

HOW I DID IT

Written by Ash Paul



Ash Paul explains how his revitalising of Cookham's St Anne's House Dental Practice went beyond the cosmetic to transform the standard of care on offer

When I bought St Anne's House Dental Practice, it was a well-established practice in a lovely old Victorian building. It clearly had a lot of potential, but I soon realised it hadn't had much love and care for a while. The team working there were really strong, but the practice itself wasn't as glossy as it had first appeared, a lot of equipment wasn't working and the whole practice needed a bit of a refresh.

I really didn't just want to just change how it looked though. My vision, was for St Anne's to be the stand out practice within a ten-mile radius, carrying out general dentistry, but also offering treatment from visiting specialists, all to a really high standard.

We offer an array of treatment options 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.

TEAM

Firstly, I looked to improve the back office by building a culture and a set of values for our team while training all members of staff to help enhance their communication skills and



BUILDING

St Anne's House is located in an old Victorian house in the centre of town. It needed a little TLC, but generally it is a beautiful building with lots of character. We're lucky to have the whole premises, which stretches over four floors, so we have plenty of space to play with. 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. I like the fact it is like an old Victorian home, it has a warmer homely feel when compared to purpose-

built practices, which can seem like office blocks.

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.

We refurbished two rooms completely, as well as lots of other more minor changes throughout the practice. The exterior of the building was painted, complemented by new signage, shrubbery, plants, lighting, mirrors and wallpaper - all carefully chosen in line with the character of the site.

Financial preparations for this part of the project were worked through with

ensure an exceptional patient experience. Dentists were mentored and encouraged to advance their clinical knowledge, the team were trained to offer more to our patients and highly qualified dental nurses were recruited.

We've since grown, as a team, from three dentists to six, and also now offer more hours of hygiene treatment, aided by a new surgery. We also worked on our broader image 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 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 the practice to reflect the values and ethos we had created behind the scenes.

THE PRACTICE

St Anne's House Dental Practice
Station Hill, Cookham,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9BT

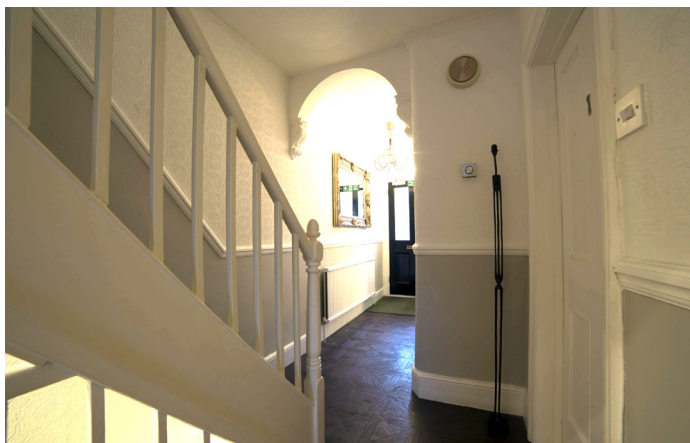
TELEPHONE: 01628 528017
EMAIL: info@st.annes.dental
WEBSITE: www.cookhamdentist.co.uk

THE PHILOSOPHY

Located in the centre of the beautiful English village of Cookham, the dental practice was established in 1980. Many of our patients have been coming to us since the very early days, attracted by our unique and personal ethos where patient care and comfort are key. At St Anne's House, we are as far away from a faceless corporate dental practice as you can get. We believe in listening to and entering into a dialogue with our patients, to provide the most appropriate, tailor-made treatment for each individual. Our practice ethos is to provide the highest standards of treatment for new and existing patients, customised to meet each patient's individual wants and needs. We believe that we have something unique to offer, and our promises and values reflect that.

60
SECOND
TOUR





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, but I thought it wise to seek the advice 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 feedback from others who had worked with them in the past.

DESIGN

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 managing nervous patients. Each room has its own individual colour scheme - with different wallpaper on a feature wall - this is designed to be bold and quirky.

The building, and its warm feel are both appreciated by the patients, and that is complemented by our friendly reception team who provide a welcoming environment. We're at the centre of the community as the practice has been here for so long - I wanted that feeling to translate to the decor.

SURGERY

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 Adec 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 wires 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 don't expect everyone to like it, but I know it stands out and is memorable! Many new patients already know about it from other patients or from the website - it's a big talking point, which is exactly the result I was after.

We also added a Digital OPG machine - required for the orthodontic treatments we had started offering at the practice. All the surgeries were enhanced with new digital x-ray units, which offered a lower radiation dose and improved image quality. The smaller sensors mean they are more comfortable for the patients and their care is enhanced by the higher quality images. We also added intraoral cameras, digital cameras and larger screens to show patients what's going on in their mouths so they can make informed decisions over their treatment without the dentists having to sell anything much. We've also introduced personalised treatment plans and letters, which are very detailed and able to incorporate pictures and x-rays. I've found this has made a big difference to treatment acceptance.

Whilst the work was underway, I was very keen not to close the practice, so a lot of the work took place during evenings and weekends. We were able to keep disruption to a minimum, and while there were a few little snags they weren't major, we ironed out the creases over time without affecting patient



PRACTICE DESIGN



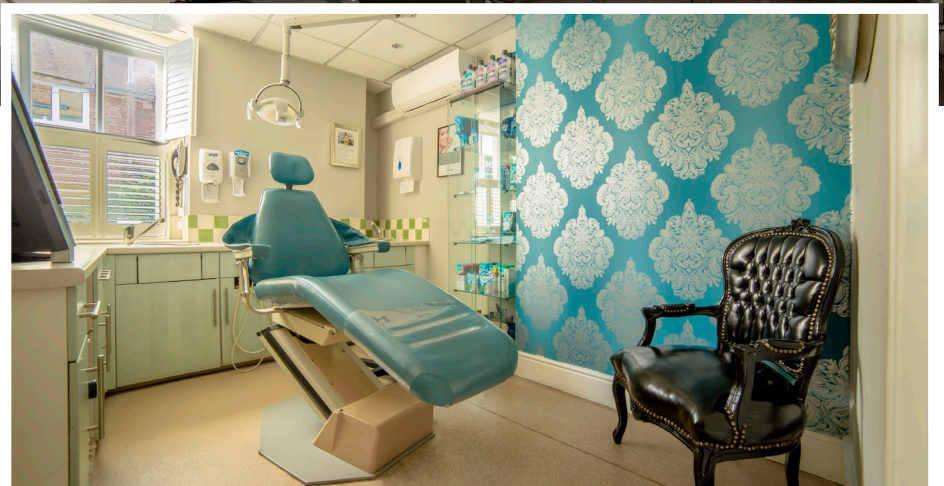
care. Hague Dental worked to high standard and I was very happy with the end result.

RESULT

I'm very proud of what we achieved with this project. The practice is very unique – there's nothing else like it! The photos don't do it justice but the warm and welcoming atmosphere created is exactly what I was aiming for.

I didn't want existing patients feeling like I was a new owner who was only here to shake things up. The work was done in phases, in a tasteful way and in keeping with the practice, with each change showing a clear improvement. Many of our patients have been coming to the practice for 30 years and there's a lot of goodwill there.

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. The practice is gaining an average of 25 new patients a month,



mostly through the website. We've recently taken on a new dentist and if growth continues, the next two years will see us recruit again and maybe add another surgery. Future goals are to expand the Perio and Endo services offered here to allow St Anne's House to offer all services under one roof.

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; it's important to note that it's the back office, the team and the patient experience which is the key to the business growing. ●



COMPANIES AND EQUIPMENT INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Dental Chair

A-dec
TELEPHONE: 0800 2332 85
WEBSITE: www.a-dec.co.uk

Equipment supply

Hague Dental
TELEPHONE: 0800 298 5003
WEBSITE: www.haguedental.com

COMMENTS TO PRIVATE DENTISTRY

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