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JANUARY 2025

# DENTISTRY

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JANUARY 2025

## DENTISTRY

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*Staying  
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NORTH OF ENGLAND  
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2025: WHAT'S ON



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# Recharged and ready to go!

**Siobhan Hiscott**  
Group managing editor

**T**he return to routine after the often-indulgent festive period can leave January feeling like a bit of a shock to the system.

One of the recurring themes I heard from people in 2024 was a dawning acceptance that post-pandemic, life seems to be more hectic than ever – with no sign of slowing down. So it's crucial that from time to time we pause and give ourselves time and space to breathe.

I hope you've been able to avail yourselves of exactly that, taking a much-needed break to start the new year revitalised and reenergised.

While the turning of the year is typically seen as the point to make new resolutions, plans and promises, one of our defining values at FMC is to go through this process much more regularly – so, for us, the new year is often about revealing the fruits of that work.

And this year is no different, because for the last few months we've been busy making plans that will make this year the best yet for our readers! Of those plans, one highlight that I'm especially

excited about is the North of England Dentistry Show. We explore the show in more detail on page 12, but for now I'm delighted to share some of the hottest news from this year's event!

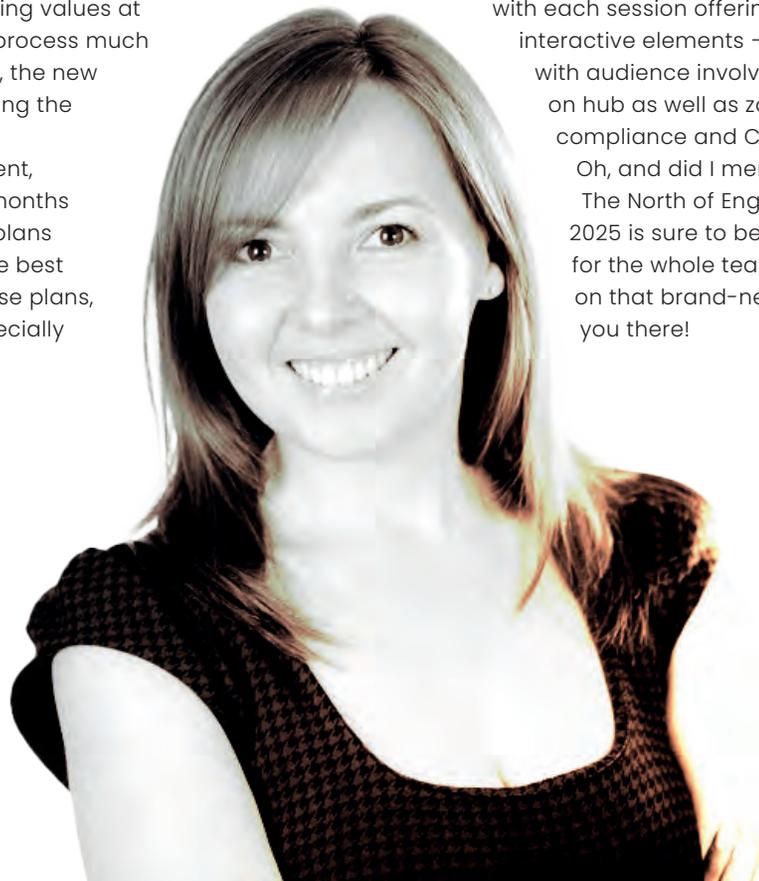
This year's North of England Dentistry Show will return to the ever-popular Manchester Central Convention Complex on Saturday 8 March, and if the preparations are anything to go by, attendees are in for a treat.

This year, we're livening things up and trying something a little different. With a new look, new energy and new flow, the North of England Dentistry Show has been reimaged to deliver an unparalleled experience designed to inspire every member of the dental team.

In addition to the traditional lecture style line-up, with each session offering CPD, there will more interactive elements – including live debates with audience involvement, a hands-on hub as well as zones dedicated to compliance and CPD.

Oh, and did I mention it's free entry?

The North of England Dentistry Show 2025 is sure to be an unmissable event for the whole team – so mark the date on that brand-new calendar and I'll see you there!



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# PRIVATE

## DENTISTRY

### MISSION STATEMENT

*Private Dentistry* is an essential reference for dental practice development in the 21st century, focused on helping practices evolve sustainably, operate innovatively, and thrive.

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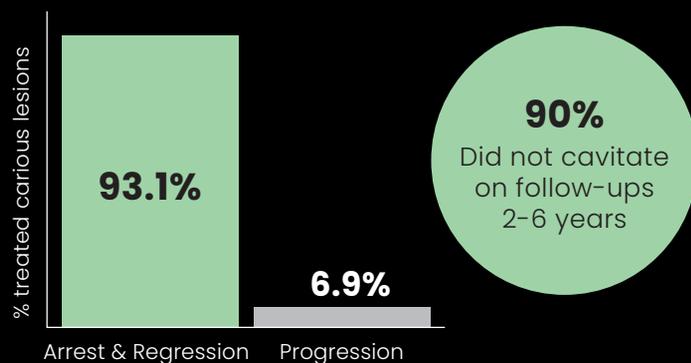
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\*Long-term clinical study in public pediatric dental clinic in Chur, Switzerland

# PRIVATE DENTISTRY

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BDS MCLinDent (Prosthodontics) PhD MFGDP (UK) FICOI FICD, has been in private practice in London for more than 30 years and is the programme director for the MSc in Aesthetic Dentistry at King's College London Dental Institute.



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BDS, co-owns Rothley Lodge Dental with his wife Dr Meghan Chard. He is immediate past president of the BACD, lectures nationally and is a co-founder of Pärila toothpaste tabs.



### RACHEL DERBY

BDS MS, is an award-winning dentist and a partner and founder of Chapel Dental in Buckinghamshire. Rachel is past president of the BAPD.



### MERVYN DRUIHAN

BDS (Rand) DGDPRCS (Lon), is one of the pioneers of cosmetic dentistry. He is one of very few UK dentists to be on the distinguished AACD President's Honour Role.



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### SUNIL HIRANI

BSc BDS FDSRCS FDS(Orth) RCs Eng MOrth MSc, is a specialist in orthodontics and practice principal of Smilelux, a dedicated orthodontic practice in Milton Keynes.



### MARTINA HODGSON

BChD MJDF, is owner and principal dentist at The Dental Studio in Wakefield and is also known as the Dental Architect. She has an interest in orthodontics, Invisalign and facial aesthetics.



### NEEL JAISWAL

BDS, runs a multidisciplinary practice at Neel Dentistry. He founded PDI-Professional Dental Indemnity Ltd. He is a judge for the Private Dentistry Awards. He founded the British Academy of Microscope Dentistry and is a founder of the BAPD.



### SAM JETHWA

BDS, is the founder of Bespoke Smile Clinic & Academy, which trains dentists on occlusion, porcelain veneers, and rehabilitations. Sam is on the board of directors at the BACD, and has been a judge for the Private Dentistry Awards.



### ANGELA LY

BDS, is an award-winning dentist who has featured on *BBC Breakfast*, ITV's *Save Money Good Health* and Channel 5's *Gadget Show*.



### HANNA MIRAFTAB

BDS, is owner of Kiln Lane Dental practice and an actress in *Real Housewives of Cheshire*. She has completed a master's degree in prosthodontics and has qualifications in non-surgical treatments such as anti-ageing injectables.



### ASHISH B PARMAR

BDS, is a cosmetic dentist offering smile design, comprehensive dental care, laser dentistry and implants. He is a national and international lecturer.



### KISH PATEL

BDS MSc, is a director at Smile Clinic Group and director of Smile Dental Academy. Having successfully completed training in Invisalign in 2011, he offers a range of clear and cosmetic orthodontic treatments.



### KREENA PATEL

BDS, is a specialist in endodontics. She taught on the specialist endodontics programme at Guy's. She works at Brigstock Dental Practice and Oaktree Dental Practice. Kreena runs an online endo course, The Endo Course.



### MANRINA RHODE

BDS, principal of DRMR Clinic in Knightsbridge. Also runs DRMR Academy with a mentorship programme, online course and in-person course on porcelain veneers. She has completed more than 14,000 porcelain veneers over 22 years.



### JASON SMITHSON

BDS (Lond) DipRestDent RCS (Eng), qualified at the Royal London Hospital in 1995, achieving a number of awards.



### KOMAL SURI

BChD, owns Smile Design Dental Practice. The focus of her work is aesthetic and restorative dentistry.



### PROFESSOR PAUL TIPTON

BDS MSc DGDGP UK, is a specialist in prosthodontics, president of the British Academy of Restorative Dentistry and an internationally renowned dental lecturer.



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BChD, is principal of the referral practice Andrea Ubhi Dentistry in York. She is also chair of the charity Asha Nepal, supporting survivors of trafficking.



### SIR NAIRN WILSON

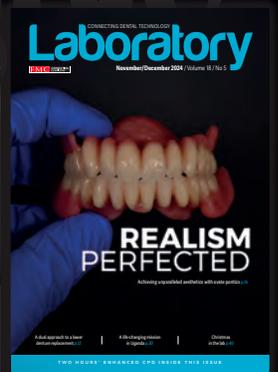
CBE DSc (hc) FDS FFGDP (UK) FFD FKC, is emeritus professor of dentistry at King's College London. He was previously dean and head of King's College Dental School (2001-2010), dean of the Faculty of Dentistry RCS Edinburgh (1995-1998), and president of the GDC (1999-2003).

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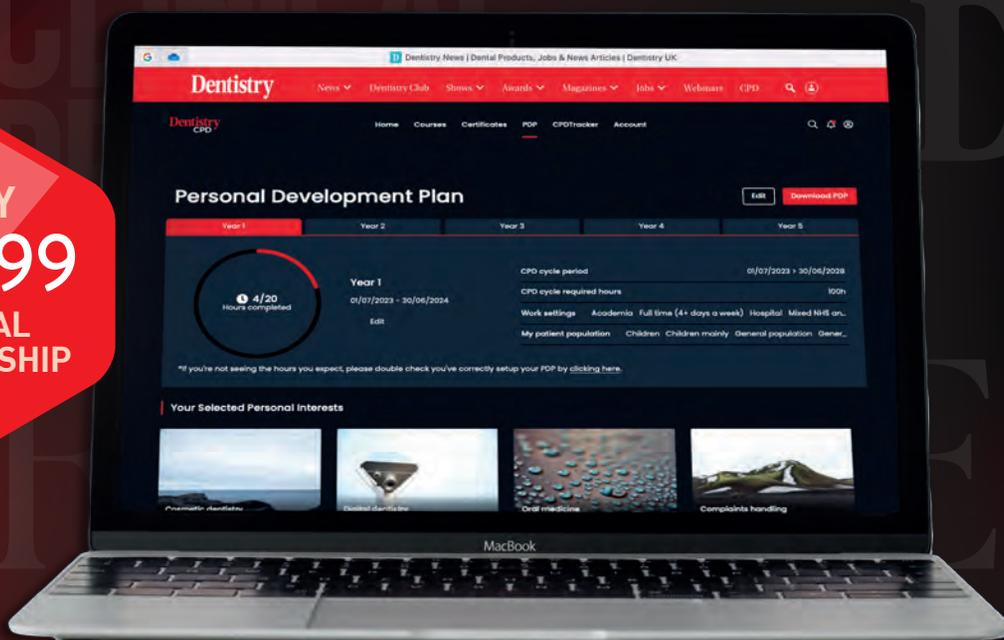
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## General Dental Council makes remote hearings permanent

The General Dental Council (GDC) has confirmed its move for dental professional hearings to be held online is to be made permanent following a public consultation.

The policy will take effect from 1 April 2025 to allow for guidance for all independent committees at the hearings service to be developed and for monitoring processes to be put in place.

The move follows the implementation of remote hearings in recent years, with GDC data showing that 87% of the 508 substantive hearings held between January 2022 and May 2024 were conducted remotely.

Under the new policy, dental professionals will retain the right to request an in-person hearing for any reason. The regulator says this will be granted in most cases. The GDC also maintains the right to request in-person proceedings where appropriate. Where there is no consensus between parties, an independent panel will provide direction through a preliminary meeting.

Stefan Czerniawski, executive director of strategy at the GDC, said: 'The decision to make remote hearings permanent reflects the clear benefits observed over the past few years. While maintaining our commitment to fairness and public protection, remote hearings have demonstrated reduced stress, significant cost savings, and improved accessibility for participants.'

To read the GDC's *Format of Hearings: Consultation Outcome Report*, visit [bit.ly/4g7i5qk](https://bit.ly/4g7i5qk).

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## Dentures with octopus-inspired suckers invented

A new type of denture with octopus-like suckers has been designed for improved grip and comfort.

The researchers at King's College London (KCL) explored how they could replicate the suckers octopuses have on their eight arms that allow them to attach to surfaces.

They then formulated the idea of using similar suckers to attach to the soft mucosa of the mouth. As a result, the researchers designed small 'suction cups' into 3D-printed models using CAD. Following analysis, they found that the new denture design had twice the amount of retention as standard dentures.

The researchers also explored how chemical changes could help to fix dentures in place. They discovered that a thin lining of keratin, the protein found in hair and skin, on plastic dentures improves retention further due to a chemical bond. This is also invisible, meaning the aesthetics of the dentures is not impacted.

The scientists, from the KCL faculty of dentistry, oral and craniofacial sciences, believe the new design could help denture wearers across the UK. They suggest it could aid 11% of the UK population who use a denture and the 350 million of people around the world who have no natural teeth at all.

The octopus-like suction design would remove the need for denture adhesive and improve the retention, according to the researchers.

### 'IMPROVED GRIP AND COMFORT'

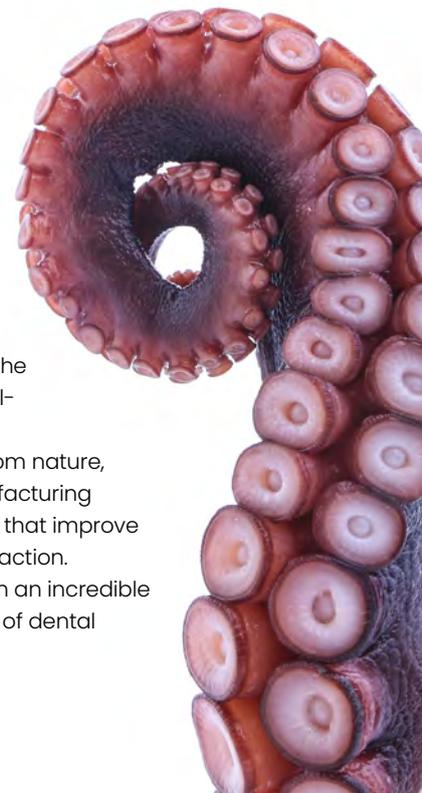
Dr Sherif Elsharkawy, lead author of the study at King's College London, said: 'I first had the idea to replicate sticky surfaces in nature while biting into a peach. I noticed how the furry skin stuck to the palate of my mouth and decided to investigate other sticky surfaces in nature. Octopus suckers seemed like the perfect place to start.'

'This research bridges nature and technology to tackle a long-standing challenge for denture wearers. By mimicking the ingenious adhesive strategies found in octopus suction cups, we have developed a prototype that offers improved grip and comfort in even the most demanding oral environments.'

'Our findings pave the way for a new generation of dentures that can transform the quality of life for millions worldwide.'

Dr Eda Dzinovic, a researcher in dental materials at King's College London, said: 'This work showcases the power of "biomimicry" in solving real-world medical challenges.'

'It's inspiring to see how insights from nature, combined with cutting-edge manufacturing techniques, can lead to innovations that improve both functionality and patient satisfaction. Contributing to this project has been an incredible opportunity to push the boundaries of dental material science.'



## Plans approved for new dental school

Plans to open a new dental school in Norfolk have advanced, supported by £1.5 million in funding.

The new dental school will be built at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital (N&N) as part of the University of East Anglia (UEA). Norwich council leaders granted the funding following calls for the UEA to address the 'dental desert' in Norfolk. This comes as a report found that Norwich had the second lowest acceptance rate for NHS dentistry in the UK, with just eight out of the 50 practices (16%) accepting patients.

Currently, East Anglia is the only region in the country without a dental training school. The university hopes the dental school, which is expected to cost a total of £3 million, will result in more dentists practising in the county.

Sue Holland is leader of Broadland District Council and chairman of the Greater Norwich Growth Board. She said: 'The lack of access to a dentist is a real concern for too many of our residents. Training dentists locally will provide much needed resources for existing dental practices.'

### 'AN IMPORTANT STEP'

Named the School of Oral Health, the new dental training facility will be created on the second floor of an extension on the N&N's Edith Cavell Building.

The university is set to provide the remaining £1.5 million from its capital budget for equipment. This includes nine dentist chairs and specialist teaching facilities. At first, the school will enrol 40 students per year, though this is expected to increase to 65 students per year following another expansion.



The university is now in discussions with the General Dental Council (GDC) to advance the required registration process so the school can start the dental training courses.

Kay Mason Billig, leader of Norfolk County Council, said: 'The county council has been working hard to support UEA's ambitions for a new School of Oral Health, which is why we brought this proposal to the Greater Norwich Growth Board. We are delighted, therefore, that this investment now has the support of district partners.'

Norwich City Council leader Mike Stonard added: 'I really strongly support this. We have a shortage of dentists, particularly NHS ones in Norfolk and the nearest training facility is a long, long way away.'

David Maguire, vice chancellor of the UEA, also said: 'This is an important step in our bid to deliver undergraduate dental training at UEA, building on the success of the Norwich Medical School.'

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NORTH OF ENGLAND  
Dentistry  
SHOW 2025

SAVE THE  
DATE



Returning for 2025, here's what is in store at the **North of England Dentistry Show**

**T**he North of England Dentistry Show returns to Manchester Central Convention Complex on Saturday 8 March 2025.

With a new look, new energy and new flow, this year's show has been reimagined from the ground up to deliver an unparalleled experience.

The one-day event will keep delegates at the heart of the experience – with more interaction than ever before, on top of seamless session flows, meaningful networking opportunities and actionable insights tailored for professional growth.

More than 40 renowned speakers will present cutting-edge research, innovative techniques and practical expertise across multiple lecture theatres. Each session is CPD-verified, offering hours of certified content to help you stay up to date.

The event will showcase the latest advancements in dental technology, interactive workshops and a vibrant exhibition featuring more than 100 leading suppliers.

Best of all, the North of England Dentistry Show is entirely free to attend, ensuring the whole team can take advantage of this incredible opportunity to learn, connect and explore.

Here's what you can expect from the theatres.

**DIGITAL & IMPLANT THEATRE**

The Digital & Implant Theatre makes its debut at the North of England Dentistry Show 2025, bringing the latest thinking



on implant techniques and the impact of the latest technological developments on clinical practice.

The theatre will shine a light on corners of digital and implant dentistry, from guided surgery to full restorative workflows – a must for anyone interested in developing these aspects of their practice.

**DENTISTRY CPD HUB**

The Dentistry CPD Hub is a mainstay of the North of England Dentistry Show, designed to help all dental professionals stay abreast of their General Dental Council (GDC) recommended topics.



For 2025, that line-up includes key sessions on:

- Disinfection and decontamination – shattering some of the myths and misconceptions around infection control with a down to earth, highly practical conversation hosted by expert Dr Pat Langley
- Legal and ethical issues – what does the issue of consent look like in modern practice? Let Dr Bijju Krishnan guide you through the latest requirements – and share his tips on staying on top of them and updates within legal and ethical issues and how to address them
- Oral cancer – a primer on recognising the signs of oral cancer, and a guide to keeping on top of oral care for oncology patients in general practice

- Handling complaints – uncover the 'DNA of complaint handling' with legal expert Jennie Jones, who will examine what really causes complaints... and how to deal with them when they arise.

**ADAM THEATRE**

The brand-new ADAM Theatre will run a series of talks expressly designed for the dental practice managers and administrators who help keep the UK's dental practices running smoothly.



The stage has been developed in tandem with the Association of Dental Administrators and Managers (ADAM), which lends its name to the show.

The ADAM Theatre will offer visitors effective, realistic tips and tricks to ensuring practice processes run smoothly – no matter what role they play in the practice.

**CLINICAL SKILLS THEATRE – POWERED BY SMILE ACADEMY AND AVANT GARDE**



Delegates looking for unrivalled learning on every aspect of restorative dentistry simply need to stop by the Clinical Skills Theatre.

Powered by two of the UK's biggest brands in clinical education – Smile Academy and Avant Garde – this theatre will host an unmissable series of clinical lectures.

# 'IF THERE'S ONE EVENT TO ATTEND THIS YEAR, IT'S THE NORTH OF ENGLAND DENTISTRY SHOW. WE CAN'T WAIT TO WELCOME YOU ALL!'

A favourite at the North of England Dentistry Show since its introduction, the Clinical Skills Theatre has hosted some of the biggest names in dentistry.

This year is no different, capturing the clinical zeitgeist with some of the UK's most exciting clinicians, including the likes of Robbie Hughes, Milad Shadrooh and *The Apprentice's* Paul Midha.

## DENTISTRY HOT TOPICS

A far cry from the standard lecture, the Hot Topics stage will tackle some of the biggest issues in UK dentistry with a series of panel discussions and impassioned conversation.

The stage will cover everything from the benefits, dangers and future of AI in dentistry to fierce debate on clinical approaches.

Looking for a no-holds barred conversation on how to grasp the challenges of recruitment and retention, or the secrets of building an effective personal brand? Then the Dentistry Hot Topics stage is the place to hit for expert conversation, audience interaction, and unrivalled insight.

## LABORATORY ZONE

The UK's most successful title for laboratories leaps off the page to present a line-up custom-designed for technicians and clinical dental technicians.

It's the perfect space to learn something new while making quality connections within the UK's passionate community of dental technicians.

Curated by the *Laboratory* editorial team, the lectures will cover the latest thinking, techniques and technology.

The talks on offer will include a session on making CAD/CAM planning smarter by 'hacking the workflow', and a discussion on improving communication

## BUSINESS LOUNGE – POWERED BY TOWERGATE

The Business Lounge is a must-visit for practice managers, owners, and group owners.

With expert-led lectures covering every aspect of business leadership, you'll leave inspired and equipped with fresh ideas to elevate your practice.

From understanding how to make sustainability pay to the mistakes to avoid when setting up squat practice, the focus will be squarely on business resilience and growth – and with a dedicated area for networking before and after the lectures, it's the ideal space to exchange ideas and create meaningful business connections.

## HANDS-ON HUB

The Hands-on Hub is all about expanding visitors' clinical experiences, with a varied series of hands-on sessions scheduled throughout the day.

Offering a practical experience unlike any other at the show, attendees will be able to get up close and personal with a range of new techniques.

Whether it's treating white spot lesions with resin infiltration, understanding veneers, or first fits of guided porcelain, delegates will get the chance to find their next practice-changing treatment.

## TAILORED TO INSPIRE

Leanna Ellis, FMC events director, said: 'The North of England Dentistry Show is set to be the most anticipated event of the year for the dental industry.'

'We've designed this show to offer far more than just CPD hours. It's about providing each attendee with real, hands-on experiences, meaningful networking opportunities, and exclusive insights that truly elevate their practice.'

'This year, we're bringing a new look and an enhanced flow to the



# NORTH OF ENGLAND Dentistry SHOW 2025

## Why attend?

- Learn from the biggest names in dentistry – with speakers providing lectures throughout the entire day on the hottest topics
- Stay at the cutting edge of dentistry – with the latest developments being discussed on every stage, delegates will leave brimming with new ideas and inspiration
- Network with like-minded professionals – after each talk, you will have the opportunity to meet speakers and network with other like-minded professionals.



existing event, with over 100 exhibitors, compliance and CPD hubs, and a new theatre crafted for an engaging experience that keeps all dental professionals feeling inspired and empowered.

'If there's one event to attend this year, it's the North of England Dentistry Show. We can't wait to welcome you all!'

Stay tuned over the coming months as more is revealed about what's in store.

*Register for the 2025 North of England Dentistry Show for free at [dentistry.co.uk/shows/north-of-england-dentistry-show](https://dentistry.co.uk/shows/north-of-england-dentistry-show).*

# Rise and shine

Are you going to be the beacon of light in 2025, asks **Chris Barrow**



CHRIS  
BARROW

**I**t's been 31 years since my first dentist client, and in 2025, I find myself with a greater sense of excitement than I can ever remember.

The media is preoccupied with doom and gloom, and it is very easy to get sucked in to that narrative.

Remember that, as leader, each member of your team is looking to you for a steer on how they should feel – you need to be 'the beacon of light' in the stormy landscape.

But being that beacon isn't just hype. You have to be able to back up a positive mental attitude with some facts, or else people might class you as just another insincere politician!

## THE GREAT EIGHT

I've been giving my clients eight reasons why 2025 could be the start of a growth spurt in the development of their businesses.

Here are eight revolutions that are taking place in the delivery of dentistry in the UK:

1. The intraoral scanner. This can be used at every step of the patient journey, from initial assessment, through dental health reviews and into treatment planning. Once users realise that an intraoral scanner is more than just a replacement for impression material or a way to deliver aligners then the sky is the limit
2. The digital treatment coordinator (TCO). A GDC-registered TCO who uses intraoral scanning to communicate with patients can triage new patient enquiries into those that are not the right fit for your practice and those that are, directing them to the right clinician and establishing needs, desired outcomes, suitability and affordability before a paid clinical consultation takes place
3. The modern dental therapist. Embracing the full GDC scope of practice and using intraoral scanning to communicate with patients. Assumptions here are that we are talking about an individual who is trained, skilled, competent, confident and hasn't had that skill knocked out of them by focusing on hygiene

4. The 3D printer. Off-site design and on-site printing, utilising the latest software, technology and materials
5. The smile simulation. From airbrush to digital smile design and Invisalign Smile Architect, you can present patients with a stunning visualisation of how you can help them
6. Guided dentistry. Systemise your planning and clinical processes, producing faster, safer, more predictable results, fewer appointments, increased profits, more efficiency, less complications, a medicolegal safety net through a more robust audit trail. Standardised pricing and fixed costs due to its predictability
7. AI note-taking and feedback. Using AI-driven technology to record, transcribe, summarise and even coach on patient and team consultations and conversations
8. Chairside dentistry. Combining 'scan, design, print, fit' – the ability to deliver dentistry on the same day that the diagnosis takes place, the 'one-hour crown'.

## SHINING BRIGHT

The evolution of the digital workflow has one further revolutionary impact on practices.

I worked with a number of clinics throughout 2024 who fully embraced the digital workflow and enhanced business practices described above. If you need a 'value case' to take part in a revolution (show me the facts/numbers) then absorb these metrics that we are seeing every day:

- 100% treatment plan acceptance
- 30% increase in average daily clinician production
- Patients telling their family, friends and colleagues about what you do
- Business running costs down by 6% of turnover – that's straight to the bottom line.

Reasons to be cheerful? These and more besides. I haven't even got started on the growth in the UK dental implant market.

You have every right to be a beacon of light – so go out there and shine.



Turn your dream of owning a dental practice into reality!



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- 03 Finding the Perfect Location
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### Hear From the Dentists Who Took the Leap



# Smile Stories

How Instagram friends-turned-business partners **Gareth Edwards** and **Zak Kara** are redefining the dental experience without the white coats and ‘fire-breathing receptionists’

**Z**ak and I were competitors. We worked in different clinics in the same area and were both known locally for providing feelgood aesthetic dentistry. Our clients would find us to improve their smile confidence, and we’d help them prepare for their wedding photos or an important job interview and so on.

Zak and I initially chatted via DMs on Instagram, met for coffee a couple of times and then at the pub. Zak says it was like dating, and we grew to realise we thought similarly about dentistry.

We had a few beers just before the pandemic, and I remember saying to him that this virus was ‘nothing’ and would blow over, and it’d be a great time to start a clinic. It turns out my dentistry is far better than my virology!

The profession was turned upside down when practice doors were shut for three months while they figured out what to do with aerosol treatments and the risks they posed. Zak and I barely spoke in all the mayhem.

Then, one day, I got a message out of the blue from him. ‘There may be an opportunity. Come and meet me at the clinic for a chat,’ he cryptically suggested.

It transpired the current clinic owner where he worked felt it was an excellent time to sell, which aligned perfectly with us.

**WHEN PASSION  
AND IDEAS COME  
TOGETHER, THE  
RESULT IS OFTEN  
GREATER THAN THE  
SUM OF ITS PARTS**

We were both leaning towards ownership, partly due to the frustration of working in clinics where our influence was limited. We’d always been on the same wavelength and realised we should now collaborate rather than compete.

When passion and ideas come together, the result is often greater than the sum of its parts.

## **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS**

This initial purchase was the opportunity. We both knew we could do dentistry differently by reframing how we delivered care and fixing many of what we saw as the old-school 1990s hangovers, such as the fire-breathing receptionists etc.

So, Smile Stories was borne out of this vision to establish a unique dental experience – a clinic our clients (note, not patients) were excited to share with their friends and family.

Having worked in numerous practices with their peculiar waiting rooms and distinct odours, Zak and I had heard the phrase ‘I hate the dentist’ more times than we can remember.

We believed dentistry had stagnated for years and were determined to bring it into the present.

We bought the three-surgery clinic, which had one treatment room that was used full-time. We built it

*Step inside...*

**THE PRACTICE**  
Smile Stories  
330 Wimborne Road  
Bournemouth  
BH9 2HH

**TELEPHONE**  
01202 513292

**WEBSITE**  
[smilestories.co](http://smilestories.co)

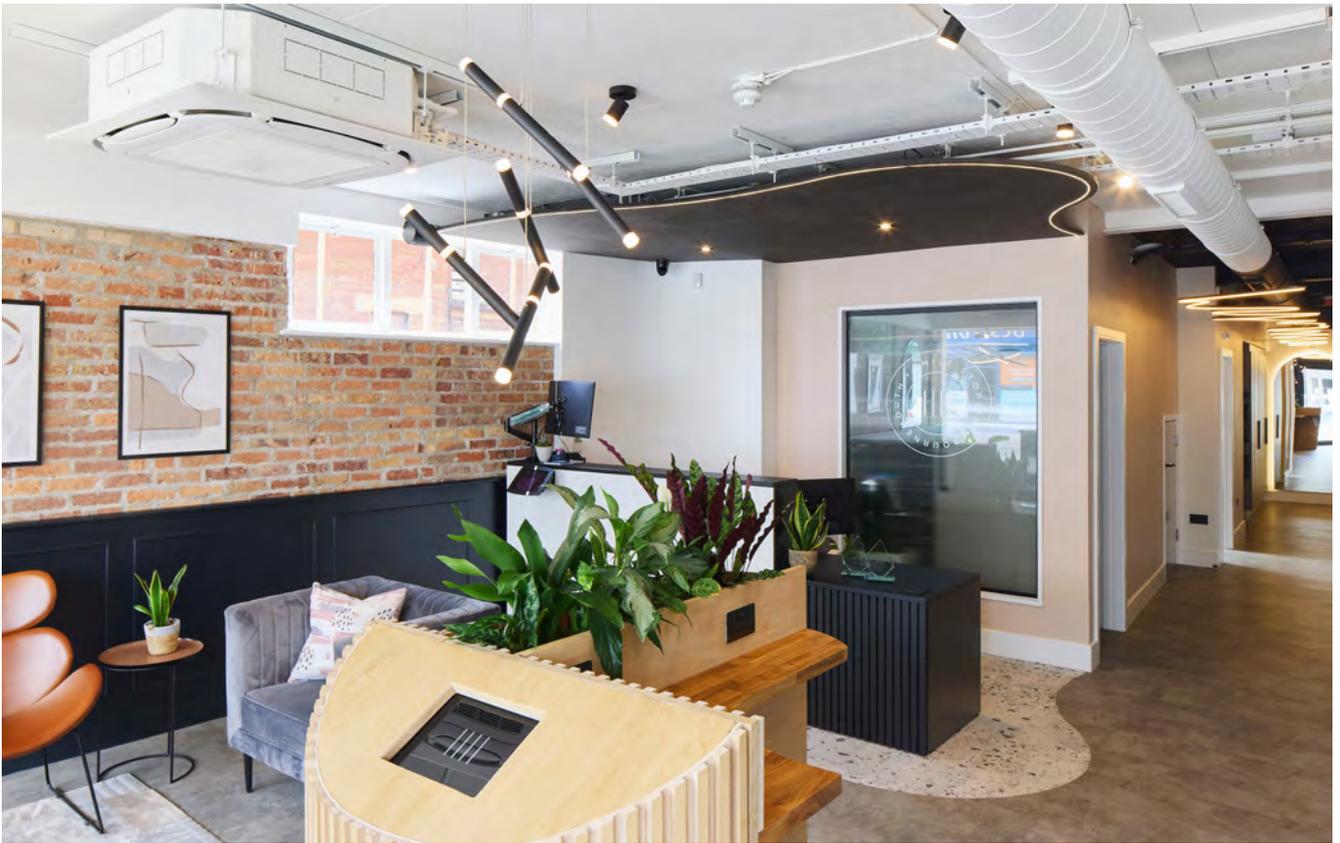




## *The ethos*

Zak and Gareth envision transforming the dental experience into something people genuinely love. For them, it isn't just about fixing teeth; it's about setting a new standard for exceptional service. For them, every smile is a journey. Deeply committed to a philosophy that prioritises people over procedures, the team pays attention to the little details, the nuances of a day and what makes each person unique. The Smile Stories logo, with its four stripes, represents the stories of their patients – 'much like books on a shelf or friends gathered at a coffee shop'. It signifies journeys, transformations and the community they are building together. They say: 'Smile Stories is a clinic designed for everyday people with everyday lives.'





into three rooms, opening 8.00am-8.00pm weekdays and Saturdays.

Within a year, we were in a perilous position. We couldn't help everyone we wanted. We were only able to offer aesthetic goal-focused dentistry at the old location but nothing general. Clients asked us if we could be their partner's dentist, but we didn't have the capacity.

We could have played it safe and stayed, but we wouldn't have been able to help as many people. So we relocated one mile down the road.

### **SOLID GOLD**

We purchased the site of a former Santander bank on Wimborne Road, the main artery through Bournemouth. We thought transforming an old bank into a clinic was a good idea, but it turns out they're rather tricky to renovate.

The first step in building is deconstructing the old walls and clearing them out – and banks come with a lot of reinforced concrete. We didn't get one smile from our builders while they dug that out in 30-degree heat over the summer. We walked in one day, and there they were with tops off, sweating and sitting on drilling equipment you'd expect to

be used in a South African diamond mine! So, that was fun.

I advise anyone to plan for the unexpected, factor in any delays and accept that there will be overspending.

### **GRIT AND AUTHENTICITY**

Zak and I wanted the Smile Stories brand to look and feel like an extension of us, so we needed to find ways to convey this. The décor needed to be premium but thoroughly unpretentious, and we spent weekends seeking design ideas in Manchester and Liverpool, scoping out the coolest cafés and bars that had grit and authenticity.

I'd describe our style as earthy and 'natural'. An exposed brick wall is central to this and adds an authentic touch, grounding the space. I uncovered the brickwork myself – days of grinding left brick dust in my hair during the build phase.

With an abundance of plants that could rival The Ivy, we've cultivated an atmosphere of tranquillity. Oak wood furniture and subtle lighting further enhance the warmth and adds a sense of openness to the environment.

The colour scheme incorporates our brand colours, too. We felt the new clinic needed some continuity from the old Smile Stories location, so we've carried some elements across, like the outdoor lights that hang over the entrance.

We don't have a 'waiting room' because who likes to wait? The client lounge has Sonos speakers and a centralised scent pumping out the air vents.

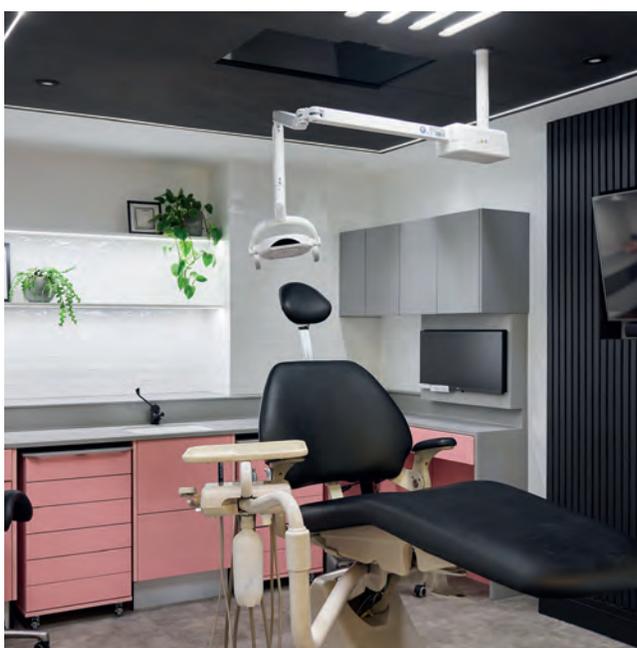
We now have five treatment rooms with the opportunity for two more. We have expanded our services to include general dentistry and facial aesthetics and have grown since then. Our clients often comment that it feels like walking into a café. One tells me that with a busy life, it's the place she relaxes the most. Comments like that mean we know we're doing something right.

## *The team*

**AESTHETIC DENTIST**  
Gareth Edwards

**AESTHETIC DENTIST**  
Zak Kara

## HOW I DID IT



### PREVENTIVE AND PROACTIVE

But it isn't just the physical aspects of the building that motivate us; it goes much deeper than this. It is also about doing dentistry in the way we feel it should be done, comprehensively and without hurry. This means laying proper foundations for dental health by focusing on a truly preventive and proactive approach and phasing treatment to ensure our clients have a 100% healthy mouth before placing the cherry on top with any cosmetic work.

We call it the 'Smile Stories way'. This involves feeling good about the skin you're in – defining, refining or rewinding time, or what we call 'total mouth health' – a happy, healthy mouth without any patch-ups.

It's the whole client journey and experience – from the moment people hear about us to the brand messages, from the tone they're met with to how they feel when they walk through the door to their raving about us at the end.

### ATTRACTING ATTENTION

They say location is everything, but our clients find us as far away as the Midlands and London. People come to us because of our work, not because we're their local dentist and only a five-minute drive from their house.

That said, we have a considerable shopfront with eye-catching screens. When people have to stop at the lights on one of the busiest roads in Bournemouth, we make it difficult for them not to notice us.

We take a fresh, good-humoured, and engaging approach to our marketing and branding. Website messaging such as 'Smile Stories does dentistry differently. Without fire-breathing dragon receptionists. No weird white coats. Just a down-to-earth team who make going to the dentist feel more like visiting friends' conveys the difference in our approach.

We created our brand to attract a specific cohort of people. Strategy-wise, we want to treat friendly, easy-going clients. Dentistry is demanding, and everyone has had a client in the diary who makes their heart sink. Luckily and genuinely, we don't have this anymore. We actively dissuade influencers, footballers and footballer wives. If we feel someone isn't a good fit, we happily advise them to go to a more suitable clinic.

We want to put Smile Stories on the map with its modern, comprehensive and free-of-fustiness approach. But time will tell. We always say if we're enjoying it, we'll continue doing it.

In the short term, we're still growing and are always looking for enthusiastic dentists, specialists and therapists to join us.

---

### *Who was involved?*

#### **Architect/surgery design**

KTM Design

#### **Builders and fitters**

Decadent

#### **Practice management software**

Dentally

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# Crafting dental spaces collaboratively

Design expert **Katie Thomas** brought a client-centred approach to practice design, empowering **Hannan Imran** to bring his dream practice to life

**S**iha Dental is a new family-run practice in west London owned by award-winning Dr Hannan Imran. The practice takes its name from the Arabic word 'health', reflecting a commitment to holistic patient care.

Located in the heart of the W12 area of Shepherd's Bush, this flagship clinic opened its doors last summer, bringing a comprehensive range of dental services to one of the capital's liveliest postcodes.

To recreate his vision, Hannan partnered with KTM Design, a wellness-focused design team founded by Katie Thomas and renowned for its expertise in crafting modern, purpose-driven spaces. Together, they embarked on a journey to transform his ideas into a reality, merging the design team's creative precision with Hannan's deep commitment to patient-centred care. The result is a dental practice that balances aesthetics with function in an inviting and calming environment.

## TRANQUIL TRAITS

With an emphasis on a neutral palette with striking terracotta and burnt orange accents, the splashes of green within the practice add a natural tone that ensures the tranquillity Hannan envisioned.

Carefully curated features, soft curves and plush furnishings add to its appeal. In some areas, patterned

tiles are offset by the subtle colours. Indeed, every element reflects a commitment to a calm space, blending seamlessly to create an atmosphere of clinical professionalism and aesthetic harmony.

But how did KTM Design perfectly realise Hannan's dream? And, what are the key ingredients to any successful design project?

## COMING TOGETHER

Designing for clinical settings presents unique challenges, but Katie and the team have honed their approach to ensure each practice they work

on meets both brand identity and operational needs. Maintaining clear and consistent client communication is a crucial part of the process.

Katie explains: 'As a design team, we are responsible for creating a dental practice that aligns 100% with a dentist's vision and needs. We have to balance functionality demands with aesthetic desires, consider the patient experience and ensure staff comfort and workplace ergonomics – all within one cohesive space. At the initial consultation, Hannan was clear about the key elements he envisioned, and our role was to integrate his priorities



**Katie Thomas**

Katie founded KTM Design, a wellness-focused interior design company, in 2015. She leads a team of talented designers renowned for innovative thinking and ahead-of-the-trend ideas. For more information, visit [www.ktmdesign.co.uk](http://www.ktmdesign.co.uk).

into the design to bring his vision to life.'

Interior designers Eleanor Woodward and Emily Onagoruwa both worked on the project.

Eleanor says: 'Hannan established that colour was an essential aspect of the branding, specifically the striking terracotta and hints of green. This was then translated into the mood board and reflected throughout the final design. Regarding a "philosophy", Hannan wanted a space where patients felt at ease. Wood, stone and other natural materials supported this concept. Soft curves and arches, as well as plush furniture, helped to create a comfortable space.'

### OVERCOMING REGULATORY CHALLENGES

Designing dental practices inevitably requires meeting specific functional needs and adhering to strict regulatory standards, posing a challenge for interior designers striving to meet all demands.

Emily explains: 'CQC is a considerable challenge. Essentially, it limits finishes such as flooring, taps, handles and all surfaces/material choices in the surgery rooms. We worked hard with Hannan to ensure the choices in these spaces were practical but still in

theme with the rest of the space.

'Whilst functionality was the main factor in treatment rooms, we always returned to the design to ensure it reflected the brand – and Hannan's ideal. An example of this is the lighting. Surgeries inevitably require specific cold lighting, so to stick to the design, we added secondary warm LED lighting to soften the space.'

KTM Design always prioritises feedback throughout the design process – as the team maintains: 'It's the client's vision, after all'.

'Hannan's input played a pivotal role in the design of the surgery rooms, particularly in enhancing patient comfort. He advocated for integrating a Belmont treatment centre, which influenced the aesthetics and selection of materials, including cupboard fronts, Corian splashbacks and flooring,' Katie says.

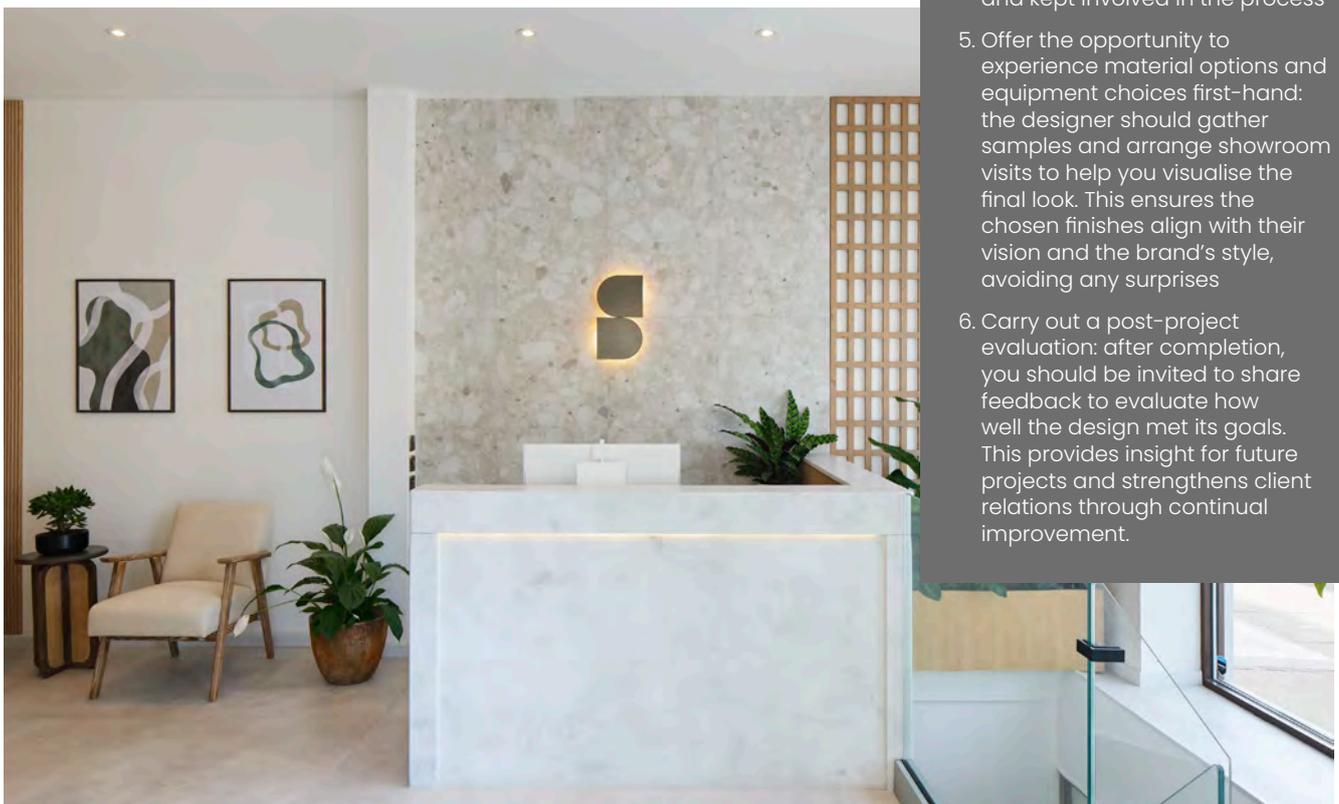
'The cream Belmont Eurus S8 treatment centre is of contemporary style. Its aesthetic and colour inspired the design of the surgery room, where we focused on lighter finishes to create a bright and airy environment. In another surgery, Hannan had installed a Belmont Cleo 2 with a folding leg-rest to optimise space. The dark green of this and the cabinetry foster a cosier treatment experience.'

## How to collaborate with designers

The KTM Design team offers insider tips to ensure your finished project is perfect.

Your design team should...

1. Embody your brand identity: your chosen design team should ensure that all process elements, including colour palettes, material choices, and décor, are rooted in your brand values
2. Balance functionality and aesthetics: regulatory requirements often impose design constraints. For example, CQC standards impact material choices. Ensure your designer is up to speed on the regulations or is prepared to rely on your knowledge and expertise
3. Place your input at the heart of the design: whether it's specific chair models or colour schemes, you should be involved in guiding design decisions
4. Ensure transparency and clear communication: any designer should be open in managing client expectations regarding budget and design adjustments. This ensures you are informed and kept involved in the process
5. Offer the opportunity to experience material options and equipment choices first-hand: the designer should gather samples and arrange showroom visits to help you visualise the final look. This ensures the chosen finishes align with their vision and the brand's style, avoiding any surprises
6. Carry out a post-project evaluation: after completion, you should be invited to share feedback to evaluate how well the design met its goals. This provides insight for future projects and strengthens client relations through continual improvement.



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Thanks to an excellent patient experience with Belmont treatment centres, Hannan plans to add to the range with a Belmont Eurus S6.

He explains: 'From both the dentist's and patient's perspective, Belmont prioritises ergonomics and pays close attention to details that make a difference in daily use. This focus aligns well with my approach to clinical care, where small details matter. These thoughtful touches make the experience of using Belmont chairs far more seamless for me as a dentist. Plus, I genuinely prefer the design of Belmont treatment centres over others – it's a style that stands out to me.'

### FUNCTIONAL FINISHES

Selecting materials and finishes for Siha Dental required subtlety and expertise to ensure they aligned with his goal of creating a welcoming and professional atmosphere.

'Hannan was explicit about his vision, which helped us immensely when selecting finishes. They had to meet his expectations and specific criteria around durability and functionality. We often brought samples to meetings, and he was also very open to going to showrooms to see the finishes in situ. This allowed us to create a comprehensive material palette that

was both practical and beautiful.'

Managing a design project within a specific timeline can be challenging. Still, the team established early on the importance of rapid feedback to allow for any necessary alterations and keep the project on track.

Eleanor says: 'Luckily for us, Hannan was very efficient with this, which allowed the process to run smoothly. Transparency is critical, and we are always careful that our proposed designs remain timely and cost-effective for the client.'

### SEAMLESS STEPS

From Hannan's perspective, being hands-on and accessible helped the team realise his dream.

He explains: 'KTM Design was fantastic throughout the design process. I was more involved than most of their clients, as I have a strong vision for how our brand should look and feel.

'Building a cohesive brand identity is essential for a new dental clinic – the logo, colour palettes, social media designs and website all work together to create a unified and recognisable brand for Siha.'

Talking through the design and build journey, he adds: 'To begin with, I shared a mood board with KTM, and they used this to craft their own, which

aligned perfectly with my vision. I worked closely with my branding designer to create brand guidelines and, through several design iterations with KTM, we honed in on a final look before construction began.'

Once the design was approved, KTM handled the product selection – everything from cushions and seating to frames, paints, and flooring – consulting with Hannan to ensure every detail was consistent with his vision.

'Though time-consuming, I'm passionate about design and aesthetics and wanted this reflected throughout the clinic. I aimed to provide patients with a unique, immersive experience from the moment they step into Siha.'

Being hands-on in finalising choices for the flooring, tiles, paint, furniture, and finishes allowed him to shape every element. KTM offered valuable guidance on where and how to source items, but he handled the fine details to achieve the desired result.

'Throughout the build process, I was meticulous, overseeing each stage to ensure everything met my standards. My priority was to ensure the patient journey remained unaffected by construction, reinforcing Siha's commitment to quality and care.

'This clinic project is our first venture as a family, and we have invested time and resources to make it special.'

Hannan's ideal for the optimum patient experience is apparent in every visual and material aspect of the practice.

From the serene colour palette to the thoughtfully chosen furnishings, each detail prioritises patient comfort and nurtures trust. Realising this vision has been a rewarding journey for the team at KTM Design and has helped Hannan bring his ideals to life. It's a collaborative approach that has evidently paid off.

# Be supported

**Practice Plan** puts a spotlight on its Relationship Support Advisors

**P**ractice Plan is renowned for its family feel, despite being part of the much larger Wesleyan Group of companies. Here we throw some light on the new roles taken on by some members of the family.

The world of dentistry is becoming ever more complex and challenging. This means Practice Plan's field-based team of Regional Support Managers (RSMs) are increasingly spending time in practices providing in-person support to teams trying to navigate the changing landscape.

To ensure the RSMs are able to provide the in-person support and advice to their practices when needed, it made sense to offer an additional head-office-based point of contact to bolster this support.

By ensuring each member of this new team was aligned to a specific number of practices, they would be able to get to know and understand each practice's needs. This would allow many queries to be more efficiently and promptly addressed and would mean practices could be more easily connected to the relevant parts of the wide range of practice management advice and guidance Practice Plan can provide.

## SUCCESSFUL PILOT

In November 2022 Practice Plan began a pilot scheme where they introduced two dedicated Relationship Support Advisors (RSAs). Their remit was to be a single named point of contact at Head Office for the practices they supported. The scheme was welcomed by both customers and colleagues alike. RSMs were able to spend more time helping their practices with their business and practice teams were able to have simple queries dealt with quickly.

Following the success of the pilot

scheme, an expanded team of eight RSAs began supporting practices in August 2023 with two additional RSAs joining the team in May 2024. All had been hand-picked by the Team Manager, Anna Bird, with the aim of complementing the work of the field-based RSMs and putting the customer at the heart of everything they do.

'Our RSMs have brilliant relationships with their practices but they can't always respond immediately as they're out on the road a lot.' Anna explains. 'We introduced the RSAs so that customers would have an additional point of contact at Head Office. Someone who was dedicated to their particular practice and who they could get hold of easily with just a phone call.'

All of the RSAs were recruited internally as their existing knowledge of plan administration helped them get up to speed with the role more quickly. Although experience of plan administration was an advantage, when Anna was interviewing the candidates, she focused primarily on their interpersonal skills and attitude.

'Although it would take longer for the team to get up and running if we had recruited externally, product knowledge can be taught,' Anna says, 'But knowing how to build relationships and speak to people in the right way are skills much harder to acquire if they aren't there naturally.'

'These were brand new roles for Practice Plan which continue to evolve as we seek to find better ways

## Anna Bird

Customer Services  
Team Manager



# THE ADVANTAGE FOR PRACTICES OF HAVING A **DEDICATED RSA** IS THEY CAN SPEAK TO SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THEIR PRACTICE SO THERE'S NO NEED TO KEEP REPEATING THEMSELVES

to help our customers,' she says. 'I needed people who were able to be flexible and adaptable as every day is different. I wanted 10 individuals, not robots.'

'Although the operational side of the business is, by necessity, process driven, the successful candidates had to be people who could strike the balance between process and procedure and understanding what's best for their practices. Which is what I got.'

## TEAM WORKING WELL

Nearly 18 months after their introduction the team: Andrea, Claire, Becca, Janet, Joseph, Frankie, Lucy, Emma, Shannon and Megan are now well-established and help practices with a variety of tasks from training, support with annual fee increases, through to helping practices with new business requirements.

Each RSA is aligned to two or three RSMs and is tasked with looking after their practices.

As Anna says, 'They are the bridge between the RSMs in the field and Head Office.'

Dental practices are encouraged to regard their RSA as their first port of call for any queries or requests for assistance as they are able to resolve most issues straight away. However, as they work closely with their allotted RSM they can escalate issues to them when necessary.

## TAILOR-MADE ROLE

Anna's background is perfectly suited to developing a team such as the RSAs. Before joining Practice Plan in 2021, she had worked for 10 years in customer services in a bank.

During this time, she discovered that building good relationships with customers was her passion. When the opportunity to head up and mould a

new team came about, she jumped at the chance.

'When I heard the proposal to establish the new team, I knew I wanted to be part of it,' she says.

'I have always been happy to challenge the status quo and leading a team dedicated to building great relationships with our customers really played to my strengths.'

## INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

'Setting up a team like this comes with considerable cost,' she admits.

'However, it's part of the wider investment programme Practice Plan

has in place to future proof the business.

'Our Sales and Marketing Director, Nigel Jones, championed the idea of the team and was very keen we went ahead as soon as possible after the success of the pilot.'

Nigel was acutely aware that, as dental practice management grows in complexity, the needs of our practices will also develop and there needed to be an additional layer of support added to ensure we continue to meet those needs to the absolute best of our ability.

'Different practices are meeting different management challenges all the time and by strengthening our understanding of each individual situation, we can continue to meet the needs of our practices in a personal and empathetic way,' he explains.

Anna is confident that introducing the new team will help achieve this objective. 'Our aim is to help our customers' interactions with us to be as easy and pleasant as possible,' she says. 'The advantage for practices of having a dedicated RSA is they can speak to someone who knows their practice so there's no need to keep repeating themselves.'

'This means they can still have a very personal service despite dealing with Head Office.'

'Unlike with a conventional customer services team, our RSAs go to some of our events such as the Workshop Tour, Regional events and various dentistry shows and occasionally accompany their RSMs on visits. So, they get the opportunity to actually meet some of the practice teams.'

'It's still early days, but they are proving to be a great help to our dental practices and most important, they're building those (hopefully) long-term relationships with their dental practice teams.'

# Celebrating 30 years!

This year, Practice Plan celebrates 30 years of welcoming practices into the family, helping them to grow profitable businesses through the introduction of practice-branded membership plans. So, if you're looking to switch provider or are considering a full or partial move away from the NHS and would like a provider who will hold your hand through the process whilst moving at a pace that's right for you, why not start the conversation with Practice Plan, on 01691 684165, or for more information visit the Practice Plan website: [www.practiceplan.co.uk](http://www.practiceplan.co.uk)

**Practiceplan**  
The business of dentistry

Part of the **WESLEYAN** Group

# Protect yourself with garden leave

**Adam Bernstein** explains the benefits of using garden leave clauses to cultivate low-risk employment contracts

**D**ental practices are inherently people-oriented businesses that provide clinical services while maintaining personal relationships with patients. While such personal relationships engender loyalty, they're a business weakness in that when an employee leaves, some patients may be inclined to follow.

Likewise, when an employee departs they also take with them information not only about patients, but also pricing, processes and key suppliers. Fundamentally, a departing employee can cause a dental practice harm.

One solution is a term in employee contracts known as garden leave. This gives an employer the right to require employees to work their notice period at home.

Alex Kleanthous, a consultant and employment solicitor in the dispute resolution and commercial litigation team of Gannons, knows from experience that 'employers use these clauses to distance an employee from patients and colleagues to minimise the risk of poaching when the employee actually leaves'. They're also used in conjunction with restrictive covenants.

## WHEN IS GARDEN LEAVE NEEDED?

Clearly the risks are higher with key employees, and this is why garden leave clauses are typically found in a senior employee's or director's employment contract.

Alex says: 'The clause entitles the employer, after notice has been given by either party, to require the employee to stay at home and not work or contact colleagues, clients and suppliers.'

Garden leave clauses are not just important for senior employees. They are useful where any employee has valuable and transferable relationships – practice managers and dentists being good examples.

Utilising garden leave can protect client relationships and reduce the risk of data theft or misuse in the lead up to the employee's departure.

Garden leave clauses can prohibit working within a certain distance of the practice, or from soliciting patients,

## Advantages of garden leave

- The employee continues to owe all their contractual duties to the employer, including implied terms such as the duty of trust and confidence
- It can allow for a useful handover period
- A paid period of non-competition is more attractive to the employee than unpaid.

## Disadvantages of garden leave

- The employer is obligated to continue paying the employee
- The employer must continue providing any contractual benefits unless explicitly stated in the employment contract.



**Adam Bernstein**

Adam is director of Abfeatures and a business-to-business literary agent.

for a defined period. Alex notes that there are 'issues of enforceability' here. However, the mandate not to work for another employer can be enforced if the employee tries to break it.

### LEGAL POWER

It should also be noted that there is no real disadvantage to having the garden leave clause in the contract – it will always be up to the employer whether to implement it.

Remember that employees have a right to work. It's for this reason that, in the absence of the garden leave clause, an employer might not legally be able to place an employee on garden leave.

Alex says: 'Isolating an employee or failing to provide them with work, without the express power, could be regarded as a breach of contract depending on the circumstances. This would entitle the employee to resign and claim constructive dismissal on account of the employer's breach of contract.'

Worryingly for employers, this can enable the employee to avoid any restrictive covenants because of the breach of contract.

## GARDEN LEAVE IS VALUABLE WHEN COMBINED WITH RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS THAT APPLY POST- DEPARTURE

### RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

As noted earlier, garden leave clauses are often used in tandem with restrictive covenants. And the reason is simple: employees acquire confidential information.

Alex has seen employees tempted to use this information after their employment has terminated, either in business for themselves or to further the interests of their new employer who may be a competitor.

It's because of this that garden leave is valuable when combined with restrictive covenants that apply post-departure. Further, the lack of comprehensive protection in employment contracts can make it more difficult to sell a business.

### BREACHES OF GARDEN LEAVE

With the landscape set out, there's an obvious question: what happens if an employee refuses to comply with garden leave?

Garden leave clauses can be enforced with a court injunction, often preceded by a cease-and-desist letter. However, this is an expensive solution.

Alex adds: 'A court is highly likely to enforce a contractual garden leave clause whereas a restrictive covenant is usually much more arguable.'

It's a fact of life that employees rarely stay in post forever. Considering the value a dental practice places on both the information it holds and the relationships it has with patients, thought needs to be given to protecting its information on employee departure.



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# Navigating the dental practice market

It's never too early to start preparing your dental practice for sale.  
**Joel Mannix** explores the key considerations for practice owners

**W**hile the transactional market in 2024 saw fewer major deals to corporate operators, this shift has opened exciting opportunities for independent and first-time buyers. However, we fully anticipate that well-capitalised corporate buyers and established dental groups will return to the market in 2025, with a renewed appetite to acquire profitable, associate-led practices, in good trading locations – the criteria will be as strict as it has always been.

We also expect the market to continue to favour sellers who have taken the time to prepare and adapt their practices to align with these evolving buyer preferences.

## PREPARATION IS KEY

It's never too early to start preparing your dental practice for sale, even if the transaction is years away. A well-prepared practice often achieves a higher value and more favourable sale terms, and early planning allows owners to address operational inefficiencies, optimise financial performance, and ensure that all aspects of the business are running smoothly. This preparation doesn't just benefit a potential sale, it often enhances the day-to-day functioning of the practice.

## VALUATION AND FINANCIAL READINESS

A market appraisal or formal valuation will provide a clear understanding of your practice's worth through an assessment of how it operates, its

potential for growth, and its appeal to different types of buyers. Practices with strong financial records, modern equipment, and a solid patient base typically command higher values so it's essential to keep financial records up-to-date, manage rising costs effectively, and ensure the practice operates at peak profitability. Additionally, understanding how different factors impact valuations – such as NHS contracts versus private revenue streams – can help owners make decisions about their long-term strategy.

## BUYER EXPECTATIONS

Buyers continue to seek stable practices, often prioritising those with a strong and loyal team, robust operational and financial systems, and growth opportunities. Focusing on these areas before going to market can make the practice more appealing and increase competitive interest.

## NAVIGATING THE SALE PROCESS

Whatever your reason for selling, it's important to approach the process thoughtfully:

- Understand what you want from the sale, whether it's maximising financial value, ensuring continuity for staff and patients, or minimising your post-sale involvement
- Engage experienced dental accountants, solicitors, and brokers who can provide valuable guidance and support
- Many buyers prefer a gradual handover, particularly when the seller plays a key role in the practice's operations. Being open to this can make it more attractive and lead to better terms.

## EMERGING TRENDS

Tools like AI-assisted diagnostics, virtual consultations, and digital treatment planning are becoming essential for both clinical efficiency and patient engagement. Practices that invest in these technologies are better positioned to meet the expectations of patients and prospective buyers.

Workforce dynamics are also shifting. Practices with strong associate-led models and well-trained teams are increasingly in demand as they present lower risks for buyers compared with owner-dependent practices.

## NHS AND PRIVATE INCOME

A key consideration for many practices is the balance between NHS and private revenue streams. While NHS contracts provide a stable foundation, private revenue offers opportunities for growth and independence from government funding pressures.

Practices that have diversified their income streams tend to attract a broader range of buyers and achieve higher valuations.

## A CONSULTATIVE APPROACH

Selling a dental practice is not just a transactional process – it's a strategic decision that requires careful consideration of market conditions, buyer trends, and personal goals.

With thorough preparation, aligning with professional advisers, and adapting to emerging market dynamics, practice owners can achieve a successful outcome.

*For a confidential discussion about your sale options, email [joel.mannix@christie.com](mailto:joel.mannix@christie.com) or call 07764 241 691.*



**Joel Mannix**

Joel is head of dental at Christie & Co.



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# Defining a strong brand

**Kunal Thakker** delves into the importance of developing a clear brand for squat practices

**I**n dentistry, defining your brand strategy is crucial. Knowing and having a solid brand that consumers, patients and customers can connect to is vital. Having a strong brand that patients know has been one of the biggest elements behind Tooth Club's success. We have made sure that we have got a bold, solid brand that people can connect to.

It is all about balance. We wanted Tooth Club clinics, including the branding, to be accessible for everyone. We didn't go super high-end and niche because we felt that it would restrict certain patients. But equally, our practices look really nice – they're warm, welcoming and appeal to the mass market. And that's what our brand tries to do, bring in volume, but high-end volume.

## GET THE TEAM ON BOARD

When you come into a Tooth Club clinic, it smells good, it looks good and there's a fantastic team to welcome you. This is important, because you could have the prettiest looking practice, but if your team doesn't represent your brand or follow your brand values, it destroys the brand altogether.

Having a clear mission, vision and core values defined is really important to the success of your dental practice. The team must know the core values and the culture of the business.

The Tooth Club team knows the mission we're on: we want to disrupt dentistry – we want to do dentistry very differently. And because every team

member has bought into that, because they know what that really means, they can do their roles to help us achieve our mission.

## BE DIFFERENT

Being different has been important to the Tooth Club strategy and our squat practices. Having our unique selling point (USP), knowing that we're going to do dentistry differently for patients, and knowing that when they come into our practices, we're going to put them at the heart of everything we do, has been crucial.

If you're opening a squat practice, think about what's going to make your practice different. Why is the patient going to come to you and not the practice next door? This is really important on your squat journey, so make sure you have defined that.

## FIND CONNECTION

The Tooth Club branding is really strong. We chose branding that would connect with the public.

As people walk past our clinics, they are going to see the strong branding, the neon lights and the little catchphrases – all things that are going to make people stop and look.

And when they stop and look, they realise we're a dental practice, and then the next time they need dental care, guess where they're going to come? The concept in Tooth Club practices is to be bold. On our wall, we have got catchphrases that people can connect with. It's about finding a balance of not just a pretty looking wall, but things that people can connect with.



**Kunal Thakker**

Kunal is founder and CEO of Tooth Club.

# The rules of engagement

**Manrina Rhode** offers six tips to build your brand and boost patient engagement using social media

**I**n today's digital age, social media has transformed from a mere networking platform to a powerful tool for personal branding, patient engagement and practice growth.

As a cosmetic dentist, leveraging social media is not just about showcasing beautiful smiles – it's about building trust, sharing expertise, and connecting with patients on a personal level.

Here, I'm sharing key social media strategies and insights that have helped me grow my own presence and that I teach in my mentorship programme.

## BE AUTHENTIC

**1** Patients are not only looking for clinical expertise – they're looking for someone they can relate to and trust. Share your journey into dentistry, why you love what you do and the values that drive your practice. Authenticity resonates deeply with followers and can set you apart from others in your field.

Use Instagram Stories, for example, to give a behind-the-scenes look into your day, showing the human side of your practice. Patients appreciate transparency and will be more inclined to connect with someone they feel they know even before stepping into the clinic.



### Manrina Rhode

Manrina is principal of DRMR Clinic in Knightsbridge. She also runs DRMR Academy with a mentorship programme, online course and in-person course on porcelain veneers.

## 2 EDUCATION FIRST

One of the most powerful ways to use social media is to educate. Patients are hungry for knowledge, especially when it comes to understanding the treatments you offer and how they can benefit them.

Share informative posts, explainer videos and before-and-after photos that highlight your work and the process behind it. This doesn't just help build trust; it positions you as an authority in cosmetic dentistry. When patients feel educated, they're more likely to approach you with confidence.

In my mentorship programme, we cover how to make educational content accessible, visually engaging and compliant with regulatory standards. This ensures that while you're providing valuable information, you're also safeguarding your reputation and adhering to ethical guidelines.

## 3 CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Just like in real-life relationships, online connections require consistency. Posting regularly and interacting with followers demonstrates your commitment to your patients and your field.

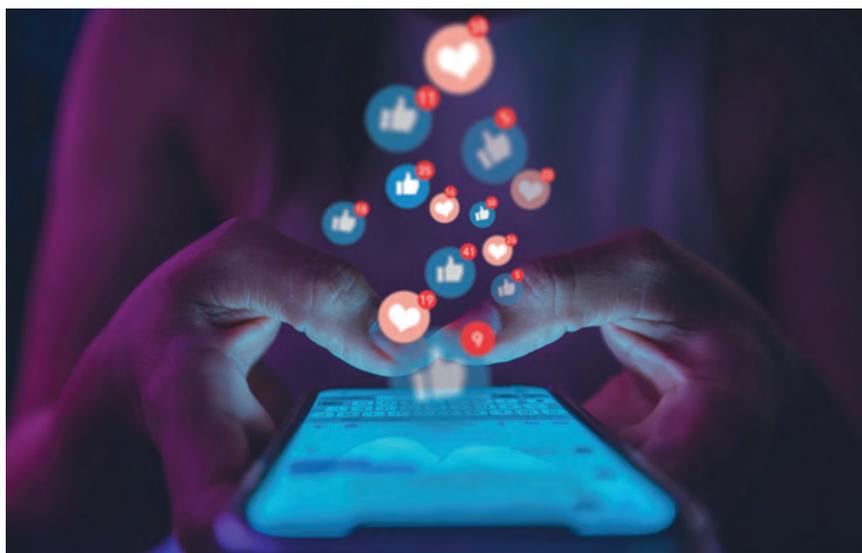
Aim to post a balanced mix of content: educational posts, patient testimonials, Q&A sessions, and updates from your practice.

Social media algorithms favour consistent posting, and so do your followers. When you show up regularly, you keep your audience engaged and build a following that looks forward to your content.

## 4 OFFER PROOF

There's nothing more powerful than social proof. Patients who have had life-changing experiences at your clinic are often more than happy to share their stories.

Showcase testimonials, patient



reviews and before and after images that highlight your work and the impact it has on people's lives. Make sure you have signed consent for any images or stories you share – patients will appreciate your professionalism and care.

Before and after photos are especially effective in cosmetic dentistry, as they visually demonstrate your expertise and the results patients can expect.

I often encourage my mentees to invest time in capturing high-quality images of their work, as these can be some of the most engaging and impactful pieces of content on social media.

## 5 EMBRACE VIDEO CONTENT

Video content has become a game-changer on social media, allowing dentists to connect with patients in a more engaging way. Live Q&A sessions, short tutorials or patient walkthroughs can demystify treatments, making them less intimidating for patients.

Video also allows your personality to shine through, which can be

instrumental in building trust and rapport before patients even step foot inside your clinic.

For those in my mentorship programme, we dive into practical strategies for creating video content that resonates with your audience, even if you're new to being on camera. From understanding lighting and editing to structuring your message, we cover everything you need to make video content work for you.

## 6 USE ANALYTICS

A successful social media strategy is one that's adaptable. Pay attention to your analytics to see what

content resonates most with your audience. Which posts get the most engagement? What topics are your followers most interested in?

By tracking your performance, you can refine your strategy over time, ensuring that you're meeting your audience's needs while staying true to your brand.

## WHY MENTORSHIP MATTERS

Building a social media presence in dentistry is not without its challenges. There's a lot to consider, from maintaining professionalism and adhering to guidelines to creating engaging content that genuinely connects with patients.

That's why I've made social media training a core part of my mentorship programme. I want to help dentists overcome their hesitations, refine their approach and unlock the potential that social media offers for their practice.

*For more information about Manrina's mentorship programme, visit [www.drmlondon.co.uk/courses](http://www.drmlondon.co.uk/courses).*

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOT JUST ABOUT SHOWCASING BEAUTIFUL SMILES – IT'S ABOUT BUILDING TRUST, SHARING EXPERTISE, AND CONNECTING WITH PATIENTS

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*\*Gradual-Triplex-Technology: zirconia already provided with colour, translucency and flexural strength gradients during the production process. This ensures a natural-looking restoration with a highly translucent incisal edge and an extremely high flexural strength at the tooth neck.*

# Running a successful dental practice: top tips

Alex McWhirter discusses how to run a smooth and successful dental practice that thrives

**R**unning a dental practice smoothly and successfully is all about balancing efficient systems with compassionate leadership.

I've always believed that attention to detail and a supportive team culture can make a real difference in patient care.

Being awarded Practice Manager of the Year at the Dentistry Awards 2024 is something I'm incredibly proud of, and I'm grateful for the recognition of my approach to practice management.

Here, I'm excited to share some of my top tips for creating an environment where both patients and the team feel valued and motivated. These strategies have helped our practice thrive, and I hope they are useful for others, too.

## 1 PROCESS, PROTOCOL, PROCEDURE

Every smooth-running practice needs clear, actionable processes and protocols. From the moment patients walk in the door to the completion of their care, processes should guide everyone on the team through their roles.

Start with the essentials: scheduling, patient check-in, and billing, and build efficient workflows around them.

Protocols give clarity and consistency, allowing team members to deliver a seamless patient experience, even in high-stress situations.

Regularly reviewing and refining these processes is vital, ensuring they remain up-to-date and responsive to the team's needs and patient expectations.

## 2 DIRECTION AND PURPOSE

Defining a clear direction and purpose keeps everyone aligned and motivated. With a shared mission, team members understand their goals and how their efforts contribute to the practice's success.

Set measurable, meaningful objectives, both for the long-term and for short-term wins. For instance, if patient retention is a goal, discuss strategies to make every patient feel valued.

Regular meetings help celebrate progress and refine goals, keeping everyone engaged. A clear purpose unites the team and makes each individual feel a valued part of a shared journey.

## 3 ADAPT AROUND YOUR TEAM

Your team's strengths and skills are the backbone of the practice, so it's essential to work with these attributes, not against them.

Identify each member's unique abilities – whether it's a knack for calming anxious patients or strong organisational skills – and position them accordingly.

Flexibility is key; if one team member shines at specific tasks, give them room to lead in those areas. Adapting to your team's talents fosters an environment where each person feels empowered, helping them contribute their best and enhancing overall productivity.

*Leading with clarity, compassion and consistency*

1. Create clear, actionable processes and protocols
2. Define a clear direction and purpose
3. Identify each member's abilities
4. Trust your team, and delegate!
5. Keep a finger on the pulse of each area of the practice
6. Regularly review workflows, patient feedback and team insights
7. Leverage external expertise, such as financial advisers, marketing professionals or IT specialists
8. Set clear boundaries and identify your own burnout point
9. Be authentic and have a compassionate, 'human-first' approach
10. Stay informed and up to date through continuous learning.



Alex McWhirter

Alex is practice manager of North Cardiff Dental & Implants.

## 4 DELEGATE

Delegation is crucial in avoiding burnout and ensuring that every team member can play an active role in the practice's success.

As tempting as it may be to stay hands-on with everything, trusting others to manage certain responsibilities enables growth – for both the team and yourself. Start with administrative tasks or patient follow-ups, where delegation won't compromise quality.

This approach encourages ownership among team members and shows them you trust their skills. In the long run, it ensures continuity and a well-rounded team that can keep the practice thriving, even when you're not there.

## 5 KNOW YOUR PRACTICE INSIDE OUT

A deep understanding of your practice's operations is essential for effective management. From patient demographics to the details of dental procedures, knowing these elements helps you make better decisions and foresee challenges before they arise.

Regularly connecting with team members to understand their roles and any challenges they face helps you anticipate needs, resolve issues and make informed decisions.

By keeping a finger on the pulse of each area of the practice, from patient care to administrative workflows, you can lead with insight and make adjustments that benefit both staff and patients.

This proactive approach shows your team that you genuinely understand and support their work.

## 6 CONTINUALLY PERFECT AND REVIEW

The dental industry is always evolving, and so should your practice. Regular reviews of workflows, patient feedback, and team insights can reveal valuable areas for improvement.

Encourage your team to suggest adjustments to procedures that could enhance efficiency or patient satisfaction.

When everyone feels comfortable contributing, the practice benefits from diverse perspectives, staying competitive and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.



# MANAGING A DENTAL PRACTICE IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST THE LOGISTICS; IT'S ABOUT CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BOTH PATIENTS AND STAFF FEEL VALUED, SUPPORTED AND MOTIVATED

## 7 LET THE EXPERTS HELP YOU

Don't be afraid to bring in external expertise when needed. Whether it's consulting with financial advisers, marketing professionals, or IT specialists, these experts can streamline operations and introduce fresh insights.

Leveraging outside support not only saves time but also allows the practice to maintain high standards by letting team members focus on what they do best: patient care.

Expert advice helps you keep operations sharp and provides your team with resources to thrive.

## 8 KNOW HOW (AND WHEN) TO SWITCH OFF

Both the practice manager and the team need clear boundaries to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

I recommend setting dedicated 'off' times that apply to everyone, using work-exclusive communication channels like Slack instead of personal ones such as Whatsapp. Make sure notifications switch off automatically outside of working hours to respect everyone's personal time.

Identifying your own burnout point and planning leave accordingly is crucial, as well. Showing respect for personal time not only prevents burnout but also allows everyone to come back recharged, prepared to deliver high-quality care.

## 9 DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE HUMAN

A compassionate, 'human-first' approach goes a long way in building rapport with both patients and team members. Dental visits can be intimidating for patients, and showing empathy helps them feel at ease.

Similarly, your team benefits from a supportive atmosphere. Showing emotion doesn't make you seem weak; in fact, it demonstrates strength, reinforcing trust and approachability. When your team sees that you're human too, it creates a culture of openness and respect. Authenticity – whether through admitting you don't have all the answers or appreciating hard work – resonates and strengthens relationships all around.

## 10 NEVER STOP LEARNING

Continuous learning is vital in the ever-evolving field of dentistry. Stay informed, whether through courses, conferences or peer networking.

When you embrace ongoing education, you set a strong example for the team and equip yourself with new insights to benefit the practice.

Share updates with the team, fostering a collective commitment to growth and improvement. By staying adaptable and encouraging knowledge sharing, you inspire a practice culture that's resilient, innovative and always striving for excellence.

## MORE THAN JUST LOGISTICS

These tips are designed to help other practice managers lead with clarity, compassion and consistency.

Managing a dental practice is about more than just the logistics; it's about creating an environment where both patients and staff feel valued, supported and motivated.

I hope these insights inspire others to build practices that thrive on the foundation of strong leadership and empathetic care.

# Bullying in the dental practice

**Sarah Buxton** details how to handle bullying in the workplace

**I** talk a lot about the importance of employee wellbeing, and I always emphasise how nuanced and multifaceted an issue this can be. It's a broad-brush term that encapsulates happiness, physical and mental health, and comfort.

Wellbeing at work is often overlooked by managers and a person may be suffering at work without complaint. This is especially true of bullying in the workplace.

## IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS AN EMPLOYER TO SPOT THE SIGNS AND ENSURE YOU HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE

Bullying doesn't just refer to physical violence; it can be emotional, or psychological too. It can be an extremely traumatising experience for the individual involved. If other team members are aware of bullying taking place, it can also have an effect on their wellbeing and effect morale.

If an employee is experiencing bullying in the workplace, they may not approach you about the issues. Therefore, it's your responsibility as an employer to spot the signs and ensure you have policies in place to support any members of staff who may be affected.



**Sarah Buxton**

Sarah is director at Buxton Coates Solicitors, a full-service independent law firm providing bespoke legal solutions to the dental profession.

### SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES

If you don't have one already, you should create an anti-bullying and harassment policy to support your employees.

This should outline how you will initially spot the problem, the steps you'll take if an employee discloses information about the bullying, how you will support them, and if you might refer them to receive specialist support.

It will also need to set out the consequences for the perpetrator. For example, bullying would be deemed to be gross misconduct and therefore it would be proportionate to dismiss/terminate a team member who was found to be bullying another team member.

### COME FORWARDS

Crucially, all your employees should be aware of this workplace policy. If they know support is there, they may be more inclined to come forward and speak out about any bullying.

If bullying continues, the employee or other team members will more than likely leave the practice, and you may end up losing good team members.

Seek specialist advice if you need help shaping policies or are looking for guidance on this topic. While you are focusing on the wellbeing of your team, it's a good opportunity to also consider numerous other policies such as domestic abuse, stillbirth and neonatal loss, stress at work, menopause and gender identity.

## Tackling bullying

Unison has defined workplace bullying as persistent offensive, intimidating, humiliating behaviour, which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees.

While bullying is generally carried out face-to-face, it can also occur in writing, by telephone, text messaging, email and on social media.

Examples of bullying behaviour include:

- Ignoring views and opinions
- Withholding information which can affect a worker's performance
- Setting unmanageable deadlines or workloads
- Humiliating staff in front of others
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone by picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker with constant

# A new path to forge

Enrico Steger shares a message for the new year

**A** new year is like a blank canvas, ready to be filled with colours, shapes, and ideas. It gives us the chance to start anew, to dream, and to transcend ourselves. And yet, as pure as this beginning may seem, it is marked by our experiences, our insights, and our achievements.

Looking back, we realise it wasn't only our successes that pushed us forward, but also the challenges from which we have learnt. They are

not barriers, but signposts – small life lessons that teach us how to grow. Every experience shapes our thoughts and actions, preparing us to walk new paths with courage and determination.

#### A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

The year ahead is rich with new opportunities and possibilities. Every challenge holds a lesson that makes us stronger, each opportunity is an inspiration to grow. We do not walk this

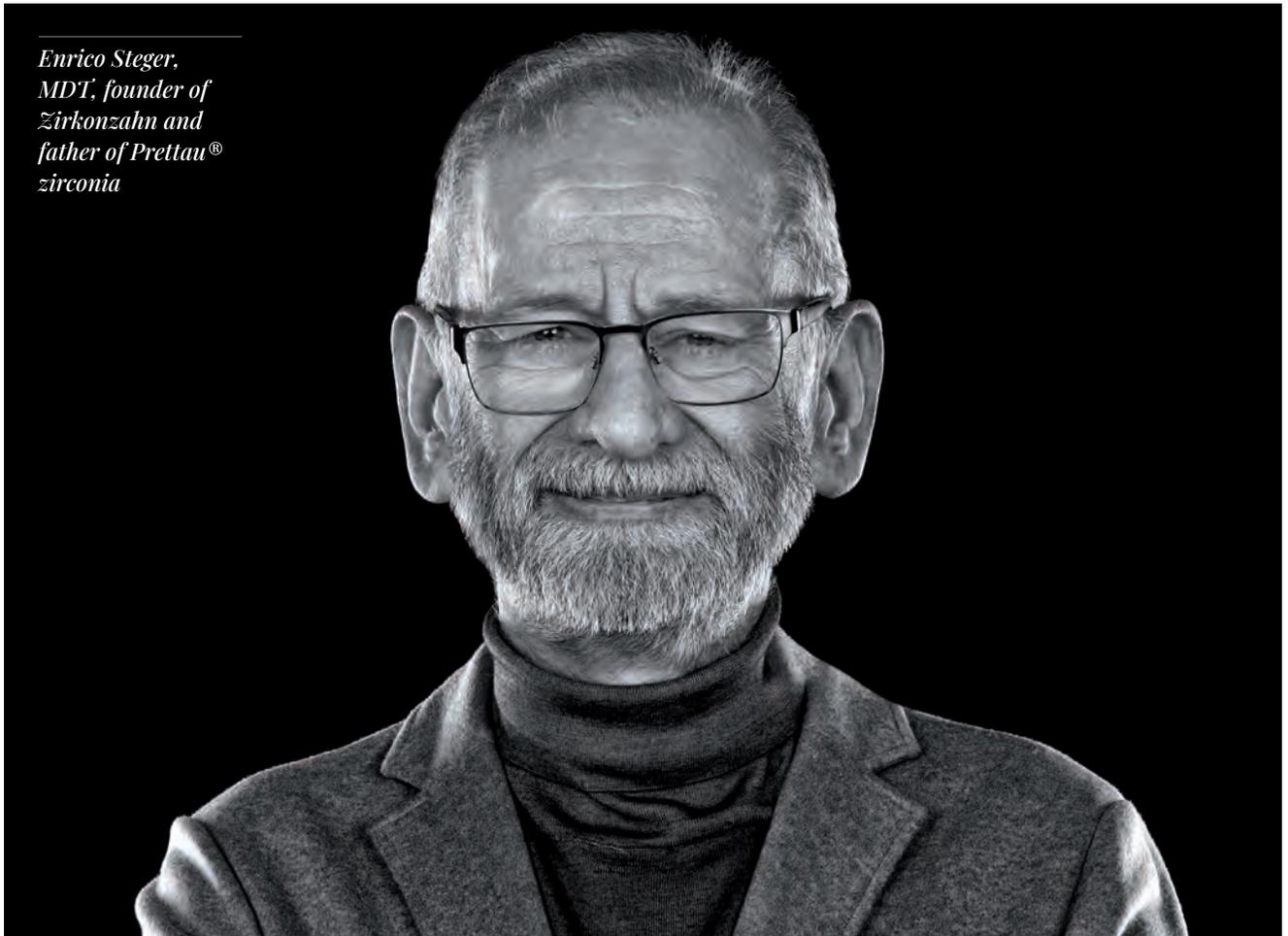
path alone, but together, driven by the will to work with passion, persistence, and creativity to leave an indelible mark.

May the coming year bring us the courage to explore the unknown and the patience to face trials with determination.

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*Human Zirconium Technology*

*Enrico Steger,  
MDT, founder of  
Zirkonzahn and  
father of Prettau®  
zirconia*



# Achieving goals with self-leadership

Sarika Shah kicks off a new series on leadership by exploring self-leadership and why it's important in dentistry

**S**elf-leadership refers to the ability to influence and direct one's own actions and behaviours towards achieving personal and professional goals. It involves self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, goal-setting, and personal accountability.

In the context of dentistry, there are several reasons why self-leadership is particularly important, which I'd like to explore in further depth in this article.

## 1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Self-leadership empowers dental clinicians to take charge of their own learning and development. By setting specific professional goals, such as obtaining certifications in advanced procedures or mastering new technologies, dentists can continually enhance their expertise.

Engaging in self-directed learning – such as attending workshops, pursuing advanced degrees, or engaging in online courses – enables them to remain current in an ever-evolving field.

This proactive approach not only enhances their skills but also increases their confidence and competence when treating patients.



**Sarika Shah**

Sarika is the founder and owner of Platinum Dental Care in London. She is an Invisalign and cosmetic dentist. She created the leadership course, Flourish as a Female in Dentistry for women in dentistry. For more details, visit [www.flourishasafemale.com](http://www.flourishasafemale.com).

## 2 PATIENT CARE

Self-leadership directly impacts the quality of care that dental clinicians provide. By cultivating self-awareness, dentists can better understand their own biases, unique strengths, and areas for improvement. This awareness allows them to approach patient care more empathetically, recognising when a patient may be anxious or needs individualised attention.

Establishing personal benchmarks – for instance, aiming for a high-quality patient centred care and effective communication – motivates dental clinicians to enhance their interaction and treatment quality, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and richer relationships with their patients and team.

This will also improve efficiency and productivity as well as enhance their reputation, which will benefit themselves and the practice.

## 3 STRESS MANAGEMENT

The dental profession is known for its high-stress environment, given the demands of patient expectations, clinical outcomes, and business management. Self-leadership equips dental clinicians and practice owners with the skills to manage stress effectively.

By employing strategies such as mindfulness, setting boundaries, and prioritising self-care, dentists can mitigate burnout and maintain a healthier work-life balance.

Regular self-reflection and assessment of their emotional wellbeing can help them recognise signs of stress early and take corrective actions, by using specific strategies, to protect their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

## 4 TEAM LEADERSHIP

A successful dental practice often relies on a cohesive team. Self-leadership fosters essential leadership traits, such as strong communication skills, empathy, and conflict resolution abilities.

Clinicians and practice owners who practise self-leadership are more likely to inspire and motivate their team members, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute.

By modelling accountability and collaboration, dentists can build trust and foster a positive workplace culture, leading to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction among staff.

**CLINICIANS AND PRACTICE OWNERS WHO PRACTISE SELF-LEADERSHIP ARE MORE LIKELY TO INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE THEIR TEAM MEMBERS**



## SELF-LEADERSHIP IS A VITAL SKILL SET FOR DENTISTS THAT INFLUENCES EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES

### 5 GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Setting and achieving goals is fundamental in any profession. In dentistry, goals may range from increasing patient flow to enhancing treatment protocols and uptakes, or improving financial performance.

Self-leadership encourages dentists to create specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART) goals and develop action plans to achieve them.

By breaking larger goals into manageable steps and regularly evaluating progress, dentists can maintain motivation and ensure accountability, which leads to tangible improvements in their practice.

### 6 ADAPTABILITY

Rapid advances in technology, changing regulations, and shifts in patient expectations are prominent in the dental field.

Self-leadership instils a growth mindset, enabling dental clinicians to be more adaptable and open to change. By recognising the need for flexibility and staying informed about industry trends, clinicians can quickly adopt new practices or technologies

that enhance patient care. This adaptability not only benefits their professional growth but also helps maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

In addition, instead of avoiding challenges, those with a growth mindset actively seek them out. They view challenges as a way to push their boundaries and enhance their abilities and build resilience.

### CONCLUSION

Self-leadership is a vital skill set for dentists that influences every aspect of their professional lives. It enables them to develop into lifelong learners, provide exceptional patient care, lead effectively within their teams, manage stress efficiently, achieve meaningful goals, and remain adaptable to change.

Cultivating these skills fosters not only personal satisfaction and professional success but also contributes to a thriving practice and better patient outcomes. This multifaceted approach to self-leadership ultimately enhances the overall quality and effectiveness of dental care.

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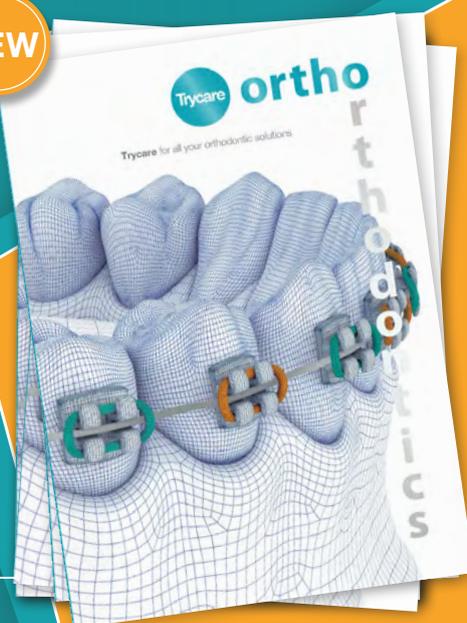
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# Keeping it clean

**Nadine Bellamy-Thomas** considers whether modern dental practices really need to invest in a washer disinfector

**M**odern dentistry is evolving. Today, many dental businesses are exploring new revenue streams by expanding their services to include facial aesthetics, such as Botox injections and dermal fillers, as well as cosmetic dentistry procedures like tooth whitening, dental bonding, and veneers.

This trend shows no signs of slowing down. According to recent research, one third of those under 35 have had a cosmetic dental procedure or treatment in the last 12 months, spending an average of £3,677 (Zargaran et al, 2023).

With more and more people turning to their dentists to achieve a perfect, aesthetically pleasing smile, there is a greater opportunity for practices to expand their services and offerings, enhance patient satisfaction, and boost revenue.



**Nadine Bellamy-Thomas**

Nadine is national account manager of decontamination and medical at Miele Professional and has 20 years of experience working within technical and medical industries.

While tapping into the growing demand for cosmetic treatments is a great opportunity for dental businesses to grow and develop, it isn't without its risks. Adding new services requires maintaining excellent hygiene to prevent the risk of infection to patients.

Investing in commercial equipment such as washer disinfectors can provide the appropriate solution by supporting hygiene requirements and improving efficiencies. However, since they are not yet a legal requirement in all dental businesses throughout the UK, practices debate their value and whether they can justify the expense of additional equipment.

So, in this article, I want to explore if modern dental practices really need washer disinfectors.

## UPHOLDING HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS

In healthcare settings, such as dentistry, upholding high hygiene standards and preventing infection is essential for creating a safe environment for both staff and

patients, as well as meeting the HTM 01-05 guidelines.

Currently, in England and Wales, dental practices are not required to have washer disinfectors, only sterilisers such as autoclaves.

For dental practices that haven't invested in a washer disinfector yet, autoclaves provide a method of sterilising instruments after being cleaned in an ultrasonic bath.

However, as practices expect to get busier with their growing offerings, any margins of error, such as blood-borne pathogens and microorganisms left on instruments, can increase the likelihood of cross-contamination and pose dangerous health risks to patients.

Therefore, extra steps must be taken to uphold the highest levels of hygiene.

Washer disinfectors eliminate any fears by removing debris and preventing staff from injuring themselves while manually cleaning the instruments, further reducing the possibility of cross-contamination.



## **WASHER DISINFECTORS ELIMINATE ANY FEARS BY REMOVING DEBRIS AND PREVENTING STAFF FROM INJURING THEMSELVES WHILE MANUALLY CLEANING THE INSTRUMENTS**

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As we look towards the future, hygiene requirements within the industry may change, meaning it may be mandatory to implement washer disinfectors. For businesses that have already introduced washer disinfectors to their practice, they will be seen as forward-thinking and committed to maintaining high standards by the industry, staff and patients alike.

By embracing this technology, practices demonstrate their dedication to safety and efficiency.

Furthermore, investing in washer disinfectors will become more beneficial as they are adaptable to a wide range of instruments; meaning dental practices would benefit in the long-term as their services expand.

### **MAINTAINING YOUR REPUTATION**

In this day and age, maintaining your business's reputation is essential for attracting and retaining customers and ensuring a steady flow of revenue.

Several negative online reviews can significantly harm a business' reputation, especially with the increased focus on hygiene in healthcare settings. According to findings published within a Forbes article, 94% of customers will avoid businesses with negative reviews (Otar, 2019).

By failing to invest in the correct equipment for your practice, businesses can risk losing the trust and credibility with patients, staff, and the broader community.

To safeguard their image and uphold the best quality service to their patients, dental practices should seek to invest in commercial machinery that upholds the highest standards of hygiene, such as a washer disinfectant.

What's more, should an allegation or complaint be made against the practice regarding infection control or hygiene standards, washer disinfectors provide crucial traceability in the form of detailed digital records and printed reports that demonstrate your dental practice has consistently followed proper cleaning protocols.

### **REDUCING OVERHEAD COSTS AND SPACE**

Other concerns that are typically raised when it comes to investing in equipment such as washer disinfectors are the costs and space required.

Implementing commercial machinery doesn't have to be a significant investment for businesses.

Many suppliers now provide leasing packages, meaning dental practices can have easier access to premium, commercial equipment without a large upfront cost.

Additionally, machinery has been developed to reduce the amount of water, chemicals, and energy necessary for use, reducing overhead costs and providing an eco-friendly and economical solution for your business.

Practices also no longer need to compromise on space, as washer disinfectors come in various sizes, supporting businesses of all sizes.

### **AN ESSENTIAL INVESTMENT**

For modern dental practices aiming to meet the highest quality standards and exceed patient expectations, investing in a washer disinfectant is essential as your services and patient base continue to grow.

This investment reduces margins of error and upholds the highest standards of hygiene, providing ultimate peace of mind for both patients and staff and future-proofing your business.

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# Breaking *barriers*

**Rachel Derby** talks lockdown parenting, leadership and the importance of leaving a legacy

Words Julie Bissett

**D**entistry has historically presented steep challenges for women in leadership, with female representation in top roles still needing to catch up. Yet, Rachel Derby has made a lasting impact, recently completing her term as president of the British Association of Private Dentistry (BAPD).

BAPD was born from a unique crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic when dentists grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of national advocacy for private practices. Since then, it has evolved into a vital voice for the sector, offering invaluable guidance to professionals navigating the hurdles of private dentistry.

For Rachel, who co-founded Chapel Dental in the Buckinghamshire village of Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, with her husband Neil Evans, effective communication has been at the heart of her leadership and success.

Her dual roles – clinical director of her practice and past president of the BAPD – complemented each other, reflecting shared values and a dedication to the profession.

At Chapel Dental, her approach is patient-centred, ensuring she listens closely to tailor treatments to patients' needs.

When she was president, her focus on collaboration and dialogue defined her leadership style. Both roles demanded significant dedication. Add into the mix her young daughter, Niamh, born just before the pandemic, it makes for a whirlwind of responsibilities.



*Award winners! Rachel Derby and Neil Evans won Practice Principal South at the Private Dentistry Awards 2024*

## SPOTLIGHT

But if you think it's chaotic, think again. Rachel, who's won numerous dental awards, has proven she's a force to be reckoned with since her days as the University of Manchester's Undergraduate Student of the Year in 2010.

She approaches every challenge with tenacity and precision. Focused on creating a foundation of strength, in 2017, she transitioned fully into private practice, having practised in NHS dentistry. By 2020, she had completed an MSc in endodontics, driven by a desire for greater autonomy and the ability to shape her own professional environment.

### FINDING THE WHY

When we speak, Rachel has just dropped Niamh off for her first day of school – a milestone for any parent. She is composed, even joking about their final summer day spent together, baking amidst clouds of icing sugar. That sugar rush may have, in part, powered Niamh's joyful entrance into the classroom, Rachel jokes.

With dentist husband Neil, the couple embraced an unexpected blessing during the pandemic: extended time at home with their newborn. They spent long, peaceful walks with Niamh on Brighton's beach, enjoying the rare quiet of early lockdown days.

'Finding out I was pregnant with a little girl gave me the perfect time to reflect on my "why",' Rachel explains. 'I realised that owning a practice was more than just a professional aspiration; it was about creating something meaningful, a space where I could be a role model for my daughter. I wanted to show her that having a family while building a successful career is possible and that we can wear many hats.'

'Why do we champion girls to do well at school, only for them to give all that away and lose their identity the moment they hit 30 and start having a family?'

When they acquired Chapel Dental, the practice was an established but struggling business. Its location in a solid old church building between High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Gerrard's Cross and



Marlow presented challenges and opportunities.

Rachel and her husband saw potential in its location and facilities and transformed it into the thriving dental centre it is today.

'The practice had been there for 10 years when we took over. It is in an old Temperance Hall, a historic Victorian building, but the door was permanently closed, and few people knew it existed. Creating something that was ours became a long-term project, and the clinic is now not just a place for excellent patient care but also for embodying the values I want to pass down.'

### EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIP

Rachel's commute from Brighton to High Wycombe is two hours. She juggles childcare with her husband and co-principal Neil as he continues working as an associate to support the fledgling business financially while working part-time at the practice.

'My husband has always been there, supporting me. Together, we have tried everything and anything to build a thriving practice in a small English village surrounded by its bigger towns.'

Slowly, they set out to establish a presence in the community, adding signage, sponsoring local events like Heath Fest, running competitions, visiting schools and hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning.

'Over time, we have built trust, and today, our practice is unrecognisable from where we started. We invested heavily in creating a welcoming, technologically advanced environment.'

'We've added a glass door so people can see inside. It's a bit of a Tardis, and we wanted to banish the old idea that nobody was here. But for me, technology is just a tiny part of the patient experience – an adjunct to the most critical aspect of dental care: building relationships

with patients. It is words and rapport that build the relationships. It's about genuinely listening to needs, fears and hopes for their health.'

And it is here that Rachel excels – communicating openly to forge long-lasting and meaningful partnerships.

'While I advocate for better guidelines around treatments abroad, many dentists worldwide have just as solid reputations as they do in the UK. But, I do believe patients

## How to *put a positive spin on private practice*

1. Embrace leadership and representation: female leaders are breaking barriers in dentistry. We can thrive in private practice and leadership roles
2. Find your 'why': acquiring a struggling practice requires vision and dedication, but also inspiration. Don't shy away from difficult situations – with the proper support, they can be transformed into success stories
3. Patient-centred communication: prioritise open, honest conversations with patients to understand their goals, manage expectations and build lasting trust
4. Keep growing: embrace every learning opportunity and seek out mentors to guide your journey. Bhavna Doshi's Dental Wealth Builder course was a pivotal moment for us. With limited resources, my husband and I had to invest wisely in our business. There wasn't room for trial and error, especially knowing that this investment is also Niamh's future
5. Showcase the 'wins': invest in technology and enter awards by all means, but remember what is truly important. Quality of care is how you make people feel, how you communicate, and how focused you are on building patient relationships and ensuring the best outcomes for each one.
6. Stay firm on pricing by showcasing value: be transparent about the high quality of your care, tools and technology, and ensure patients understand the value they receive for the prices charged
7. Consistency in messaging and teamwork: ensure your team shares the same values and messages about patient care, reflecting a unified and supportive practice environment. And invest in them, too
8. Advocate for professional balance: my role at the BAPD underscores the importance of involving private practitioners in policy discussions, ensuring the profession's needs are recognised
9. Pay it forward: mentor and empower the next generation by encouraging young dentists, particularly women, to pursue leadership roles
10. Foster a supportive professional environment: the BAPD is guiding, supporting, protecting (and listening) to the dental profession. Get involved. To join the BAPD, visit [bapd.org.uk/join-us](http://bapd.org.uk/join-us).

deserve clear, honest communication. We must ask the right questions to get to the root of what treatments they want and what results they expect. Our role as healthcare providers is to help them make informed decisions, not to patronise or frighten them.

'Promoting private dentistry is about getting patients to understand your value. There can be an overload of information, so we must break it down into small parts. It may take asking many questions to get there, but by doing so, we can manage expectations and reach the outcomes they want.

'Patients should feel encouraged to openly share their goals and expectations. While most seek better health, it's essential to understand what "health" means to them personally. For example, how far are they willing to go to achieve straight teeth or a near-perfect smile? If extracting a tooth becomes necessary, will they be comfortable with that decision, or will it cause distress? How committed are they to saving the tooth? If treatment only lasts a year, will they be frustrated? Are they open to removing some of the natural tooth structure for veneers, or would they prefer a less invasive solution that still offers noticeable improvement?

'The key is to initiate and guide the conversation, actively listening to their concerns and desires. With many new patients, fostering open communication ensures their treatment aligns with their expectations.'

She adds: 'Of course, there will always be the cheeky chappies who will chance their arm and challenge or question the cost. But that's where communication becomes vital. If they ask questions, it can change the dynamic, but it's important to remind them that no matter what, we will always be there to look after them.

'It's about giving them the tools to make their own decisions. As private practitioners, we must show them the total value of the patient journey. If they leave without investing, they've not bought into you or are not quite there with you yet. So, we work hard to ensure our patients understand the value of their treatment; I will never apologise for the prices we charge. They reflect the quality of care, the technology we've invested in and our expertise.'



## SPOTLIGHT

### SAFETY NET

Significant to this is ensuring the team is consistent in the messaging, reflecting the practice ethos.

'We must all be on the same page, educate our patients together,' she believes.

Rachel has also used these skills to her full advantage to benefit the BAPD in a role that allowed her to advocate for the profession, particularly in regulatory balance and professional support.

She is vocal about the need for a safety net within the profession, where dentists can share their experiences and challenges without fear of reprisal. She believes fostering an open and supportive environment is crucial for the wellbeing of practitioners and patients.

She also views it as her responsibility to keep banging on the doors of regulators, raising the voice of private practitioners, and ensuring they are included at the table with other key stakeholders to be a cog in that decision-making process.

'We've discussed legislative changes with Lord Toby Harris, which is a huge step forward. As president, I saw my role as a mentor, especially for young women entering the profession. My message to them is simple: be brave, look at the bigger picture, and remember that private practice is about creating a fulfilling, sustainable career.'

### OPEN DOOR POLICY

Now focused on growing her practice and influence within the dental community, Rachel is passionate about mentoring the next generation of dentists, particularly women, and encouraging them to pursue leadership roles in the industry.

'My door is always open. I encourage anyone within the profession to reach out, join the BAPD, and keep pushing forward. Private dentistry has much to offer, and by focusing on patient care and open communication, we can continue to grow, both as individuals and as a profession. But be practical – it's as much about being happy and fulfilled as running a busy practice.'



*Rachel and Neil collecting their Practice Principal South trophy at the Private Dentistry Awards 2024*

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# Why visit a showroom?

**John Dargue** details the benefits of visiting an A-dec showroom if you are looking to purchase new dental equipment

**W**hen dentists consider purchasing new dental equipment, they typically follow a structured approach known as the decision-making process. This process is a fundamental cognitive behaviour in which individuals select an option from a set of alternatives based on their research and preferences (Vassilios, 2018).

The decision-making process consists of several key stages:

1. Recognising a need
2. Gathering information
3. Evaluating alternatives
4. Choosing a brand to purchase
5. Engaging in post-purchase activities.

According to a 2019 study by Sheikh Qazzafi, published in the *International Journal of Scientific Research and Engineering Development*, consumers spend 72% more time making decisions for high-value purchases, such as dental equipment, compared to lower-value purchases.

So how does a showroom appointment fit into the decision-making process?

## **1. PROBLEM/NEED RECOGNITION**

The recognition of a need or problem is the first stage of the decision-making model. For instance, you might require a new dental chair because your current one has broken down, or you may need additional chairs



**John Dargue**

John is territory manager south west England and south Wales at A-dec. Get in touch with John on 07718 786 024.

# Showroom visit: pros

There are several key benefits to visiting a showroom, including:

- A showroom lets you physically see, touch, and experience the quality of dental products in real life, giving you a clear idea of size, options, and functionality
- When you visit an A-dec showroom you will be guided through the different options by a knowledgeable territory manager who can answer your questions, provide personalised advice based on your specific needs and inform you of the latest news and promotions
- If you're considering purchasing a dental chair, many manufacturers offer a variety of finishes and colours to choose from. For example, A-dec chairs are available in sewn or form upholstery finishes and over 30 colour options, allowing you to select the perfect combination to align with your practice's branding and vision. Viewing fabric samples and chairs in person lets you see the true colours, which can be difficult to accurately assess when browsing online
- During a showroom appointment, make sure you take the time to sit in the chair yourself, just as your patient would and think about how you feel being in that chair. Do you feel comfortable and reassured? The appearance and comfort level of your chosen dental chair will be one of the most memorable aspects of a patient's visit to your surgery, so make sure their experience is a positive one!
- All three A-dec showrooms (Nuneaton, Bracknell, Warrington) are equipped with all the dental packages on offer, which enables you to discover options you might not have considered
- By directly comparing products, assessing quality, and seeking expert opinions, you can make a more informed and confident purchase.

to accommodate the growing demands of your expanding practice.

Whether you're upgrading your equipment, expanding your business, or setting up a new practice, the process begins with identifying the need for a dental chair.

## 2. INFORMATION SEARCH

The next stage of the model is the information search. After recognising a need, dentists typically seek additional product-related information to support their purchase decision.

The approach to information gathering varies for each individual and is influenced by factors such as prior knowledge of the product, previous experiences purchases (examples of internal searches), and feedback from others, online searches and showroom appointments (examples of external searches).

Whether you have previous experience using A-dec or have come across the brand at a trade show or search engine, a showroom appointment can be the most valuable step in researching new dental equipment.

## 3. EVALUATING ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS ON THE MARKET

After gathering sufficient information, dentists typically compare and evaluate the various options available in the market.

Attending trade shows allows dentists to explore multiple brands in one convenient location. However, it's important to note that trade shows may not provide in-depth conversations or showcase the complete product range that can be experienced during a dedicated showroom appointment.

Depending on the pathway a dentist chooses, they may attend a showroom appointment when evaluating alternative products on the market.

Be sure to ask the right questions during your showroom appointment. For example, enquire about the company's background in manufacturing dental equipment, the differences between various

product models, if the company offer any product training and the details of their warranty and aftersales care.

Asking these critical questions directly to a territory manager encourages a clear, two-way conversation, helping dentists gain a deeper understanding of what the manufacturer can offer.

## 4. THE PURCHASE

Once the information search and evaluation process has been completed, the dentist makes the purchasing decision. By this point, all the information has been gathered and carefully analysed, leading to an informed choice.

Important factors, such as current promotional offers and comparisons between brand collections discussed during the showroom appointment, help dentists select the equipment that best meets the practice's needs and requirements.

## 5. ENGAGING IN POST-PURCHASE ACTIVITIES

The final stage in the consumer decision-making process is the post-purchase evaluation. This stage involves the consumer's overall experience with using the dental equipment, as well as assessing their experience with the manufacturer or dealer.

While high-value purchases like dental equipment are less frequent and the decision-making process occurs less often, it remains a common cycle adopted by many dentists.

A positive experience is crucial in reducing uncertainty and influencing the decision to purchase the same product or service again in the future.

A-dec understands the importance of continuously supporting dentists post-purchase with complimentary product training and in-person ergonomic sessions to ensure dentists, dental nurses and hygienists are fully supported and getting the most out of the dental equipment.

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*Take advantage of the benefits of an A-dec showroom visit! Find your nearest dealer at [unitedkingdom.a-dec.com/find-a-dealer](http://unitedkingdom.a-dec.com/find-a-dealer) and enquire about a showroom appointment.*

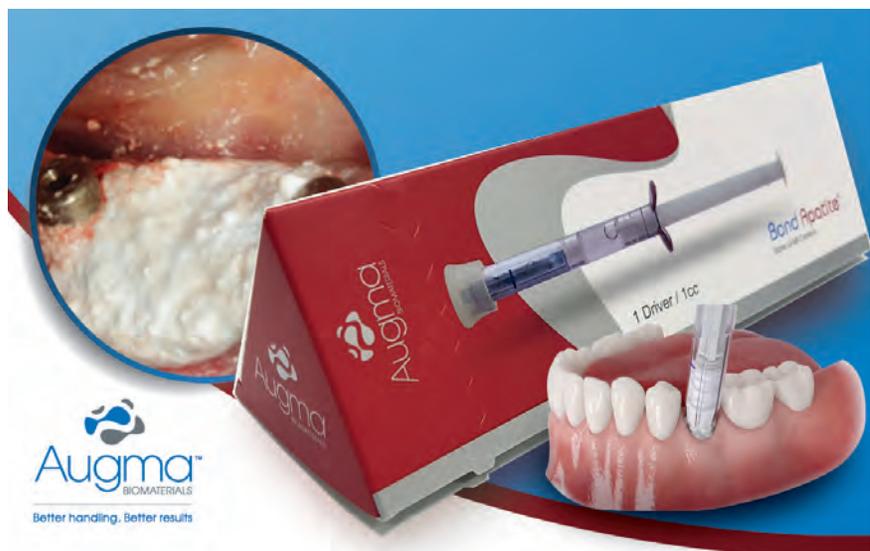
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**A**ugma's Bond Apatite is a natural mineral bone regeneration material that does not wash away, unlike other synthetic bone materials. Supplied in an all-in-one syringe that enables immediate dispensing directly into the bone defect, it is incredibly quick and easy to use. Simply depress the plunger to activate the ingredients, dispense it into the defect and apply pressure using a sterile gauze and it's set. The whole process takes literally seconds. Bond Apatite sets hard, so it won't wash away even in the presence of blood and saliva. And, because it sets hard, there is no need for a membrane which saves additional time and unnecessary expense. There is no need to achieve tension-free closure, this is actually contra-indicated, or even complete primary closure for gaps less than 3mm. Small dehiscences can be left exposed without any risk of infection or breakdown. Larger dehiscences can be protected by suturing an Augma Shield protective layer over it.

Formed from a patented mixture of biphasic Calcium Sulphate and Hydroxyapatite in a 2:1 ratio, Bond Apatite sets like a cement in the oral cavity, even in the presence of blood and saliva. After a few weeks it transforms into a radiolucent matrix, before calcifying and becoming radiopaque new bone.

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## FULL-DAY HANDS-ON WORKSHOP

Augma are running a Full Day Bone Cement Hands-on Workshop on Saturday 29 March at the Leonardo Royal London City hotel, near London Tower. It will be presented by Dr Lucio Faria who has been a National and International Speaker for Nobel Biocare since 2011, is a Surgical Master in Regenerative Implant Dentistry and has undertaken extensive Postgraduate Studies in Prosthodontics, bone and soft tissue grafting, and Zygomatic implant surgery and rehabilitation.

Dr Faria will review four of the most common surgical protocols using Bond Apatite bone grafting cement, which sets immediately and is accompanied by minimally invasive surgical procedures that do not require a membrane. Delegates will receive practical knowledge on how to perform socket grafting without flap reflection,

lateral ridge augmentation and augmentation in the aesthetic zone.

The course includes a variety of resources, such as animated videos, recorded live surgery demonstrations and clinical videos. Evidence based data histology shows how following the surgical protocols leads to clinical success and complete bone regeneration for the patient.

The course fee is £195.00 plus VAT (including all course materials and lunch) with a £145.00 plus VAT Early Bird fee for confirmed bookings before 31 January 2025.

*For more information on Augma Bond Apatite or the 29 March hands-on workshop in London, contact your local Trycare representative, Denise Law at the Trycare events team, on 01274 885544 or email [denise.law@trycare.co.uk](mailto:denise.law@trycare.co.uk).*

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- With the new Prettau 3 Dispersive zirconia, the concept of Gradual-Triplex-Technology was introduced. In addition to the colouring, also translucency and flexural strength levels change. In this way, while the incisally increasing translucency results in a highly translucent incisal edge, the cervically increasing flexural strength leads to an extremely high flexural strength at the tooth neck
- Prettau 4 Anterior and Prettau 4 Anterior Dispersive have been specially designed for the anterior region and are therefore characterised by a particularly high translucency. Both materials are suited for the posterior region. These two types of zirconia are suitable for the production of single crowns, inlays, onlays, veneers and three-unit bridges.

Zirkonzahn Shade Guides are composed of monolithic zirconia sample teeth in the shape of premolars, upper and lower incisors. They are available in Prettau 2 Dispersive, Prettau 3 Dispersive and Prettau 4 Anterior Dispersive zirconia.

[www.zirkonzahn.com](http://www.zirkonzahn.com)

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## IN THE HOT SEAT

Cosmetic dentist **Alan Clarke** on finding chill moments, being brave and disrupting the status quo

**Q When and where was your last meal out?**

**A** I had dinner with one of my best friends in the Slieve Donard Resort and Spa, Newcastle, Northern Ireland. We had a great lunch after a spa morning of deep thinking and business planning for 2025.

**Q Who would play you in the movie of your life?**

**A** Jude Law!

**Q If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?**

**A** Hmm, so I would buy a few properties strategically placed around the globe. Then I'd start thinking about how can I leave an impact on this profession and planet. So, let's pump some cash into making that happen quickly and radically!

**Q What's your guilty pleasure?**

**A** Travel hacks! A night at the airport hotel before a flight to avoid the super early morning alarm, a seat upgrade or a lounge access. I like anything to calm the chaos and let me find a 'and chill' moment!

**Q What was the last gift you gave/received?**

**A** The last gift I gave was a personalised Where's Wally book for one of my good friends. You create a cartoon version of someone and then they get to find themselves as they travel around the world! It's genius!

The last gift I received was the business planning spa morning with full body massage and time to connect and discuss our goals and fears. That is special and bonding time with friends is a gift to me!

**Q Describe your perfect holiday...**

**A** I love to travel, as you know! It can be many things, a surfing beach break in Sri Lanka or Morocco city break with friends or family. Always culture filled, always a little bougie and always an adventure!

**Q What's your all-time favourite book/movie?**

**A** There are two books by my friend and mentor Colby Martin that radically open up how we view God in our lives!

For movie choice, I love *Point Break* – surfing meets 90s LA, the aesthetic! On that note, anything with 90s America. Thank you Nancy Meyers for the stylised fantasy and calling to the US.

**Q What song is guaranteed to make you want to dance?**

**A** Maniac – Michael Sembello! (No judgment, please!)

**Q What keeps you up at night?**

**A** Friends from the US calling and forgetting the time difference and then suddenly it is 12pm and ever closer to morning!

**Q How do you unwind?**

**A** Having unscheduled time is a luxury, so time with no watching the clock is perfect. Swimming, strength training, travel – a little last-minute city break with friends or family!

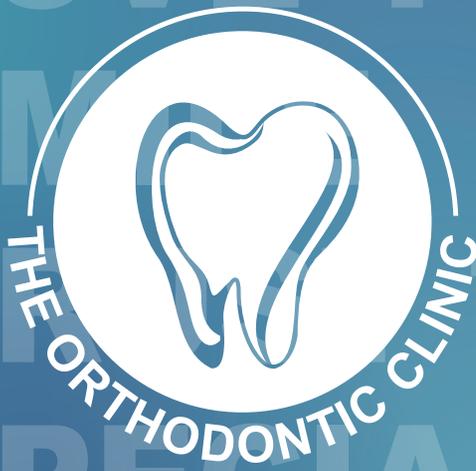
**Q What's the best advice you've received?**

**A** Think outside the box. This was repeated often by my dad who was a visionary in his industry and has taught me to be brave, to take risks and to disrupt the status quo!

**Q What was the last photo you took on your phone?**

**A** It's this one pictured below, it was taken just before Christmas!





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Winner  
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Dentistry Scotland Awards 2023



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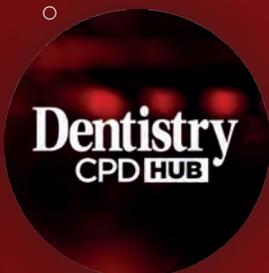


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