

Endocare UK Limited

99 Harley Street

Inspection Report

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Overall summary

We carried out an announced comprehensive inspection on 10 March 2017 to ask the practice the following key questions; Are services safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led?

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

The 99 Harley Street practice is located in the London Borough of Westminster. The premises are situated in a

converted residential building. There are two treatment rooms, a reception room and a kitchen on the second floor of the building. There is a dedicated decontamination area in one of the treatment rooms. There is lift access to the second floor and the use of shared toilet facilities throughout the building.

The practice provides private dental care services to adults and children. The practice only offers specialist endodontic services on referral or by self-referral.

The staff structure of the practice consists of a principal endodontist, an associate endodontist, three dental nurses, a practice manager and an operations manager. There is also a visiting anaesthetist who provides conscious sedation, when required.

The practice opening hours are on Mondays to Fridays from 9.00am to 5.30pm.

The operations manager is the registered manager. A registered manager is a person who is registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons 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 inspection took place over one day and was carried out by a CQC inspector and a dental specialist advisor.

Summary of findings

Eleven people provided feedback about the service. Patients were positive about the care they received from the practice. They were complimentary about the friendly and caring attitude of the dental staff.

Our key findings were:

- Patients' needs were assessed and care was planned in line with current guidance such as from the British, European and American Endodontic Societies.
- There were effective systems in place to reduce and minimise the risk and spread of infection.
- The practice had effective safeguarding processes in place and staff understood their responsibilities for safeguarding adults and children living in vulnerable circumstances.
- Staff reported incidents and kept records of these which the practice used for shared learning.
- There were effective arrangements in place for managing medical emergencies.
- Equipment, such as the air compressor, autoclave (steriliser), fire extinguishers, and X-ray equipment had all been checked for effectiveness and had been regularly serviced.
- Patients indicated that they felt they were listened to and that they received good care from a helpful and caring practice team.
- The practice ensured staff maintained the necessary skills and competence to support the needs of patients.
- The practice had implemented clear procedures for managing comments, concerns or complaints.
- The provider had a clear vision for the practice and staff told us they were well supported by the management team.
- Governance arrangements and audits were effective in improving the quality and safety of the services.

There were areas where the provider could make improvements and should:

- Review the current Legionella risk assessment and implement the required actions including the monitoring and recording of water temperatures.

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?

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

The practice had systems in place to minimise the risks associated with providing dental services. There was a safeguarding lead and staff understood their responsibilities in terms of identifying and reporting any potential abuse. There were systems in place for identifying, investigating and learning from incidents relating to the safety of patients and staff members. The practice had policies and protocols, which staff were following, for the management of infection control, medical emergencies and dental radiography. We found the equipment used in the practice was well maintained and checked for effectiveness.

No
action
✓

Are services effective?

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

The practice provided evidence-based care in accordance with relevant, published guidance, for example, from the General Dental Council (GDC). The practice monitored patients' oral health and gave appropriate health promotion advice. Staff explained treatment options to ensure that patients could make informed decisions about any treatment. The practice worked well with other providers and followed up on the outcomes of referrals made to other providers.

Staff engaged in continuous professional development (CPD) and were meeting all of the training requirements of the General Dental Council (GDC). Staff had received appraisals within the past year to discuss their role and identify additional training needs.

No
action
✓

Are services caring?

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

We received positive feedback from patients through comment cards and by speaking with patients on the day of the inspection. Patients felt that the staff were kind and caring; they told us that they were treated with dignity and respect at all times. We found that dental care records were stored securely and patient confidentiality was well maintained.

No
action
✓

Are services responsive to people's needs?

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

Patients generally had good access to appointments, including emergency appointments, which were available on the same day. The culture of the practice promoted equality of access for all. The practice was wheelchair accessible through the use of a portable ramp and with two of the treatment rooms situated on the ground floor.

There was a complaints policy in place. One formal complaint had been received within the past year. This had been recorded and appropriately investigated. Patient feedback was also used to monitor the quality of the service provided.

No
action
✓

Are services well-led?

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

No
action
✓

Summary of findings

The practice had clinical governance and risk management structures in place. These were well maintained and disseminated effectively to all members of staff. A system of audits was used to monitor and improve performance. There were some areas where risk management processes could be improved. For example, in relation to Legionella monitoring and the recording of staff recruitment processes. The practice was responsive to our feedback in these areas and sent us evidence two days after the inspection to confirm the actions they had taken to resolve these issues.

Staff described an open and transparent culture where they were comfortable raising and discussing concerns with the principal dentist or practice manager. They were confident in the abilities of the principal dentist and practice manager to address any issues as they arose.

99 Harley Street

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the practice was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

We carried out an announced, comprehensive inspection on 10 March 2017. The inspection took place over one day and was carried out by a CQC inspector and a dental specialist advisor.

We reviewed information received from the provider prior to the inspection. During our inspection we reviewed policy documents and spoke with four members of staff. We conducted a tour of the practice and looked at the storage arrangements for emergency medicines and equipment. One of the dental nurses demonstrated how they carried out decontamination procedures of dental instruments.

Eleven people provided feedback about the service. Patients were positive about the care they received from the practice. They were complimentary about the friendly and caring attitude of the dental staff.

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 therefore formed the framework for the areas we looked at during the inspection.

Are services safe?

Our findings

Reporting, learning and improvement from incidents

There was an effective system in place for reporting and learning from incidents and accidents. There was an accidents reporting book and a form for recording other incidents. Staff understood the process for accident reporting, including the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). One incident and one accident had been recorded in the past 12 months. These had been appropriately investigated and discussed at a staff meeting with a view to preventing a recurrence.

The principal dentist was aware of the Duty of Candour. They told us they were committed to operating in an open and transparent manner; they would always inform patients if anything had gone wrong and offer an apology in relation to this. [Duty of candour is a requirement under The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 on a registered person who must act in an open and transparent way with relevant persons in relation to care and treatment provided to service users in carrying on a regulated activity].

Reliable safety systems and processes (including safeguarding)

The practice had a well-designed safeguarding policy which referred to national guidance. The principal dentist was the named practice lead for child and adult safeguarding. Information about the local authority contacts for safeguarding concerns were held at the practice.

Staff were able to describe the types of behaviour a child might display that would alert them to possible signs of abuse or neglect. They also had a good awareness of the issues around vulnerable elderly patients who presented with dementia. There was evidence in staff files showing that staff had been trained in safeguarding adults and children to an appropriate level.

The practice had carried out a range of risk assessments and implemented policies and protocols with a view to keeping staff and patients safe. For example, we asked staff about the prevention of needle stick injuries. There was a written protocol for staff to follow in the event that they did experience a needle stick injury.

The practice followed protocols to minimise needle stick injuries during the administration of local anaesthetics. Following administration of a local anaesthetic to a patient, needles were not resheathed using the hands but instead a needle guard was used. The dentists could also administer anaesthetic using a small, computer-controlled handpiece for delivering local anaesthetic. The dentist used a new needle and tubing for each patient. After use, the dentist disposed of the equipment directly into a sharps bin. We were told that the system prevented the need for resheathing needles during the delivery of local anaesthetics and thus helped minimise the risks to staff associated with the procedure.

The staff we spoke with demonstrated a clear understanding of the practice policy and protocol with respect to handling sharps and needle stick injuries. There was also a written risk assessment, in line with Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013.

The practice followed other national guidelines on patient safety. For example, the practice used rubber dam for root canal treatments in line with guidance from the British Endodontic Society. (A rubber dam is a thin, rectangular sheet, usually latex rubber, used in dentistry to isolate the operative site from the rest of the mouth. Rubber dam should be used when endodontic treatment is being provided. On the rare occasions when it is not possible to use rubber dam the reasons should be recorded in patients' dental care records giving details as to how the patient's safety was assured).

Medical emergencies

The practice had arrangements in place to deal with medical emergencies. The practice had an automated external defibrillator (AED), oxygen and other related items, such as manual breathing aids and portable suction, in line with the Resuscitation Council UK guidelines (An AED is a portable electronic device that analyses life threatening irregularities of the heart and delivers an electrical shock to attempt to restore a normal heart rhythm). Staff received annual training in using the emergency equipment.

The practice held emergency medicines in line with guidance issued by the British National Formulary for dealing with common medical emergencies in a dental practice. The emergency medicines were all in date and stored securely with emergency oxygen in a location known to all staff.

Are services safe?

Staff received annual training in using the emergency equipment.

Staff recruitment

The staff structure of the practice consists of a principal endodontist, an associate endodontist, three dental nurses, a practice manager and an operations manager. There is also a visiting anaesthetist who provides conscious sedation, when required.

There was a recruitment policy in place which stated that all relevant checks would be carried out to confirm that any person being recruited was suitable for the role. This included the use of an application form, interview, review of employment history, evidence of relevant qualifications, the checking of references and a check of registration with the General Dental Council.

We checked the staff recruitment records, including those for two members of staff who had been recruited within the past year. We found that the practice had followed its recruitment policy and retained all of the relevant documents.

The provider offered conscious sedation using an external contractor under a service-level agreement. Conscious sedation - (these are techniques in which the use of a drug or drugs produces a state of depression of the central nervous system enabling treatment to be carried out, but during which verbal contact with the patient is maintained throughout the period of sedation).

We found that there were governance systems in place to underpin the provision of conscious sedation. The systems and processes we observed were in accordance with the new guidelines published recently by The Intercollegiate Advisory Committee on Sedation in Dentistry in the document 'Standards for Conscious Sedation in the Provision of Dental Care 2015.

It was practice policy to carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for all members of staff prior to employment and periodically thereafter. We saw evidence that all members of staff had a DBS check prior to employment. (The DBS checks identify whether a person has a criminal record or is on an official list of people barred from working in roles where they may have contact with children or adults who may be vulnerable).

Monitoring health & safety and responding to risks

There were arrangements in place to deal with foreseeable emergencies. We saw that there was a health and safety policy in place. The practice had been assessed for risk of fire and there were documents showing that fire extinguishers had been recently serviced.

There were arrangements in place to meet the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002 (COSHH) regulations. There was a COSHH file where risks to patients, staff and visitors associated with hazardous substances were identified. Actions were described to minimise identified risks. COSHH products were securely stored. Staff were aware of the COSHH file and of the strategies in place to minimise the risks associated with these products.

The practice had a system in place to respond promptly to Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) advice. MHRA alerts, and alerts from other agencies, were received by the practice manager via email. These were disseminated at staff meetings, where appropriate.

The practice had an arrangement in place to use one of the provider's other practices for emergency appointments in the event that the practice's own premises became unfit for use.

Infection control

There were effective systems in place to reduce the risk and spread of infection within the practice. There was an infection control policy which included the decontamination of dental instruments, hand hygiene, use of protective equipment, and the segregation and disposal of clinical waste. The practice had carried out practice-wide infection control audits every six months and found high standards throughout the practice. We noted that the last audit had been completed in January 2017.

We observed that the premises appeared clean and tidy. Clear zoning demarked clean from dirty areas in all of the treatment rooms. Hand-washing facilities were available, including wall-mounted liquid soap, hand gels and paper towels in the treatment rooms and toilet. Hand-washing protocols were also displayed appropriately in various areas of the practice.

We asked one of the dental nurses to demonstrate the end-to-end process of infection control procedures at the practice. The protocols showed that the practice had

Are services safe?

followed the guidance on decontamination and infection control issued by the Department of Health, namely 'Health Technical Memorandum 01-05 - Decontamination in primary care dental practices (HTM 01-05)'.

The dental nurse explained the decontamination of the general treatment room environment following the treatment of a patient. We saw that there were written guidelines for staff to follow for ensuring that the working surfaces, dental unit and dental chair were decontaminated. This included the treatment of the dental water lines.

We checked the contents of the drawers in the treatment rooms. These were well stocked, clean, ordered and free from clutter. All of the instruments were pouched. It was obvious which items were for single use and these items were clearly new. The treatment rooms had the appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves and aprons, available for staff and patient use.

The practice used a decontamination area within one of the treatment rooms for instrument processing. In accordance with HTM 01-05 guidance, an instrument transportation system had been implemented to ensure the safe movement of instruments between treatment rooms and the decontamination area which ensured the risk of infection spread was minimised. The process of cleaning, inspection, sterilisation, packaging and storage of instruments followed a well-defined system of zoning from dirty through to clean.

Instruments were rinsed prior to inspection under a magnification device. Items were then placed in an ultrasonic bath for cleaning before being placed into an autoclave (steriliser). When instruments had been sterilized, they were pouched and stored appropriately, until required. All of the pouches we checked had an expiry date.

We saw that there were systems in place to ensure that the autoclave was working effectively. These included, for example, the automatic control test and steam penetration test for the autoclave and the daily visual checks and weekly protein tests for the ultrasonic bath. It was observed that the data sheets used to record the essential daily validation checks of the sterilisation cycles were complete and up to date.

The segregation and storage of dental waste was in line with current guidelines laid down by the Department of

Health. We observed that sharps containers, clinical waste bags and municipal waste were properly maintained. The practice used a contractor to remove dental waste from the practice. Waste was stored in a separate, locked location within the practice prior to collection by the contractor. Waste consignment notices were available for inspection.

Environmental cleaning was carried out using cleaning equipment in accordance with the national colour coding scheme. There was a cleaning schedule for staff to follow which described daily, weekly and monthly tasks.

Staff files showed that staff regularly attended training courses in infection control. Clinical staff were also required to produce evidence to show that they had been effectively vaccinated against Hepatitis B to prevent the spread of infection between staff and patients. (People who are likely to come into contact with blood products, or are at increased risk of needle-stick injuries should receive these vaccinations to minimise risks of blood borne infections.)

The dental water lines were maintained to prevent the growth and spread of Legionella bacteria (Legionella is a term for particular bacteria which can contaminate water systems in buildings). The practice manager described the method they used which was in line with current HTM 01-05 guidelines. A Legionella risk assessment had been carried out by an external contractor. The practice was following recommendations to reduce the risk of Legionella, for example, through the regular testing of the water temperatures. A record had been kept of the outcome of these checks on a monthly basis.

However, we found that the hot water test carried out by the contractor in December 2016 showed that the required temperature (>50 degrees centigrade) had not been reached; each subsequent monthly test confirmed that the required temperature was not being reached. This had prompted the practice to contact the landlord in order to address this issue. However, the problem had not been resolved at the time of our inspection in March 2017. We discussed this with the principal dentist. They sent us evidence, one day after the inspection, to confirm that the landlord for the building had engaged an assessor to carry out a full review of the water system and boiler.

Equipment and medicines

Are services safe?

We found that the equipment used at the practice was regularly serviced and well maintained. For example, we saw documents showing that the air compressor, fire equipment and X-ray equipment had all been inspected and serviced.

Portable appliance testing (PAT) had been completed in accordance with good practice guidance in January 2017. PAT is the name of a process during which electrical appliances are routinely checked for safety.

The practice stored and dispensed some medicines including antibiotics and paracetamol. Medicines were correctly labelled and a log had been kept of which medicines had been given to which patient. We observed that each dentist correctly wrote out private prescriptions.

The expiry dates of medicines, oxygen and equipment were monitored using weekly and monthly check sheets which enabled the staff to replace out-of-date drugs and equipment promptly.

Conscious sedation was carried out on site. The visiting anaesthetist brought their own medicines and equipment, in line with the practice's agreement. The practice kept a copy of the anaesthetist's notes for each patient's record.

Radiography (X-rays)

There was a well-maintained radiation protection file in line with the Ionising Radiation Regulations (IRR) 1999 and Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2000 (IRMER). This file contained the names of the Radiation Protection Advisor and the Radiation Protection Supervisor as well as the necessary documentation pertaining to the maintenance of the X-ray equipment. Included in the file were the critical examination packs for the X-ray set along with the three-yearly maintenance logs and a copy of the local rules.

We saw evidence in the staff records which showed they had completed radiography and radiation protection training.

Audits on X-ray quality were undertaken at regular intervals.

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

Our findings

Monitoring and improving outcomes for patients

The dentists carried out consultations, assessments and treatment in line with recognised general professional guidelines and General Dental Council (GDC) guidelines. The principal endodontist described to us how they carried out their assessments. The assessment began with the patient completing a medical history questionnaire covering any health conditions, medicines being taken and any allergies suffered. We saw evidence that the medical history was updated at any subsequent visits. This was followed by a review of the patient's complaint and need for endodontic treatment.

The patient's dental care record was then updated with the proposed treatment after discussing options with the patient. A treatment plan was given to each patient and this included details of the costs involved. Patients were monitored through follow-up appointments and these were scheduled in line with their individual requirements. The endodontists also routinely offered a follow-up appointment six months after the completion of all treatment to check that their patients were happy with the result and that they had addressed all of their patients' concerns.

The endodontist we spoke with confirmed that the practice placed an emphasis on keeping up to date with relevant guidance, for example, from the European Society of Endodontology, with a view to offering patients a high quality of care.

Health promotion & prevention

The practice promoted the maintenance of good oral health through the use of health promotion and disease prevention strategies. The endodontist told us they discussed oral health with their patients, for example, effective tooth brushing or dietary advice. They were aware of the need to discuss a general preventive agenda with their patients. They told us they held discussion with their patients, where appropriate, around smoking cessation, sensible alcohol use and dietary advice. The dentists also carried out examinations to check for the early signs of oral cancer.

We observed that there were health promotion materials displayed in the waiting areas. These could be used to support patient's understanding of how to prevent gum disease and how to maintain their teeth in good condition.

Staffing

Staff told us they received appropriate professional development and training. We checked the training records of all staff and saw they had engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) with a view to meeting the requirements of the General Dental Council. This included responding to emergencies, infection control, safeguarding training and radiography and radiation protection training.

Staff involved in carrying out conscious sedation had completed relevant training courses. (Conscious sedation - these are techniques in which the use of a drug or drugs produces a state of depression of the central nervous system enabling treatment to be carried out, but during which verbal contact with the patient is maintained throughout the period of sedation).

There was an induction programme for new staff to follow to ensure that they understood the protocols and systems in place at the practice.

Staff records demonstrated that they had been engaged in an appraisal process within the past year. The staff we spoke with told us they felt well supervised and had good access to the practice manager and principal dentist to discuss career aspirations and any concerns related to their work.

Working with other services

The practice had suitable arrangements in place for working with other health professionals to ensure quality of care for their patients.

The principal endodontist explained how they worked with other services, when required. They were able to refer patients to a range of specialists in primary and secondary care if the treatment required was not provided by the practice. There was also a system in place for referring patients to hospital consultants using a fast track process for suspected cases of oral cancer.

We reviewed the systems for referring patients to specialist consultants in secondary care. A referral letter was prepared and sent to the hospital with full details of the dentist's findings and a copy was stored on the practices'

Are services effective?

(for example, treatment is effective)

records system. When the patient had received their treatment they were discharged back to the practice. Their treatment was then monitored after being referred back to the practice to ensure patients had received a satisfactory outcome and all necessary post-procedure care. A copy of the referral letter was always available to the patient if they wanted this for their records.

Consent to care and treatment

The practice ensured valid consent was obtained for all care and treatment. We spoke to staff about their understanding of consent. They explained that individual treatment options, risks, benefits and costs were discussed with each patient and then documented in a written treatment plan. They stressed the importance of

communication skills when explaining care and treatment to patients to help ensure they had an understanding of their treatment options. Patients were asked to sign formal written consent forms for specific treatments.

All of the staff we spoke with were aware of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. (The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for health and care professionals to act and make decisions on behalf of adults who lack the capacity to make particular decisions for themselves).

The principal endodontist could describe scenarios for how they would manage a patient who lacked the capacity to consent to dental treatment. They noted that they would involve the patient's family, along with social workers and other professionals involved in the care of the patient, to ensure that the best interests of the patient were met.

Are services caring?

Our findings

Respect, dignity, compassion & empathy

All of the comments cards we received, and the patient we spoke with, made positive remarks about the staff's caring and helpful attitude. Patients indicated that they felt comfortable and relaxed with their dentist and that they were made to feel at ease during consultations and treatments. Patients who were nervous about dental treatment indicated that their dentist was calm, worked with them, listened to their concerns, and gave them reassurance throughout the processes of the dental treatments. We also observed staff were welcoming and helpful when patients arrived for their appointment or made enquiries over the phone.

Staff were aware of the importance of protecting patients' privacy and dignity. The treatment rooms were situated away from the main waiting area and we saw that the doors were closed at all times when patients were having treatment. Conversations between patients and the dentist could not be heard from outside the rooms, which protected patient's privacy.

Staff understood the importance of data protection and confidentiality and had received training in information governance. Patients' dental care records were stored in paper and electronic formats. Records stored on the computer were password protected and regularly backed up. Paper records were stored in locked filing cabinets.

Involvement in decisions about care and treatment

The practice displayed information in the waiting area and in the treatment rooms which gave details of private dental charges or fees.

Staff told us they worked towards providing clear explanations about treatment and prevention strategies. We saw evidence in the records that the dentists recorded the information they had provided to patients about their treatment and the options open to them.

The patient feedback we received via comments cards, and through speaking with patients on the day of the inspection, confirmed that patients felt appropriately involved in the planning of their treatment and were satisfied with the descriptions given by staff.

Are services responsive to people's needs?

(for example, to feedback?)

Our findings

Responding to and meeting patients' needs

The practice had a system in place to schedule enough time to assess and meet patients' dental needs. There were set appointment times for routine check-ups and more minor treatments. The dentists could also decide on the length of time needed for their patient's consultation and treatment, particularly in relation to more complex treatment plans. The feedback we received from patients indicated that they felt they had enough time with the dentist and were not rushed.

Staff told us that patients could book an appointment in good time to see the dentist. The feedback we received from patients confirmed that they could get an appointment when they needed one, and that this included good access to emergency appointments on the day that they needed to be seen.

During our inspection we looked at examples of information available to people. We saw that the practice reception room displayed a variety of information including opening hours and practice policy documents. The practice had a website which reinforced this information.

Tackling inequity and promoting equality

The practice had recognised the needs of different groups in the planning of its service. Staff told us they treated everybody equally and welcomed patients from a range of different backgrounds, cultures and religions. There was an equality and diversity policy which staff were following.

Staff spoke a range of different languages, which supported some patients to access the service. They were also able to provide large print, written information for people who were hard of hearing or visually impaired. The practice was wheelchair accessible with access to the treatment rooms on the second floor via a ramp and lift.

Access to the service

The practice opening hours are Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 5.30pm. The practice displayed its opening hours on their premises and on the practice website.

We asked the operations manager and principal dentist about access to the service in an emergency or outside of normal opening hours. They told us that calls were directed to a mobile phone which they reviewed at regular intervals. They spoke with patients and then contacted the dentists so that they could carry out an assessment of their patients' needs, as necessary.

The principal endodontist told us that patients, who needed to be seen urgently, for example, because they were experiencing dental pain, were seen on the same day that they alerted the practice to their concerns. The feedback we received via comments cards confirmed that patients had good access to the dentist in the event of needing emergency treatment.

Concerns & complaints

Information about how to make a complaint was displayed in the reception area. There was a formal complaints policy describing how the practice handled formal and informal complaints from patients. There had been one, formal complaint recorded in the past year. This had been recorded, investigated and responded to in line with the practice policy. Complaints were reviewed at staff meetings to ensure that staff were aware of any changes or improvements that needed to be implemented as a result.

Patients were invited to give feedback through completion of a mobile phone application. This helped to monitor the outcome of their treatment, for example, in relation to levels of pain. Patients were also asked to provide information about their levels of satisfaction with the care provided. The results of the feedback were regularly reviewed by the operations manager. Information about staff performance was fed back to individual members of staff.

Are services well-led?

Our findings

Governance arrangements

The practice had governance arrangements and a clear management structure. There was a comprehensive system of policies, protocols and procedures in place covering all of the clinical governance criteria expected in a dental practice. The systems and processes were maintained in an orderly fashion with files that were regularly reviewed and completed.

Staff were aware of the practice policies and acted in line with them. They told us that they held frequent team meetings to discuss any concerns related to protocols or individual patients.

Records, including those related to patient care and treatments, as well as staff employment, were kept accurately.

There was one area where further action was required to ensure that the risks associated with running a dental practice were minimised. This related to the management of risks associated with Legionella infection. The practice was responsive to our feedback in this area and sent us confirmation that action was being taken by the landlord to resolve the problems with the building's hot water system.

Leadership, openness and transparency

The staff we spoke with described a transparent culture which encouraged candour, openness and honesty. Staff said that they felt comfortable about raising concerns with the principal dentist or practice manager. They felt they were listened to and responded to when they did so.

We found staff to be hard working, caring and committed to their work and overall there was a strong sense that staff worked together as a team.

There was a system of annual staff appraisals to support staff in carrying out their roles to a high standard. Notes from these appraisals also demonstrated that they identified staff's training and career goals.

Learning and improvement

The practice had a programme of clinical audit that was used as part of the process for learning and improvement. These included audits for infection control, clinical record keeping, X-ray quality, and recall systems. Audits were repeated at appropriate intervals to evaluate whether or not quality had been maintained or if improvements had been made.

The auditing system demonstrated a generally high standard of work with only small improvements required. We saw notes from meetings which showed that results of audits were discussed in order to share achievements or action plans for improving performance.

All staff were supported to pursue development opportunities. We saw evidence that staff were working towards completing the required number of CPD hours to maintain their professional development in line with requirements set by the General Dental Council (GDC).

Practice seeks and acts on feedback from its patients, the public and staff

Patients were invited to give feedback through a comments book and suggestions box in the reception room. All patients were asked to give feedback on the first, third and fifth day after being seen by the endodontist about the outcome of the treatment and their levels of satisfaction with the care received. The information collected from these sources demonstrated that patients were satisfied with the care they received.

Staff told us that the principal endodontist and operations manager were open to feedback regarding the quality of the care. The appraisal system and staff meetings also provided appropriate forums for staff to give their feedback.