

Dear Patients

01384 292666

Now that we are a few weeks into our reopening we are getting used to our “new normal”.

Our team have all been working exceedingly hard to provide care to as many of our patients as is possible and attempt to catch up on the work that was on standby during our 3month closure.

From 25th March to 8th June the Chief Dental Officer for England required all dental practices to be closed for face to face care, provide telephone triage, and refer any urgent cases to locally set up urgent care clinics. This was a busy time for us as although there were relatively few of our regular patients in need, providing virtual care, delivering prescriptions and temporary filling/crown re-cement kits proved to be time consuming. Joanne, Lucy and some members of the team volunteered to be redeployed into other parts of the NHS. Samantha was very keen to help on the front line but was not needed, and Carol worked relentlessly making scrubs and uniform bags for NHS workers.

At the end of May, Joanne and Lucy were recruited and trained to become track and trace case workers. Unfortunately at the same time as track and trace went live, dental practices were advised to reopen for face to face emergency care and provide telephone triage for routine care, so they have not been able to put this training to use yet.

In the background we were also planning the conversion of our staff kitchen into a laundry/changing area where we can effectively socially distance, maintain a clear distinction between our home and work belongings and enable on site laundering of our uniforms. We also spent many hours trying to source PPE. The team had regular meetings over Zoom, using this platform for in house training. We were also able to access our Sedation update training live over Zoom. The dental community provided endless amounts of free webinars, so we were able to access all kinds of training.

Once guidelines for dental practices were published we were able to start putting our planning into place. We have created a very different dental environment and are now gradually working towards making this more efficient and sustainable.

For all routine and emergency appointments we still need to speak to every patient over the phone prior to a face to face visit, we will be soon be trialling remote forms that can be emailed and completed online prior to an appointment to replace some of these phone calls. We have

Wall Heath Dental Practice
7 High Street
Wall Heath
West Midlands
DY6 0HA

Tel: 01384 292666
email: info@wallheathdental.co.uk
www.wallheathdental.co.uk

found this telephone consultation a valuable way to plan for the face to face visit, allocating additional time, when required, and provide preventive advice.

Face to face visits are currently taking double the usual time. One dentist is using both surgeries to enable social distancing, time for additional cleaning, and for the provision of aerosol generating procedures (AGPs), when they are unavoidable. Use of the high speed drill and ultrasonic scaler (a normal scale and polish) are AGPs. Respiratory protection equipment and fluid resistant gowns are required for the team. Following the procedure the surgery has to be left vacant for at least an hour, prior to deep cleaning, meaning a simple scale and polish procedure would take a surgery out of use for 2hours! Other additional measures that we are taking include providing a peroxy rinse prior to any procedure, avoiding the use of the spittoon, use of the rubber dam isolation technique when we can, high volume suction (even during a dental examination!), and the avoidance of dental polishing after a hand scale.

We are therefore each only able to see patients face to face for half of the week and are spending the rest of the week working remotely trying to make contact with patients who are due an appointment. We really value these phone conversations as a means of catching up, and are delighted that so many patients are telling us how they have stepped up their dental home care during this time. We are seeing the beneficial results of this when we examine their teeth and gums.

We are planning the return of our hygiene team in September, please understand this appointment will be different from what you are used to.

In other news, Rachel had her baby boy in March just before the lockdown – Congratulations! Sadly Joyce has decided to retire, but has helped us tremendously during this challenging time. Helena is expecting her second child in the autumn and we are happy to announce that Lisa, a very experienced dental nurse, has joined our team.

Once again thank-you for your patience and support during 2020!