

Smiles all round

Uma Madhav talks about living her dream almost a year after opening her practice in the growing town of Milton Keynes

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Dentist and MK Smiles owner

Established in the 1960s as part of the government's 'new town' initiative to relieve housing congestion in London, Milton Keynes is well-known for its grid road network. Fifty years on, the town is thriving.

Known as MK to locals, it is one of the fastest growing economies in the country, with a predicted population of nearly 310,000 by 2025.

To accommodate the rising numbers wanting to live and work there, one of the newest areas targeted for housing development is Brooklands. An area to the east of the town, an estimated 25,000 homes will be built over the coming years. With proximity to peaceful open spaces and lakes – yet close enough for residents to enjoy central facilities, as well as quick access to the M1 – it is anticipated housing will be quickly snapped up.

For dentist and MK Smiles owner Uma Madhav, the area has enormous potential for a dental practice. 'When we first saw the development, it was very much in its infancy, with very few homes completed,' she says. 'However, we could see from the developers' plans that growth was going to be rapid, and would provide significant footfall for healthcare services.'

'My dream has always been to design my own practice and start from the ground up. I knew it would be hard, but was willing to take the risk.'

The council had plans to build a new state-of-the-art medical centre to house the local general practitioners and wanted to provide other healthcare services. It expressed interest in Uma opening a dental practice, and she couldn't pass on the opportunity.

So, in August 2018, she took on an empty shell within the same building as an NHS health centre.

Starting from scratch

Using the experience gained from her existing practice in Bedford, Uma knew the layout and facilities she wanted and called on the services of Hague Dental.

She recalls: 'I'd used Hague for my practice refurbishment in Bedford and liked their approach. They are good listeners and really try to understand what you need before offering advice.'

'Together, we came up with a layout that informed

early discussions with the landlord and builders, and ensured correct placement of pipework.

'When the time came, Hague tendered for all the building work, equipment provision and installation. Although they weren't the cheapest, I was working full-time at my other practice, so it was important for me to use a trusted team that would meet my expectations and put my mind at ease.'

The project to convert the empty shell into a six-surgery practice took just four months. There was room for more surgeries, but Uma wanted to create a relaxed, open environment for her private dental practice: 'I wanted a well-designed "clean and dirty" room and a spacious waiting area.'

'Every aspect of the design was carefully considered. Both sides of the unit were wall-to-wall glass that created amazing light, but required some thought to safeguard patient confidentiality.'

Initially, two surgeries were fully kitted out ready for use and cabinetry installed in the remaining four so they could be easily deployed when demand increases. For Uma, her decision to choose Belmont Compass chairs for her surgeries was based on experience.

She says: 'I'd used Belmont and A-dec chairs before for past refurbishments, but eventually decided on the Compass with E delivery option and Voyager. The Belmont Compass is installed in my other dental practice, and I love its ambidextrous capability and find it fantastic to work around. Patient comfort is paramount, but the dentist's needs are just as important.'

Serene and modern

With the Care Quality Commission inspection completed on New Year's Eve, MK Smiles opened its doors to new patients on 19 January 2019.

Now operating with four associates, it is anticipated there will be sufficient demand to enable a third chair and surgery to be commissioned by the end of the year.

Uma has plans to develop the business into a multidisciplinary practice with large rooms to aid implant placements and sedation cases. The other rooms are to accommodate the dental hygienist, orthodontics and facial aesthetic treatments with the aid of a consultation room.

The result is a practice that offers a serene treatment environment fitted with modern amenities. Uma's aim is to ensure that every minute patients spend in the practice is a pleasant one.

Picturesque floor-to-ceiling sceneries in each surgery



not only create a relaxing environment, but also provide privacy from the outside world. LED TVs are ceiling-mounted so patients can watch daytime TV or listen to music, while in the chair.

To target potential new patients and raise awareness, business manager Saty has turned to social media, local radio play and integration with the community.

The team has visited schools to teach children about oral health, as well as attending local business networking events and charity functions. MK Smiles has donated and help raise money for a local hospice, and is a sponsor of football team MK Dons.

Ultimately for Uma, this new business is all about people: 'I believe in treating patients as individuals and not just sets of teeth. By building rapport, communicating well and giving patients more time, my vision is to create a flourishing business in this new, upcoming part of town.' **D**

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