In at the deep end
Orthodontist David Gale converts a domestic property into a specialist centre

Finding the ideal premises to convert into a dental practice can involve months of targeted searching. It’s fair to say that most would probably consider a domestic property with an indoor swimming pool as an unlikely and somewhat unusual candidate for refurbishment.

However, orthodontist David Gale, not put off by the building’s atypical feature, has converted its interior into a fabulous Specialist Orthodontic Referral Centre in a prime Hampshire location.

David’s search for a new location began in 2006 after five successful years’ operating out of rented premises in Fareham. It was clear the practice was outgrowing its premises and as the business was not to be altered to meet new regulations, he began to look for an alternative location in which to create a specialist orthodontic centre.

Proportions

The property David settled on was a large private house with an indoor swimming pool just five hundred metres down the road. Chosen because of its ideal proportions to convert into a purpose-designed specialist practice it also benefited from two hundred and fifty metres down the road.

David acquired the building in 2006 and, after almost a year in planning, the redevelopment work started in earnest. He recalls the overall objectives of the project: “I gave my architect a challenging brief, to transform the current building and pool into three surgeries and a lecture theatre.”

A show of success

In 2010 on the back of the success of the new practice, David decided to carry out further enhancements, converting the existing lecture theatre into a three chair orthodontic therapist treatment suite. This time the six-week project was ‘self-contained’ and with the builders working over the weekend to join the new suite to the main practice, there was no disruption to patients.

Reflecting on the refurbishment and the practice he has created, David feels that although it
took nearly two years from purchase to completion, this kind of project can’t be hurried. He has the utmost praise for the project team.

“I have to say that we all really enjoyed working together and have stayed in touch. I’ve treated many of their children since so it’s been nice for them to benefit from the new practice they helped to build.”

When asked what advice he would give anyone undertaking a similar project David is clear: “You really need to choose people with a good reputation. They almost certainly won’t be the cheapest but in the long run it is cost effective as it saves mistakes, chasing up and your stress. I’d also really recommend employing a building contract manager so you don’t need to micro manage the project and can keep the day job going. Mine was planned and managed by an architect and an independent quantity surveyor so my main role during the building was to make quick decisions when required, so I didn’t hold up progress.”

The move to the new building has enabled David and his team of 17 staff to provide a much improved service to more than 10,000 patients.

“Not only is the practice a bright and welcoming environment in which to be treated, it is also laid out to maximise the efficiency of workflows for the staff and to ensure we can stay ahead of regulatory requirements. I am hopeful we have thought of everything and the building is future proof.” Of course, time will tell.

For more information about the David Gale Specialist Orthodontic Referral Centre please visit www.david-gale.co.uk.

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**About the author**

David Gale is a registered specialist orthodontist with The General Dental Council, and is a member of the British Orthodontic Society and British Dental Association. His main objective is to help every patient achieve his or her ideal smile, in a relaxed and friendly environment. David qualified from university as a dentist in 1989 after which he worked within the U.K. hospital service. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1993 having gained the Fellowship in Dental Surgery (oral surgery). Following a postgraduate education in most of the dental specialties David was selected for a three-year orthodontic specialist training in 1994. In 1997 David was awarded the Membership in Orthodontics from the Royal College of Surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of England and also gained a university Masters in Science Degree in orthodontics. Following further higher specialist hospital training David was awarded the Fellowship in Orthodontics from the Royal College of Surgeons in 1999, which led to consultant accreditation in 2000. David worked as the consultant orthodontist at the Royal Hospital Haslar, Hampshire for two years. David has authored scientific papers and has presented lectures at National and International specialist conferences. He is also a National Dental Nurse examiner. In 2002 David set up the Specialist Orthodontic Referral Centre in Fareham which is now his professional home.