



FROM THE GROUND UP

David and Trusha Carr share the story of how Flint House Dental came to be

Flint House Dental, located in the picturesque town of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, is a new dental practice founded by clinical directors and dentists David and Trusha Carr.

David and Trusha had been practising for two decades when they saw an opportunity to branch out and 'do dentistry' their way. While opening a squat practice can be daunting, sharing the experience seemingly made the stressful times more bearable.

THE RIGHT TIME

David shares: 'It felt like the right time for a number of reasons, so we were ready for the challenge. We had worked as associates in good practices for 20 years. Getting older and more experienced, we felt there were certain things we wanted to do differently.'

David and Trusha's relationship is longstanding – the couple met at Newcastle Dental School in 1997 and have since worked in various dental practices across the UK and in Australia.

Driven by this dream of autonomy, the couple found a new working relationship with the project – David getting his hands

dirty on the building front, and Trusha juggling the planning and build paperwork.

GEARING UP

The couple submitted plans for the practice in April 2022, eventually opening in March 2023. They oversaw the building work themselves, working alongside local tradespeople and David's father, who was also a builder.

David feels fortunate to have collaborated with someone he completely trusted to realise his vision – not only was his dad happy to lend a hand on the build, the pair also cherished the time spent together.

David says: 'My father would drive down from Liverpool a few days a week to help on the project. I really enjoyed getting my hands dirty and labouring for him, just like the old days when I'd help out during university breaks to make a few pounds. It was a comfort to have him on board from the start.'

'I'd have Wednesdays and weekends free. We would often work from 8am to 8pm, taking advantage of the light summer evenings. We had a number of challenges to negotiate along the way, so it was a great

learning experience. The whole building needed new plumbing and electrics, so we were lucky to have some great local tradespeople involved in the project too.'

'Meanwhile, Trusha, who is very organised, dealt with the planning and administration. It would have been daunting if I'd have had to do that on my own, and we were a good partnership.'

A SYMPATHETIC BUILD

Their planning application promised that 'careful consideration has been given to the adopted roof form and selected materials, all in order to harmonise with the existing structure. It is considered the proposed extension will not detract from the appearance of the existing building, but forms a modest addition that is in keeping with, and respects, the host dwelling.'

But, as dentists with keen eyes for detail, the couple's commitment to a sympathetic build went beyond simply replicating the existing flint structure.

'The original building dates back to 1839, with a characterful exterior that we were keen to retain and enhance where we could,' David explains. 'It had been an accountancy



The upholstery of the Eurus S8, Ultrasoft Pro Stone, combines well with the neutral tones of the cabinetry

THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS OF BUILDING A SQUAT PRACTICE

High points

- Seeing the different structural stages taking shape, such as the internal walls knocked through to open up space and light, linking the new extension and having the glass fitted
- Having the flooring laid and the plumbing and electrics connected
- The Belmont dental chairs and X-ray equipment installed as the place then starts to look like a dental practice
- Working with a graphic designer to establish our logo and branding and seeing our ideas and vision come to life
- Spending time with my father (a builder!) was a great bonus.

Low points

- Project-managing the different tradespeople was a little stressful as they were so busy
- Any unexpected delays with materials required a juggling act as we tried to get the project back on track
- Being unable to give our children as much attention as we would have liked.



office for 20-plus years and looked tired. The entrance was very dark, as an external porch entrance had been tagged on in recent years, which was not in-keeping with the rest of the building.

'With some helpful discussions with our architect and Laurence Goff from SPS Dental, we removed the porch and an internal wall, before adding a double-storey extension to the front of the property. It allowed us to create a much lighter entrance for the downstairs waiting room and provide an additional waiting area for the upstairs surgery. The extension had a number of flint panels incorporated into the design, and we tirelessly searched brick combinations to best match the existing collage.'

THE HURDLES

The project was not without its hiccups. At the time, there were delays getting certain building materials due to COVID-19, which had a knock-on effect that forced them to postpone works throughout the project.

David explains: 'The delays would then put the build team out of sync, leading to more delays as they had dedicated specific weeks to our project in advance.

'The delivery of the roof tiles took 16 weeks, instead of the usual two weeks. We had to wait 12 weeks for the glass because of delays in the supply chain.'

A JOB WELL DONE

The proof of David and Trusha's promise to 'harmonise' is in the completed project; the building work blends seamlessly. The landscaping remains unchanged, as does the car park.

Inside, the attention to detail continues with complementary neutral flint tones.

'The ground floor has level access and can accommodate patients with mobility issues,' says Trusha. 'We have tried to create a relaxed waiting room downstairs and incorporated a comfortable waiting area upstairs for the third surgery as part of the extension. We wanted to create a relaxing environment, so we chose neutral tones in the surgeries. We invested in the more luxurious dental chairs with extra padding for patient comfort.

'We have fully kitted-out two surgeries and had the services and surgery flooring placed in the third surgery for when we are able to expand the business.'

Flint House Dental also saw the installation of the new Belmont Eurus S8 by engineers from SPS Dental.

'We chose the electric Eurus S8 models. We have both used Belmont in the past and have found them to be reliable. We also liked the new digital display and functionality.'

The couple initially scaled down their associate jobs to two days a week each, so they could spend three days each at the new practice. But burgeoning patient interest has accelerated the transition, forcing them both to quit their associate jobs faster than anticipated.

In August, David and Trusha aimed to commit more time to Flint House Dental. Exhausted but happy, their hard work has paid off, even if it temporarily impacted family life and tested their resilience. David says it has been 'hard work but also very rewarding'.

'We hit a number of stumbling blocks along the journey, but by keeping a calm head, we eventually found a way past them. We now have the opportunity to grow our practice to take it in the direction we choose.' ●