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The Dental Surgery

Inspection report

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Overall summary

We carried out this announced comprehensive inspection on 3 January 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 generally reflected published guidance.
- Staff knew how to deal with medical emergencies. Appropriate medicines and life-saving equipment were mostly available.
- The practice had systems to manage risks for patients, staff, equipment and the premises; , although improvements could be made to ensure all risks had been assessed and acted upon.
- Safeguarding processes were in place and staff knew their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.

Summary of findings

- The practice had staff recruitment procedures which reflected current legislation.
- Clinical staff provided patients' care and treatment in line with current guidelines, however improvements could be made to ensure clinicians took into account the guidance provided by the College of General Dentistry when completing dental care records.
- 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, but improvements could be made to ensure clinicians gave 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

The Dental Surgery is in Luton 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 by the provision of a portable ramp. Car parking spaces, including dedicated parking for disabled people, are available near the practice. The practice has made reasonable adjustments to support patients with access requirements.

The dental team includes 2 dentists, 5 dental nurses, 1 practice manager and 1 receptionist. The practice has 2 treatment rooms.

During the inspection we spoke with 2 dentists, 1 of whom was the principal dentist, 2 dental nurses, the receptionist and the practice manager. We looked at practice policies, procedures and other records to assess how the service is managed.

The practice is open:

Monday – Thursday 9am until 6pm

Friday 9am until 5pm.

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

- Improve the practice's sharps procedures to ensure the practice takes into account National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance "Healthcare-associated infections: prevention and control in primary and community care" 2017.
- Take action to implement any recommendations in the practice's fire safety and legionella risk assessments and ensure ongoing fire safety and legionella management is effective.
- Implement an effective system for receiving and responding to patient safety alerts, recalls and rapid response reports issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the Central Alerting System and other relevant bodies, such as Public Health England.

Summary of findings

- Take action to ensure the clinicians adopt an individual risk based approach to patient recalls taking into account the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines and take action to ensure the clinicians take into account the guidance provided by the College of General Dentistry when completing dental care records.
- Implement audits for the prescribing of antibiotic medicines and for record keeping, taking into account the guidance provided by the College of General Dentistry.

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. We saw that one staff member had not completed safeguarding training at a level appropriate to their role. Following the inspection, the practice showed us evidence that this had been completed.

The practice had infection control procedures which generally reflected published guidance; however, improvements could be made to ensure that the processes in place fully reflected the national guidelines as laid out in the Department of Health publication 'Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices (HTM01-05)'. For example, unwrapped instruments stored in clinical areas were being reprocessed weekly and not a daily basis as per the guidelines.

The practice had procedures to reduce the risk of Legionella, or other bacteria, developing in water systems, in line with a risk assessment. However, some actions remained outstanding following a risk assessment; for example, recording the inspection of outlets for sludge or scale.

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.

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. Some actions remained outstanding; for example, the re-routing of some electrical cabling in the staff room and the installation of fire doors. Fire evacuation drills were completed on a regular basis.

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

Risks to patients

The practice had implemented systems to assess, monitor and manage risks to patient and staff safety. This included sharps safety and sepsis awareness. However, we were told that nurses were disposing of used sharps, not the clinician as recommended in NICE guidance "Healthcare-associated infections: prevention and control in primary and community care" 2017. There was no lone working risk assessment.

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

Most emergency equipment, and medicines were available and checked in accordance with national guidance. Improvements could be made to ensure all emergency equipment, as recommended by Resuscitation Council UK was available.

Are services safe?

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

Improvements could be made to ensure dental records were completed in line with guidance published by the College of General Dentistry (GCDent). We looked at 6 records and found that not all patient care records were complete, legible, kept securely and complied with General Data Protection Regulation requirements.

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 the appropriate and safe handling of medicines. Prescriptions were stored securely; however their usage was not monitored as described in current guidance to prevent fraudulent misuse. Following the inspection, the practice showed us a log they said would be completed from now on, to track all prescriptions.

Improvements could be made to ensure antimicrobial prescribing audits were undertaken, which could help audit antimicrobial prescribing practice in the surgery. We were told that antibiotics were routinely prescribed for 7 days which was not in line with the 'Antimicrobial Prescribing in Dentistry' guidance published by the College of General Dentistry (CG Dent).

Track record on safety, and lessons learned and improvements

The practice had systems to review and investigate incidents and accidents. The practice did not have 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.

Helping patients to live healthier lives

The practice provided preventive care and supported patients to ensure better oral health.

Consent to care and treatment

Staff obtained patients' consent to care and treatment in line with legislation and guidance. Improvements could be made to ensure consent was consistently recorded in the dental care record. Not all staff fully 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 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.

We saw evidence that radiographs were not always justified, graded and reported upon. Whilst there was an automated and continuous log of radiographs completed by the computer software, there was no analysis of the results with any actions or comments.

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.

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.

On the day of inspection, we spoke with patients who told us that staff were very caring and kind and they were very happy with the care they had received.

Patients 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 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 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 a portable ramp to enable entry to the practice 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.

Timely access to services

The practice displayed its opening hours and provided information on their website.

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, however NICE guidelines were not always considered. Patients had enough time during their appointment and did not feel rushed.

The practice's answerphone provided telephone numbers for patients needing emergency dental treatment when the practice was not open.

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 practice staff demonstrated a transparent and open culture in relation to people's safety.

Systems and processes were embedded, and staff worked together in such a way that the inspection did not highlight any significant issues or omissions.

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

Staff discussed their training needs during annual appraisals. 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. However, improvements could be made to ensure the process was fully effective.

Governance and management

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

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 most risks, issues and performance. Improvements could be made to ensure the risk of lone working had been assessed.

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 and demonstrated a commitment to acting on feedback.

Feedback from staff was obtained 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 where appropriate.

Continuous improvement and innovation

The practice had some systems and processes for learning and quality assurance. These included audits of infection prevention and control and a hand hygiene audit. Staff kept records of the results of these audits, but we saw that actions were not always carried out. Improvements were needed to ensure the practice carried out audits for the prescribing of antibiotic medicines, audits of dental care records and that radiography audits were carried out following current guidance.