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# Hemel Smile Studios, Marlowes

## Inspection Report

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## Overall summary

We carried out this announced inspection on 21 November 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 Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspector who was supported by a specialist dental adviser and a second CQC inspector.

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

#### Are services effective?

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

#### Are services caring?

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

#### Are services responsive?

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

#### Are services well-led?

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

### Background

Hemel Smile Studios, Marlowes is in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire and provides NHS and private treatment to adults and children.

# Summary of findings

The practice is located in a two storey building in Hemel Hempstead town centre. There is level access into the waiting area, and ground floor treatment rooms are available for people who use wheelchairs and those with pushchairs. There are some car parking spaces available at the practice.

The dental team includes five dentists, an orthodontist, a hygienist, five dental nurses and three trainee dental nurses. The clinical team is supported by six receptionists. The practice has four treatment rooms.

The practice is owned by a partnership 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 Hemel Smile Studios, Marlowes is one of the partners.

On the day of inspection, we received feedback from 14 patients.

During the inspection we spoke with two dentists, two dental nurses and the senior receptionist. We also spoke to the registered manager, an area manager and a practice manager who worked at another site belonging to the organisation.

The practice is open:

Monday to Friday from 9am to 5.30pm.

Saturday 9am to 1pm.

## 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.
- The provider had suitable safeguarding processes and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- 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 culture of continuous improvement.
- Staff felt involved and supported and worked well as a team. Staff spoke openly about how much they enjoyed working at the practice.
- The provider asked staff and patients for feedback about the services they provided.
- The provider had suitable information governance arrangements.

# Summary of findings

## The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We asked the following question(s).

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Are services safe?</b>                         | <b>No action</b> ✓ |
| <b>Are services effective?</b>                    | <b>No action</b> ✓ |
| <b>Are services caring?</b>                       | <b>No action</b> ✓ |
| <b>Are services responsive to people's needs?</b> | <b>No action</b> ✓ |
| <b>Are services well-led?</b>                     | <b>No action</b> ✓ |



# Are services safe?

## Our findings

We found that 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 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 carried out regular audits to ensure that safeguarding standards were being met.

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 had a whistleblowing policy. Staff felt confident they could raise concerns without fear of reprimand.

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

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

Records showed that fire detection and firefighting equipment were regularly tested and serviced.

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.

We saw evidence that 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'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 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.

Some members of 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.



## Are services safe?

Staff knew how to respond to a medical emergency and 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 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 in place for when the dental hygienist worked without chairside support.

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

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

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 manufacturers' guidance. 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, in line with a risk assessment. All recommendations had been actioned and records of water testing and dental unit water line management were in place.

We saw 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 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 infection control lead also performed regular staff handwashing audits.

### 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 reliable systems for appropriate and safe handling of medicines. 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 with regards to prescribing medicines. Antimicrobial prescribing audits were carried out annually. The most recent audit indicated the dentists were following current guidelines.

### Track record on safety and lessons learned and improvements

There were comprehensive risk assessments in relation to safety issues. Staff monitored and reviewed incidents. This helped staff to understand risks, give a clear, accurate and current picture that led to safety improvements.



## Are services safe?

We reviewed the significant events that had been recorded over the past 12 months. These had been recorded in detail and discussed at staff meetings. Clear action points had been taken from the events and further measures had been put in place to improve safety within the practice.

There was a system for receiving and acting on safety alerts, such as those from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. 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 that 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 that 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 staff were involved in quality improvement initiatives including peer review as part of their approach in providing high quality care.

### Helping patients to live healthier lives

The practice was providing preventive care and supporting 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 practice had a selection of dental products for sale and provided health promotion leaflets to help patients with their oral health.

The provider put emphasis on supporting and encouraging children to improve and maintain their oral health. The practice held child focused clinics throughout the school holidays to improve appointment attendance.

Competitions were held during the school holidays and winners were given oral health products as prizes. Furthermore, the provider ran a yearly competition where children could win tickets to Disneyland Paris. We received positive feedback from patients about the practice's efforts to involve children and encourage good dental hygiene from a young age.

In addition to this, a dentist and receptionist carried out educational sessions at local primary schools to promote the benefits of effective toothbrushing and a healthy diet.

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 described to us the procedures they used to improve the outcomes for patients with gum disease. This involved providing patients 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 a 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 and we saw this documented in patient 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. 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



# Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

patients' treatment needs in line with recognised guidance. We saw the practice audited patients' dental care records to check that the dentists recorded the necessary information.

## Effective staffing

Staff had the skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles. There was a comprehensive in-house training system that provided staff with continual learning opportunities. For example, dental nurses were supported with a thorough clinical training programme and dentists often attended external training courses. Furthermore, the provider held training evenings at the local dental specialist centre to ensure dental staff were up to date with contemporary subjects.

Staff new to the practice had a period of induction based on a structured programme. This was in the process of being developed further to ensure a consistent high standard. New staff took part in quizzes and scenario based

training to ensure that the learning materials were effective. We confirmed clinical staff completed the continuing professional development required for their registration with the General Dental Council.

Staff discussed their training needs at annual appraisals and regular one to one meetings. We saw evidence of completed appraisals and how the practice addressed the training requirements of staff.

## 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 specialists in primary and secondary care if they needed treatment the practice did not provide.

Staff monitored referrals through an electronic referral and tracking system to ensure they were responded to promptly.





# Are services caring?

## Our findings

We found that 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 polite, pleasant and professional. One patient stated that 'The staff are always friendly and courteous, they are also very good with my children'. Another patient commented 'The dentists always make me feel comfortable and at ease'. We saw that staff treated patients respectfully, appropriately and kindly and were friendly towards patients at the reception desk and over the telephone.

Patients said staff were compassionate and understanding. Patients told us staff were kind and helpful when they were in pain, distress or discomfort. One patient told us that 'the dentist is always very careful, which I like as I am a nervous patient'.

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

Accessible Information Standard and the requirements under the Equality Act to make sure that patients and their carers could access and understand the information they were given. We saw:

- Interpretation services were available for patients who did not speak or understand English. Information on the service was advertised in the waiting rooms and reception area. The practice were also aware of British Sign Language translation services. Furthermore, patients were told about multi-lingual staff that might be able to support them.
- Staff communicated with patients in a way that they could understand, and communication aids and easy read materials were available.

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's 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 photographs, models, videos and X-ray images.



# Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

## Our findings

We found that 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 experiencing poor mental health, and adults and children with a learning difficulty.

Patients described high levels of satisfaction with the responsive service provided by the practice. One patient commented that the practice were mindful of the patient's long term condition and took extra care to accommodate their needs.

The practice currently had some patients for whom they needed to make adjustments to enable them to receive treatment. There was level access into the practice, an accessible toilet with a call bell and ground floor treatment rooms available for patients who required them.

A disability access audit had been completed and an action plan formulated to continually improve access for patients.

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 seen 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. A senior nurse carried out regular audits of patient waiting times.

The practice signposted patients to the NHS 111 service for out of hours' care. The practice's website, 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

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 on how to handle a complaint. The practice information leaflet explained how to make a complaint. The head receptionist was responsible for dealing with these. Staff would tell the head receptionist about any formal or informal comments or concerns straight away so patients received a quick response.

The head receptionist 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.



# Are services well-led?

## Our findings

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

The provider 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

We found the provider and senior reception staff had the capacity and skills to deliver high-quality, sustainable care. The registered manager, the organisation's local area team and senior receptionist demonstrated that they had the experience, capacity and skills to deliver the practice strategy and address risks to it.

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. The provider held daily management calls for leaders from all sites to attend.

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.

### 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 practice team spoke openly about how much they enjoyed their work.

The staff focused on the needs of patients. Additional chairside support was provided for anxious patients and feedback from patients was continually encouraged and reviewed.

We saw the provider took effective action to deal with staff poor performance.

The staff focused on the needs of patients. The senior receptionist provided us with examples of where they spent extra time with patients to ensure their safety and comfort.

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

There were clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to support good governance and management.

The provider had overall responsibility for the management and clinical leadership of the practice. The senior reception team and local area manager were 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 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



## Are services well-led?

Staff involved patients, the public, staff and external partners to support high-quality sustainable services.

The provider used patient surveys, internet-based reviews and verbal feedback to obtain patients' views about the service. NHS patients were able 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. The provider monitored the feedback and continually received positive results each month. The provider had recently changed the seating in the waiting areas following requests from patients.

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. The provider arranged regular social events for the team to attend.

### **Continuous improvement and innovation**

There were 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. They had clear records of the results of these audits and the resulting action plans and improvements.

The provider showed a commitment to learning and improvement and valued the contributions made to the team by individual members of staff. The whole staff team had annual appraisals and regular one to one meetings. They discussed learning needs, general wellbeing and aims for future professional development. We saw evidence of completed appraisals in the staff folders.

Staff completed 'highly recommended' training as per General Dental Council professional standards. This included undertaking medical emergencies and basic life support training annually. The provider supported and encouraged staff to complete CPD. The provider paid for all external staff training, such as customer service, radiography and impression taking for dental nurses.