

Making a statement

Asheesh Paul discusses the recent refurbishment of his dental practice.

At St Anne's House Dental Practice in Cookham, Berkshire, we offer an array of treatment options at the practice, including cosmetic, endodontic and implant dentistry, and I wanted all aspects of the practice to reflect the high standards we strive for clinically. I do not believe in simply refurbishing a practice interior and expecting new patients and business growth. As such, I began this project quite some time before we reached the refurbishment stage.

Firstly, I looked to improve the back office by providing training to all members of staff to help enhance their communication skills and ensure an exceptional patient experience. Dentists were offered training to advance their clinical knowledge, our dental nurses were able to up-skill and new highly qualified dental nurses were introduced to the team. We also worked on our online presence by updating the website and promoting the practice outside of our local community. Patient reviews were a big part of this – I believe most patients will react more to other people's opinions than to marketing material created by the business, so we focused on collecting as many as we could. The icing on the cake was the refurbishment of the premises, from which I wanted to make our practice really stand out.

St Anne's House is located in an old Victorian building in the centre



Asheesh Paul

is the principal dentist and owner of St Anne's House Dental Practice in Cookham.

of town. It needed a little TLC, but generally it was a beautiful building. I didn't want to lose the period features during the project, but to accentuate them in a way that would create a very unique environment. As such, we began by decorating the

practice and replacing or upgrading some of the equipment so that we had the tools to deliver the very highest quality of dental care. Patient numbers were already growing substantially as a result of the other areas we had improved and the

time soon came to expand with the addition of a new, all-singing, all-dancing surgery.

Financial preparations for this part of the project were worked through with a business consultant – Asif Syed. We'd been monitoring the business growth and calculated how much the refurbishment would cost and how long it would take to recuperate the investment, so we knew this was the right time to proceed.

The space we planned to renovate had plenty of light and space to

do so, but I thought it wise to seek the support of design experts to ensure I got the very best result. I researched the market thoroughly before selecting Hague Dental – the case studies on their website looked fantastic and I received glowing reviews from others who had worked with them in the past.

When it came to the colour scheme, I wished to avoid too much plain white, as can be found in many dental and medical environments. I stayed with neutral colours but with accents of pattern and bold

colour to break it up. To complement the period look of the building, I chose white colonial shutters and a dark oak floor, which while still contemporary, helped to bridge the gap between the new and the old. I also chose dimmer LED lights, as I wanted to be able to lower the light in order to create a more calming and relaxed atmosphere, which is especially useful when talking to nervous patients.

For the dental chair, I really wanted something that would make a statement, without compromising on the quality of the unit. I therefore chose the A-dec 500 dental chair in vibrant pink. For the chair itself, I preferred its design and improved patient comfort (especially the soft upholstery, slow reclining motion and better back and neck support). I liked the continental delivery system, as the suspended hand-pieces are easy to reach, lighter to hold and the unit generally looks much neater without tubing everywhere. Regarding the colour, it has certainly had the impact I was looking for. It's become a truly iconic centrepiece and one that every single patient comments on – it gives a definite 'wow' factor.

I'm very proud of what we achieved with this project. The photos don't do it justice but the warm and welcoming atmosphere created is exactly what I was aiming for. We have continued to see patient numbers rise and this gives me absolute confidence that this project was taken on at the right time for the business.

That's not to say we didn't have our challenges. As with any project, no matter how meticulous the planning is, there are bound to be bumps in the road and it's all about minimising the problems so that there is no disruption to patient care.

For others approaching a similar refurbishment, I would advise not to wait too long – if you're growing and there is demand for more surgeries or a fresh aesthetic to match the dentistry provided, then go for it. Keep in mind that the refurbishment alone is unlikely to attract new patients though; the service and treatments provided need to be optimised at the same time.

