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 building could not 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 adjacent public car parking spaces and direct access to the M27 making it easy to reach from Portsmouth, Southampton and South Hampshire.

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. All the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and new proposed cross-infection legislation had to be met and the layout needed to ensure efficient workflows could be put in place to enable a NHS and private specialist dentistry business to be viable.”

Complex work

The work required was extensive: “The refurbishment was fairly complex and involved removing the back of the property, building an extension, stripping out all the electrics, plumbing and waste services and removing all floors, ceilings and some walls before being rebuilt. The lecture theatre was installed over the top of the swimming pool. The project took eight months to complete and we opened the new practice in February 2008.”

David turned to DESS Ltd to procure all the practice equipment and dental chairs and Planmeca for the radiographic equipment. David had worked with DESS since 2001 and used their services in his previous premises. He explains why he chose to use them for this project.

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The DESS team has always delivered an excellent service so I had no need to consider alternatives for the refurbishment project. They were fully involved in all aspects of the surgery design, dental equipment selection and procurement. Using the same software as the architect they modelled surgery layouts to ensure all the equipment fitted to a layout we were happy with.”

On the choice of dental chair David explains: “I chose Belmont equipment for my previous practice as it was highly recommended by my dental dealer. Despite intensive use over five years the chairs proved to be extremely reliable so they were my first choice for the new practice. I chose the Cleo I model for all the surgeries as I wanted a ‘knee break’ chair so patients could get in and out quickly and easily and so we could talk with them sitting up. A lot of orthodontics is communication. The small footprint of the Cleo I means that the team can move around the chair more easily.”

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 UK hospital service. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1995 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 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.