and emphasis on continually striving to improve. Systems and processes were embedded, and staff worked together in such a way that the inspection did not highlight any issues or omissions. The information and evidence presented during the inspection process was clear and well documented. They could show how they sustain high-quality sustainable services and demonstrate improvements over time.

Leadership capacity and capability

Practice leaders had the capacity, values and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care.

Practice leaders 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. 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.

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.

Staff discussed their training needs at an annual appraisals. 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. Staff were aware of and they 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 orthodontist 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.

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 Business Services Authority performance information, surveys, audits and external body reviews was used to ensure and improve performance. Performance information was combined with the views of patients.

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

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

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

The provider used patient surveys to obtain patients' views about the service. We saw examples of suggestions from patients the practice had acted on. As a result of patient feedback, they had sourced parking permits for staff which avoided them from having to use the practice's car park. This freed up the car park spaces for patients.

Are services well-led?

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.

The provider gathered feedback from staff through meetings 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.

Staff at the practice were involved with the local managed clinical network for orthodontics. Managed clinical networks are groups of professionals from primary, secondary and tertiary care who work together to ensure the equitable provision of high-quality effective services. Managed clinical networks involve those who are responsible for providing the service, those referring into the service and organisations who commission the service.

The practice was also a member of a good practice certification scheme.

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

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

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