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Townes & Townes Associates Dental Surgeons

Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced inspection on 17 September 2019 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 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

Townes and Townes Dental Practice is in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire and provides private dental treatment to adults and children and NHS treatment to children only.

There is level access for people who use wheelchairs and those with pushchairs. Car parking is in a nearby local car park which has spaces for blue badge holders.

Summary of findings

The dental team includes two dentists, one dental nurse and one trainee dental nurse, one dental hygienist, and one receptionist. The practice has three treatment rooms.

The practice is owned by a company and as a condition of registration must have a person registered with the Care Quality Commission 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 Townes and Townes Dental Practice is the principal dentist.

On the day of inspection, we collected three CQC comment cards filled in by patients, reviewed 105 on line feedback forms and spoke with one other patient.

During the inspection we spoke with two dentists, one dental nurse and the trainee dental nurse, one dental hygienist and the receptionist. We looked at practice policies and procedures and other records about how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

- Monday and Tuesday 08.30am – 6.00pm
- Wednesday and Thursday 08.30am – 5.30pm
- Friday 08.30am – 2.00pm
- Closes at weekends

Our key findings were:

- The practice appeared 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, though these could be better documented.
- The provider had suitable safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. Improvements could be made to ensure all staff were up to date with safeguarding training.
- The provider had thorough staff recruitment procedures.
- 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 well 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 suitable information governance arrangements.

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

- Take action to ensure audits of radiography, dental care records and antibiotic prescribing are undertaken at regular intervals to improve the quality of the service. Practice should also ensure that, where appropriate, audits have documented learning points and the resulting improvements can be demonstrated. Implement audits for prescribing of antibiotic medicines taking into account the guidance provided by the Faculty of General Dental Practice.
- Improve the practice systems for assessing, monitoring and mitigating the various risks arising from the undertaking of the regulated activities. In particular with regard to the fire risk assessment and the legionella risk assessment being undertaken by qualified personnel.
- Take action to ensure all the staff have received training, to an appropriate level, in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
- Take action to ensure all clinicians are adequately supported by a trained member of the dental team when treating patients in a dental setting taking into account the guidance issued.
- Implement a system to ensure patient referrals to other dental or health care professionals are centrally monitored to ensure they are received in a timely manner and not lost.

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 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.

Staff demonstrated they knew about the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and how to report concerns, including notification to the CQC. One of the dentists was a member of the local safeguarding interagency group which met regularly. We saw evidence that following these meetings the dentist gave feedback to all staff at the practice meeting. Improvements could be made to ensure all staff were up to date with their training.

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 e.g. those who were known to have experienced modern-day slavery or female genital mutilation.

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

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

The provider had a business continuity plan describing how they would deal with events that could disrupt the normal running of the practice.

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 followed their recruitment procedure.

We evidenced clinical staff were qualified and registered with the General Dental Council (GDC) and had professional indemnity cover.

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

Records showed that fire detection and firefighting equipment were regularly serviced and tested at intervals between servicing visits but not recorded. Staff spoken with corroborated testing took place.

The practice had suitable arrangements to ensure the safety of the X-ray equipment and we saw the required information was in their radiation protection file. The local rules seen needed to be updated annually as required. The provider had not yet developed a quality assurance programme for their digital scanner. They told us they were seeking advice about this.

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 (CPD) in respect of dental radiography.

Risks to patients

There were systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient safety.

The practice health and safety policies, procedures and risk assessments were reviewed regularly but they did not have the documentary evidence to support this. However, we saw in the practice meeting minutes for August 2019 a potential risk from guttering had been identified and action taken to minimise the risk. We saw staff had been advised of action to be taken until the builder was able to attend to help manage potential risk. The provider had current employer's liability insurance.

Are services safe?

We looked at the practice arrangements for safe dental care and treatment. 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 the vaccination to protect them against the Hepatitis B virus, and that the effectiveness of the vaccination was checked. They did not have a risk assessment for staff who were working clinically and had either not responded to the vaccination or been fully vaccinated.

Staff knew how to respond to a medical emergency and completed training in emergency resuscitation and basic life support (BLS) 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 these 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 (GDC) Standards for the Dental Team. A risk assessment was not in place for when the dental hygienist worked without chairside support.

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

The practice occasionally used locum and agency staff. We saw these staff had received an induction to ensure they were familiar with the practice procedures.

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 suitable 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 manufacturer's guidance.

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

We found staff had systems in place to ensure that any work was 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. Records of water testing and dental unit water line management were in place. The legionella risk assessment had been completed by the provider and was limited in its assessment of the water system. The provider took immediate action to book a legionella risk assessment with an approved company.

We saw completed cleaning schedules for the premises. The practice was visibly clean when we inspected.

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

The provider an infection control lead professional carried out infection prevention and control audits twice a year. The latest audit showed the practice was meeting the required standards.

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 a sample of dental care records to confirm our findings and observed that individual records were written and managed in a way which kept patients safe. Dental care records we saw were complete, legible, were kept securely and complied with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

Patient referrals to other service providers contained specific information which allowed appropriate and timely referrals in line with practice protocols and current guidance.

Safe and appropriate use of medicines

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

Are services safe?

There was a suitable 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 about prescribing medicines.

Antimicrobial prescribing audits had not yet been completed.

Track record on safety, and lessons learned and improvements

There were risk assessments in relation to safety issues but needed improvement regarding clear documentation and

evidence of review recorded. Staff monitored and reviewed incidents. This helped staff to understand risks, give a clear, accurate and current picture which highlighted where safety improvements were needed.

In the previous 12 months there had been no safety incidents.

There were adequate systems for reviewing and investigating when things went wrong. The practice learned, and shared lessons identified themes and acted to improve safety in the practice.

There was 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 practitioners 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.

Staff had access to x-ray equipment including an orthopantomograph machine to enhance the delivery of care.

Helping patients to live healthier lives

The practice was providing 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 toothpaste if a patient's risk of tooth decay indicated this would help them. They used fluoride varnish for patients based on an assessment of the risk of tooth decay.

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

Staff were aware of national oral health campaigns and local schemes in supporting patients to live healthier lives. For example, local stop smoking services. They directed patients to these schemes when necessary.

The dentists and dental hygienist 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 more severe gum disease were recalled at more frequent intervals for review and to reinforce home care preventative advice.

The practice carried out detailed oral health assessments which identified patient's individual risks. Patients were provided with detailed self-care treatment plans with dates for ongoing oral health reviews based upon their individual need and in line with recognised guidance.

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 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 patient records. Patients confirmed their dentist listened to them and gave them clear information about their treatment.

The practice consent policy did not include information about the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The provider took immediate action to add this information including information about obtaining the Power of Attorney certificate to ensure staff documented the right of another person to consent to care and treatment for the patient.

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. 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 patient's current dental needs, past treatment and medical histories. The dentists assessed patients' treatment needs in line with recognised guidance.

We saw the practice had not regularly audited patients' dental care records to check that the dentists and clinicians recorded the necessary information.

Effective staffing

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

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

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

Staff discussed their training needs with the provider at various times, but they did not have a specific system for these meetings or records of the discussions. The provider had identified this shortfall and has recently implemented an annual appraisal system. We saw evidence of the first part of this process in which the training requirements of staff were to be discussed.

The annual appraisal system had lapsed in the last three years, but staff told us they felt well supported and their training needs had been identified. One dental nurse told us they had recently completed their radiography training. The trainee dental nurse told us they felt well supported by the provider and team.

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 if they needed treatment the practice did not provide.

Staff had systems to identify, manage, follow up and where required refer patients for specialist care when presenting with dental infections.

The provider also had systems for referring patients with suspected oral cancer under the national two week wait arrangements. This was initiated by NICE in 2005 to help make sure patients were seen quickly by a specialist.

Staff had a system to monitor all referrals to make sure they were dealt with promptly. However, the system was not documented or robust.

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, professional and reassuring. We saw staff treated patients respectfully, attentively and were friendly towards patients at the reception desk and over the telephone.

Patients said staff were compassionate and understanding. Patients could choose whether they saw a male or female dentist.

Patients told us staff were kind and helpful when they were in pain, distress or discomfort.

Information folders, patient survey results and thank you cards were available for patients to read.

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, staff would take them into another room. 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 and were aware of the requirements under the Equality Act. The Equality Act requires providers to make sure patients and their carers can access and understand the information they are given. We saw:

- Staff communicated with patients in a way they could understand, and communication aids and easy read materials were available.
- A hearing loop had been installed at the reception desk.
- The provider was in the process of arranging for a split-level reception desk.

Staff helped patients and their carers find further information and access community and advocacy services. They helped them ask questions about their care and treatment.

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. A dentist described the conversations they had with patients to satisfy themselves they understood their treatment options.

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

The dentists described to us the methods they used to help patients understand treatment options discussed. These included models and X-ray images.

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.

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

The practice currently had some patients for whom they needed to make adjustments to enable them to receive treatment. The practice had made reasonable adjustments for patients with disabilities. This included step free access, a hearing loop, a magnifying glass and wheelchair accessible toilet with a call bell.

A disability access audit had been completed but the provider did not have any documentary evidence of this.

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.

The staff took part in an emergency on-call arrangement with some other local practices to provide an out of hour's service.

The practice website, information leaflet and answerphone provided telephone numbers for patients needing emergency dental treatment during the working day and when the practice was closed. 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

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 provider was responsible for dealing with these. Staff would tell the principal dentist about any formal or informal comments or concerns straight away so patients received a quick response.

The provider 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 provider had dealt with their concerns.

We looked at comments, compliments and complaints the practice had received within the last 12 months.

These showed the practice responded to concerns appropriately and discussed outcomes with staff 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

We found leaders had the capacity and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care. Leaders demonstrated they had the experience, capacity and skills to deliver the practice strategy and address risks to it. Improvements could be made to ensure the fire and legionella risks had been formally reviewed by professional with a recognised qualification.

Leaders were knowledgeable about issues and priorities relating to the quality and future of services. They understood the challenges and were addressing them.

Leaders at all levels were visible and approachable. Staff told us they worked closely with them and others 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.

Vision and strategy

There was a clear vision and set of values.

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 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 these would be addressed.

Governance and management

There were 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 principle dentist 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 regularly.

We saw there were clear and effective processes for managing risks, issues and performance but these were not clearly documented. The provider told us they would ensure all actions were clearly documented in future.

Appropriate and accurate information

Staff acted on appropriate and accurate information.

Quality and operational information 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 high-quality sustainable services.

The provider used patient surveys and verbal comments to obtain staff and patients' views about the service.

Patients were encouraged to complete the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT). This is a national programme to allow patients to provide feedback on NHS services they have used. 100% said they would recommend the practice.

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 upon.

Continuous improvement and innovation

There were systems and processes for learning, continuous improvement and innovation.

Are services well-led?

The provider had quality assurance processes to encourage learning and continuous improvement. The infection control audit had been completed as required and clearly recorded any shortfalls and action plans for improvements.

The radiograph audits had been completed but lacked an action plan for review and improvements. There were limited arrangements for auditing of dental care records and antimicrobial prescribing. There were few records of the results of the audits and no evidence of action plans and improvements.

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

An annual appraisal system was just being re-introduced to the practice after a lapse of three years. The provider told us they were a small practice and had been a stable team discussing all aspects of practice and professional development regularly but not in a formal way.

They recognised this as a shortfall and had commenced the appraisal process for the whole staff team. We saw staff had received their pre-appraisal forms for completion which showed their learning needs, general wellbeing and aims for future professional development were to be discussed. The provider showed us dates in the diary for staff appraisals. Staff corroborated this.

Staff completed 'highly recommended' training as stated in the General Dental Council professional standards. This included undertaking medical emergencies and basic life support training annually. The provider supported and encouraged staff to complete continuing professional development (CPD).