

Mr Andrew James Dixon

Whickham Dental Practice

Inspection report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced comprehensive on 25 March 2024 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 practice 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 advisor.

To get to the heart of patients' experiences of care and treatment, we always ask the following 5 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:

- The dental clinic appeared clean and well-maintained.
- The practice had infection control procedures which reflected published guidance.
- Staff knew how to deal with medical emergencies. Appropriate medicines and life-saving equipment were available.
- The practice had systems to manage risks for patients, staff, equipment and the premises.
- Safeguarding processes were in place and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The practice had staff recruitment procedures which reflected current legislation.

Summary of findings

- Clinical staff provided patients' care and treatment in line with current guidelines. Improvements could be made to the audit system.
- Patients were treated with dignity and respect. Staff took care to protect patients' privacy and personal information.
- Staff provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health.
- The appointment system worked efficiently to respond to patients' needs.
- The frequency of appointments was agreed between the dentist and the patient, giving due regard to National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.
- There was effective leadership and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff felt involved, supported and worked as a team.
- Staff and patients were asked for feedback about the services provided.
- Complaints were dealt with positively and efficiently.
- The practice had information governance arrangements.

Background

Whickham Dental Practice is in Newcastle and provides NHS and private dental care and treatment for adults and children.

There is step free access to the practice for people who use wheelchairs and those with pushchairs. Pay and display car parking spaces are available near the practice. The practice has made reasonable adjustments to support patients with access requirements.

The dental team includes 5 dentists, 10 dental nurses (3 of whom are trainee's), 3 dental hygienists, 2 practice managers and 5 receptionists. The practice has 6 treatment rooms.

During the inspection we spoke with 2 dentists, 2 dental nurses, a dental hygienist, a receptionist and a practice manager. We looked at practice policies, procedures and other records to assess how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

Monday and Tuesday from 8.30am to 7pm

Wednesday and Thursday from 8.30am to 5.30pm

Friday from 8.30am to 5pm

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

- Take action to ensure audits of radiography, record keeping and antimicrobial prescribing are undertaken at regular intervals to improve the quality of the service. The practice should also ensure that, where appropriate, audits have documented learning points and the resulting improvements can be demonstrated.

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)

The practice had safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. The practice had appointed a safeguarding lead to oversee safeguarding awareness and training.

The practice had infection control procedures which reflected published guidance. The practice had appointed an infection prevention and control lead to oversee and maintain standards.

The practice had procedures to reduce the risk of Legionella, or other bacteria, developing in water systems, in line with a risk assessment. Monthly hot and cold-water temperature checks were completed and logged. Those seen were within the required temperature ranges.

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

The practice appeared clean and there was an effective schedule in place to ensure it was kept clean. An external cleaning company completed the cleaning at the practice.

The practice had a recruitment policy and procedure to help them employ suitable staff, including for agency or locum staff. These reflected the relevant legislation.

Clinical staff were qualified, registered with the General Dental Council and had professional indemnity cover.

The practice ensured equipment was safe to use, maintained and serviced according to manufacturers' instructions. The practice ensured the facilities were maintained in accordance with regulations.

A fire safety risk assessment was carried out in line with the legal requirements. The management of fire safety was effective.

The practice had arrangements to ensure the safety of the X-ray equipment and the required radiation protection information was available. This included cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT).

Risks to patients

The practice had implemented systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient and staff safety. This included sharps safety, sepsis awareness and lone working.

Emergency equipment and medicines were available and checked in accordance with national guidance.

Staff knew how to respond to a medical emergency and had completed training in emergency resuscitation and basic life support every year. Immediate life support training was also completed by staff providing treatment to patients under sedation.

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

Information to deliver safe care and treatment

Patient care records were complete, legible, kept securely and complied with General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

Are services safe?

The practice had systems for referring patients with suspected oral cancer under the national 2-week wait arrangements.

Safe and appropriate use of medicines

The practice had systems for appropriate and safe handling of medicines. Antimicrobial prescribing audits were carried out. Improvements were needed to ensure audits were being carried out in line with recognised guidance.

Track record on safety, and lessons learned and improvements

The practice had systems to review and investigate incidents and accidents. The practice had a system for receiving and acting on safety alerts.

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.

The practice offered conscious sedation for patients. The practice's systems included checks before and after treatment, emergency equipment requirements, medicines management, sedation equipment checks, and staff availability and training.

We saw the provision of dental implants was in accordance with national guidance.

Helping patients to live healthier lives

The practice provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health. Oral health care products were on sale. Information leaflets were available to patients upon request.

We signposted the clinicians to updated guidance from the British Society of Periodontology to support them to ensure patients assessments are carried out and documented in line with this.

Consent to care and treatment

Staff obtained patients' consent to care and treatment in line with legislation and guidance. They understood their responsibilities under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

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 patient care records in line with recognised guidance.

Staff conveyed an understanding of supporting more vulnerable members of society such as patients living with dementia or adults and children with a learning disability. Staff had undertaken training in autism and learning disability awareness to increase their understanding of patients with these conditions.

We saw evidence the dentists justified, graded and reported on the radiographs they took. The practice carried out radiography audits every 6 months, following current guidance. However, improvements were needed, action plans had not been completed following these audits.

Effective staffing

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

Newly appointed staff had a structured induction and clinical staff completed continuing professional development required for their registration with the General Dental Council. Staff told us they had enough time for their role and did not feel rushed in their work.

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 caring?

Our findings

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

Kindness, respect and compassion

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

Patient feedback said staff were compassionate and understanding when they were in pain, distress or discomfort.

Privacy and dignity

Staff were aware of the importance of privacy and confidentiality.

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

Involving people in decisions about care and treatment

Staff helped patients to be involved in decisions about their care and gave patients clear information to help them make informed choices about their treatment.

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

The dentists explained the methods they used to help patients understand their treatment options. These included for example photographs, study models, and X-ray images.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

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 and preferences.

Staff were clear about the importance of providing emotional support to patients when delivering care.

The practice had made reasonable adjustments, including having step free access, and a ground floor surgery for patients with access requirements. Staff had carried out a disability access audit and had formulated an action plan to continually improve access for patients. The practice did not have a hearing loop available.

Timely access to services

The practice displayed its opening hours and provided information on their website, patient information leaflet and social media page.

Patients could access care and treatment from the practice within an acceptable timescale for their needs. The practice had an appointment system to respond to patients' needs. The frequency of appointments was agreed between the dentist and the patient, giving due regard to NICE guidelines. Patients had enough time during their appointment and did not feel rushed.

The practice's website and answerphone provided telephone numbers for patients needing emergency dental treatment during the working day and when the practice was not open. Staff took part in an emergency on-call arrangements and patients were directed to the appropriate out of hours service.

Patients who needed an urgent appointment were offered one in a timely manner. When the practice was unable to offer an urgent appointment, they worked with partner organisations to support urgent access for patients. Patients with the most urgent needs had their care and treatment prioritised.

Listening and learning from concerns and complaints

The practice responded to concerns and complaints appropriately. Staff discussed outcomes to share learning and improve the service.

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

The provider demonstrated a transparent and open culture in relation to people's safety.

There was strong leadership with emphasis on peoples' safety and continually striving to improve.

During the inspection, staff were open to discussion and feedback. Systems and processes were embedded, and staff worked together in such a way that where the inspection highlighted only minor issues, action was taken to address these immediately.

The information and evidence presented during the inspection process was clear and well documented.

We saw the practice had effective processes to support and develop staff with additional roles and responsibilities.

Culture

Staff could show how they ensured high-quality sustainable services and demonstrated improvements over time.

Staff stated they felt respected, supported and valued. They were proud to work in the practice.

Staff discussed their training needs during annual appraisals and 1 to 1 meetings. They also discussed learning needs, general wellbeing and aims for future professional development.

The practice had arrangements to ensure staff training was up-to-date and reviewed at the required intervals.

Governance and management

Staff had clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to support good governance and management. The practice used an online dental compliance tool to assist in the management of the service.

The practice had a governance system 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.

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

Engagement with patients, the public, staff and external partners

Staff gathered feedback from patients, the public and external partners and demonstrated a commitment to acting on feedback.

Feedback from staff was obtained 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 where appropriate.

Continuous improvement and innovation

Are services well-led?

The practice had systems and processes for learning, quality assurance, continuous improvement. These included audits of disability access, radiographs, antimicrobial prescribing, and infection prevention and control. However, improvements could be made. In particular, the practice did not carry out audits of patient care records, there were no actions plans for the radiograph audits and auditing of the antimicrobial prescribing was not completed in line with recognised guidance.