

CASE STUDY

R.A.J. Wallace and Associates, Northern Ireland

BACKGROUND

R.A.J. Wallace is a well established and mixed general practice in a busy rural town. It offers extra services including orthodontics and dental implants. For 22 years, the practice was in a converted Victorian cottage in Union Road in Magherafelt.

Last year, the team moved premises to Rainey Street and is now settling in to the new, purpose built practice which is kitted out with brand new equipment, as well as a comfortable and spacious patient waiting area.

As an NHS practice, staff found that they were working increasingly long hours. Claire McMullan remembers that the set up was becoming more and more unsatisfactory.

“Life was extremely busy and very rushed. This made it difficult to provide the quality of care, level of service and variety of treatment that we wanted to, which is unfulfilling as a clinician. We didn’t want financial constraints under the NHS to lead to a compromise in patient care.”

The practice team decided it was time to convert because they were determined not to make this compromise.

“Our first priority was to increase the quality of care by cutting down the workload. We wanted to spend more time with our patients. The first step was to move from a very run down building to a brand new purpose built practice. It also seemed to be the right time to convert.”

SOLUTION

The practice looked into a choice of providers but DPAS worked out to be the most cost effective. This, combined with the knowledge that the practice would receive all the back up and support it would need from the DPAS team, meant that DPAS was the right practice plan provider for R.A.J. Wallace and Associates.

DPAS organised the mail out for the surgery and wrote to every patient explaining the process and implications of converting to a payment plan. Every patient also received a new practice-branded brochure which DPAS produced and packed in the same envelope.

In the summer of 2008 the practice converted all fee paying patients to private treatment. The surgery continues to see registered non-fee paying patients and children on the NHS. Claire says that the practice team really appreciated the personal back up they received throughout the conversion process.

“We always knew that our DPAS representative would be available to offer us support as and when required. A specific member of staff from DPAS is assigned to each practice so you always get to talk to the same person.”

CASE STUDY CONTINUED

R.A.J. WALLACE AND ASSOCIATES, NORTHERN IRELAND

BENEFITS

The patients reacted very positively to the change. Most of them told the staff that they had been expecting a private conversion for a while.

“As some patients worry about the cost of private dental care, we included a fee guide in the mail out which showed both the charges for ‘fee per item’ patients and dental care plan members. This openness regarding fees reassures patients that their dental care remains affordable and allows them to see the benefits of becoming a plan member.”

Claire says the staff knew the conversion was going to improve their lives at work.

“Our staff were all extremely enthusiastic and supportive. In the end it was very much their hard work and enthusiasm, along with the support of our DPAS Practice Consultant that led to such a smooth and successful conversion. It actually required relatively little help from the dentists.”

Claire says the atmosphere of the practice is much more relaxed. The conversion has allowed staff to spend more time with patients without interruption. Patients no longer have to wait so long for appointments and the surgery now offers far more flexibility with times.

Converting to the private sector with DPAS has had other tangible benefits. The practice has already employed another member of office staff, which simply wouldn't have been possible under the NHS. This has helped to relieve the immense pressure the staff were previously under and enables them to take a much more active role in the running of the practice.

Claire says there are absolutely no regrets about converting the practice in partnership with DPAS.

She offers this advice to other dentists who may be considering a conversion: “Encouraging staff to be actively involved in the decision making allows everyone to know how valuable their input is and has a very positive effect on team morale.”

To find out more about the R.A.J Wallace and Associates conversion and how DPAS can help smooth your journey from NHS to private practice, or to see how we can make your existing payment plan administration work more efficiently, please visit www.dpas.co.uk or call us on 01747 870910.