

Home comforts

Dentistry spoke to James and Emma Hyslop about their ambitious practice refurbishment, the inspiration for which can be found close to home

Creating the perfect dental clinic environment using their home's décor as a design template was a clever move by James and Emma Hyslop.

Inspired by the furnishings, colours and soft lighting of the place where they relaxed after a long day at the dentistry coal-face, it has played a fundamental part in creating an elevated and relaxing dental experience for patients at their mixed practice in Southport.

Dentist James and wife Emma's endeavours have completely transformed Hyslop Dental and Implant Clinic. Located in a leafy road in the Merseyside seaside town, they have extended its capacity with a stunningly beautiful interior that ticks boxes for those less enamoured with a trip to the dentist. With an ambience more akin to a chic hotel than a dental clinic, some patients have even asked Emma where she sourced the furnishings.

'I had to dig out an invoice for one patient who wants to buy the statement chandelier we have in James's surgery,' Emma laughs.

Getting started

Having purchased the dental practice in an attractive red brick, double-fronted Victorian building in 2013, the couple felt 2021 was perfect for a refresh and a substantial expansion.

With increasing patient numbers due to demand for James's implant skills, the couple had to consider their options.

'When we bought the practice, we bought the whole building – it's in a lovely location in a pretty road. The plan was always to grow the business. Initially, we considered developing a referral practice nearby. But when we thought about it, this meant double the overheads. But we had outgrown the building in its current state.'

And, while the decision to renovate and increase surgery numbers was not entirely due to the pandemic, the lockdown did offer Emma and James the gift of time – time to take stock of the business, time to consider the moving-versus-staying-put scenarios, and ultimately, time to plan the refurbishment.

'The timing of the refurb was pretty coincidental,' Emma says, 'But the lockdown did allow us more time to plan it. When everything shut down in March 2020,

there was talk of fallow time and need for fans etc, so we bit the bullet and installed them immediately.

'It paid off, and when the government announced we could return to work in June, we were ready. We had little downtime and managed to catch up with NHS examinations within six months. Our implant works carried on, and once people overcame their initial fear, more of them returned. We were lucky to have made the right decisions at the right time.'

The results

Having refurbished the clinic to create Hyslop Dental and Implant Clinic, Emma now had both the confidence and experience to draw up plans and timetable the build and fit, leaving little to chance. Hiccups in equipment delivery delays and build team availability notwithstanding, the results speak for themselves.

The Hyslops have converted the two upstairs apartments into the private arm of their mixed practice. The expansion of their private patient capacity includes new surgeries with Belmont Cleo 2 packages and custom-made cabinetry.

They have also created a private patient waiting area and treatment coordinator room with a feature ceiling, a new decontamination room and an office/staff area.

Amazingly, the project had little impact on the everyday activity at the clinic, the conversion of the residential space above the practice into two new fantastic surgeries mostly completed behind the scenes.

Emma explains: 'James's patient base was increasing and we needed to expand the business, so this second phase of improvements required us to create extra surgery space.'

Both new surgeries have custom-made cabinetry with soft under-cabinet lighting that adds warmth to the rooms.

The Belmont chairs are flexible with folding leg rests that facilitate elderly patients and allow for face-to-face conversations between James and his implant patients, and the hygienists and theirs during oral health education in the second surgery.

'We kept with Belmont chairs across the whole practice because we were so happy with them, and the servicing and after-care is excellent,' Emma says.

The NHS side of the business wasn't left out. The NHS surgeries and waiting area have also been expanded and refurbished to create a natural flow throughout the clinic. Now, all of their 7,000-plus patients can enjoy a fantastic dental experience with the stunning design, calming colour scheme and comfortable environment flowing throughout the building.

A skylight over the staircase with the traditional



Victorian bay windows let light flood in, allowing for an airy, open feel.

Cabinetry flush to the wall ensures they have maximised space. All surgeries have TVs – 'Our patients can see their X-rays on a large screen. It is really effective patient education,' Emma says.

Soft lighting, sumptuous armchairs in navy blue and tan, a grey colour scheme and warm wood flooring offer clean lines but ensure a homely ambience, too. The transformation is an oasis of calm tranquility.

Meticulous planning

Emma project-managed the refurbishment. The seamless experience was due to her meticulous planning – her workflow chart of who needed to do what and when evidently making the difference.

'The two large upstairs apartments accommodate the implant suite and hygiene room. We turned one kitchen into a bespoke decontamination room with three autoclaves. The apartment at the front of the property had a kitchen-diner, so we converted this into office space that acts as a meeting room cum staff room.'

Emma's passion for property renovation meant she wasn't fazed by the project and she was, again, grateful to Simon Pearce and McKillop Dental for their professional input.

'We had used McKillop before, so there is a long-standing relationship. It was a no-brainer for me to use them again and, miraculously, they came to the party!'

There was a separate staircase to the upstairs apartments, which meant they could install one of the surgeries upstairs until they were ready to do the rest. They then built a temporary wall blocking off the back of clinic, so patients could still access the reception and the two front surgeries.

'The building flows beautifully. Our NHS and private areas complement each other perfectly, but the layout allows for differentiation. All areas share the same aesthetics with feature lighting, bespoke cabinetry, under cabinet lighting, comfy chairs and wood-effect flooring.'

The team are proud of their newly renovated, expanded clinic, having subverted traditional dental practice aesthetics. But equally important has been how they ensured it was business as usual throughout the works. When it came to their NHS patients, this mattered hugely.

'Managing a private practice with an NHS contract can be challenging, so we were keen not to shut down any surgeries,' Emma says. 'Luckily, we completed the project without having to do so. We can certainly give ourselves a pat on the back for not having to cancel a single appointment.' **D**

