

# Inspection Report

13 August 2025



## Mercer Dental Care

Type of service: Independent Hospital (IH) – Dental Treatment  
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Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>, [The Independent Health Care Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2005](#) and the [Minimum Standards for Dental Care and Treatment \(March 2011\)](#)

## 1.0 Service information

<b>Organisation/Registered Provider:</b> Bangor Smiles Ltd	<b>Registered Manager:</b> Mrs Janice Barr
<b>Responsible Individual:</b> Mr Andrew Hill Mercer	<b>Date registered:</b> 15 December 2014
<b>Person in charge at the time of inspection:</b> Mrs Janice Barr	<b>Number of registered places:</b> Two
<b>Categories of care:</b> Independent Hospital (IH) – Dental Treatment	
<b>Brief description of how the service operates:</b> Mercer Dental Care is registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) as an independent hospital (IH) with a dental treatment category of care. The practice has two registered dental surgeries and provides general dental services, private and health service treatment and does not offer conscious sedation.	

## 2.0 Inspection summary

This was an announced inspection, undertaken by a care inspector on 13 August 2025 from 09.50 am to 12.50 pm.

It focused on the themes for the 2025/26 inspection year and assessed progress with any areas for improvement identified during the last care inspection.

There was evidence of good practice in relation to the recruitment and selection of staff; staff training; management of medical emergencies; infection prevention and control; decontamination of reusable dental instruments; radiology and radiation safety; management of complaints and incidents; and governance arrangements.

No immediate concerns were identified regarding the delivery of front line patient care.

### **3.0 How we inspect**

RQIA is required to inspect registered services in accordance with legislation. To do this, we gather and review the information we hold about the service, examine a variety of relevant records, meet and talk with staff and management and observe practices on the day of the inspection.

The information obtained is then considered before a determination is made on whether the practice is operating in accordance with the relevant legislation and minimum standards.

Examples of good practice are acknowledged and any areas for improvement are discussed with the person in charge and detailed in the quality improvement plan (QIP).

### **4.0 What people told us about the care and treatment?**

We issued posters to the registered provider prior to the inspection inviting patients and members of the dental team to complete an electronic questionnaire.

No completed patient questionnaires were received prior to the inspection.

Two staff submitted questionnaire responses. Staff responses indicated that they felt patient care was safe, effective, that patients were treated with compassion and that the service was well led. Both staff members indicated that they were very satisfied with each of these areas of patient care. Both of the staff members responses included positive comments regarding the management of the practice and the high standard of patient care.

### **5.0 The inspection**

#### **5.1 What action has been taken to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since last inspection?**

The last inspection to Mercer Dental Care was undertaken on 14 April 2023; no areas for improvement were identified.

### **5.2 Inspection findings**

#### **5.2.1 Do recruitment and selection procedures comply with all relevant legislation?**

There were recruitment and selection policies and procedures in place that adhered to legislation and best practice guidance.

Mrs Barr oversees the recruitment and selection of the dental team and approves all staff appointments. Discussion with Mrs Barr confirmed that she had a clear understanding of the legislation and best practice guidance.

A discussion took place regarding the development of a staff register and following the inspection RQIA received confirmation a staff register had been developed. Mrs Barr confirmed that three new staff had been recruited since the previous inspection. A review of two personnel files of newly recruited staff evidenced that relevant recruitment records had been sought; reviewed and stored as required.

There was evidence of job descriptions and induction checklists for the different staff roles. A review of records confirmed that if a professional qualification is a requirement of the post, a registration check is made with the appropriate professional regulatory body.

Mrs Barr confirmed that the newly recruited staff have been provided with a job description, contract of employment/agreement and received induction training when they commenced work in the practice.

The recruitment of the dental team complies with the legislation and best practice guidance to ensure suitably skilled and qualified staff work in the practice.

### **5.2.2 Is the dental team appropriately trained to fulfil the duties of their role?**

The dental team takes part in ongoing training to update their knowledge and skills, relevant to their role.

Mrs Barr was aware of the mandatory training to be undertaken, in line with any professional requirements, and the [training guidance](#) provided by RQIA.

A record was kept of all training (including induction) and professional development activities undertaken by staff, which is overseen by Mrs Barr to ensure that the dental team is suitably skilled and qualified.

The care and treatment of patients is being provided by a dental team that is appropriately trained to carry out their duties.

### **5.2.3 Is the practice fully equipped and is the dental team trained to manage medical emergencies?**

The British National Formulary (BNF) and the Resuscitation Council (UK) specify the emergency medicines and medical emergency equipment that must be available to safely and effectively manage a medical emergency. Systems were in place to ensure that emergency medicines and equipment are immediately available as specified and do not exceed their expiry dates.

There was a medical emergency policy and procedure in place and a review of this evidenced that it reflected legislation and best practice guidance. Protocols were available to guide the dental team on how to manage recognised medical emergencies.

Managing medical emergencies is included in the induction programme and refresher training is undertaken annually.

Mrs Barr confirmed that the dental team were able to describe the actions they would take, in the event of a medical emergency, and were familiar with the location of medical emergency medicines and equipment.

Sufficient emergency medicines and equipment were in place and the dental team is trained to manage a medical emergency as specified in the legislation, professional standards and guidelines.

#### **5.2.4 Does the dental team provide dental care and treatment using conscious sedation in line with the legislation and guidance?**

Conscious sedation helps reduce anxiety, discomfort, and pain during certain procedures. This is accomplished with medications or medical gases to relax the patient.

Mrs Barr confirmed that conscious sedation is not offered in Mercer Dental Care.

#### **5.2.5 Does the dental team adhere to infection prevention and control (IPC) best practice guidance?**

The IPC arrangements were reviewed throughout the practice to evidence that the risk of infection transmission to patients, visitors and staff was minimised.

The infection prevention and control measures to prevent transmission of respiratory illnesses in the practice was discussed with Mrs Barr. Mrs Barr confirmed that arrangements are in place to check the Department of Health (DoH) websites for further advisory information, guidance and alerts in this regard.

There was an overarching IPC policy and associated procedures in place. Mrs Barr confirmed there was a nominated lead dental nurse who had responsibility for IPC and decontamination in the practice. The lead dental nurse had undertaken IPC and decontamination training in line with their continuing professional development and had retained the necessary training certificates as evidence.

During a tour of some areas of the practice, it was observed that clinical and decontamination areas were clean, tidy and uncluttered. All areas of the practice observed were equipped to meet the needs of patients.

The arrangements for personal protective equipment (PPE) were reviewed and it was noted that appropriate PPE was readily available for the dental team in accordance with the treatments provided.

Using the Infection Prevention Society (IPS) audit tool, IPC audits are routinely undertaken by members of the dental team to self-assess compliance with best practice guidance. The purpose of these audits is to assess compliance with key elements of IPC, relevant to dentistry, including the arrangements for environmental cleaning; the use of PPE; hand hygiene practice; and waste and sharps management. This audit also includes the decontamination of reusable dental instruments which is discussed further in the following section of this report. A review of these audits evidenced that they were completed on a six monthly basis and, where applicable, an action plan was generated to address any improvements required.

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for clinical members of the dental team as it protects them if exposed to this virus. A system was in place to ensure that relevant members of the dental team have received this vaccination. Mrs Barr confirmed that vaccination history is checked during the recruitment process and vaccination records are retained in personnel files.

Discussion with one of the dental nurses confirmed that they had received IPC training relevant to their role and responsibilities and they demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of these procedures. Review of training records evidenced that the dental team had completed relevant IPC training and had received regular updates.

Review of IPC arrangements evidenced that the dental team adheres to best practice guidance to minimise the risk of infection transmission to patients, visitors and staff.

### **5.2.6 Does the dental team meet current best practice guidance for the decontamination of reusable dental instruments?**

Robust procedures and a dedicated decontamination room must be in place to minimise the risk of infection transmission to patients, visitors and staff in line with [Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices, \(HTM 01-05\)](#), published by the DoH.

There was a range of policies and procedures in place for the decontamination of reusable dental instruments.

There was a designated decontamination room separate from patient treatment areas and dedicated to the decontamination process. The design and layout of this room complied with best practice guidance and the equipment was sufficient to meet the requirements of the practice. Records evidencing that the equipment for cleaning and sterilising instruments was inspected, validated, maintained and used in line with the manufacturers' guidance were reviewed. Review of equipment logbooks demonstrated that all required tests to check the efficiency of the machines had been undertaken.

Discussion with one of the dental nurses confirmed that they had received training on the decontamination of reusable dental instruments in keeping with their role and responsibilities. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the decontamination process and were able to describe the equipment treated as single use and the equipment suitable for decontamination.

Decontamination arrangements demonstrated that the dental team are adhering to current best practice guidance on the decontamination of dental instruments.

### **5.2.7 How does the dental team ensure that appropriate radiographs (x-rays) are taken safely?**

The arrangements regarding radiology and radiation safety were reviewed to ensure that appropriate safeguards were in place to protect patients, visitors and staff from the ionising radiation produced by taking an x-ray.

Dental practices are required to notify and register any equipment producing ionising radiation with the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI). A review of records evidenced the practice had registered with the HSENI.

The practice has two surgeries each of which has an intra-oral x-ray machine and the equipment inventory reflected this. In addition, there is an orthopan tomogram (OPG) machine, which is located in a separate room however this piece of equipment is no longer operational. A review of documentation evidenced that the x-ray equipment had been serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

A radiation protection advisor (RPA), medical physics expert (MPE) and radiation protection supervisor (RPS) have been appointed in line with legislation.

A dedicated radiation protection file containing the relevant local rules, employer's procedures and other additional information was retained.

The RPS oversees radiation safety within the practice and regularly reviews the radiation protection file to ensure that it is accurate and up to date. Following the inspection RQIA received confirmation that Mr Mercer, Responsible Individual has nominated the RPS to entitle the dental team to undertake specific roles and responsibilities associated with radiology and ensured that these staff had completed appropriate training.

The appointed RPA must undertake a critical examination and acceptance test of all new x-ray equipment; thereafter the RPA must complete a quality assurance test every three years as specified within the legislation.

Mrs Barr confirmed that no new radiology equipment had been installed since the previous RQIA inspection.

The most recent report generated by the RPA during January 2023 evidenced that the x-ray equipment had been examined and any recommendations made had been actioned.

A copy of the local rules was on display near each x-ray machine observed and appropriate staff had signed to confirm that they had read and understood these.

Quality assurance systems and processes were in place to ensure that all matters relating to x-rays reflect legislation and best practice guidance. It was evidenced that all measures are taken to optimise radiation dose exposure. This included the use of rectangular collimation, x-ray audits and digital x-ray processing.

The radiology and radiation safety arrangements evidenced that procedures are in place to ensure that appropriate x-rays are taken safely.

### **5.2.8 Are complaints and incidents being effectively managed?**

The arrangements for the management of complaints and incidents were reviewed to ensure that they were being managed in keeping with legislation and best practice guidance.

The complaints policy and procedure provided clear instructions for patients and staff to follow. Patients and/or their representatives were made aware of how to make a complaint by way of the patient's guide and information on display in the practice.

Arrangements were in place to record any complaint received in a complaints register and retain all relevant records including details of any investigation undertaken, all communication with complainants, the outcome of the complaint and the complainant's level of satisfaction.

A review of records concerning complaints evidenced that complaints had been managed in accordance with best practice guidance. Mrs Barr confirmed that arrangements are in place to undertake a complaints audit to identify trends, drive quality improvement and to enhance service provision.

Discussion with Mrs Barr confirmed that an incident policy and procedure was in place which includes the reporting arrangements to RQIA. Mrs Barr confirmed that incidents are effectively documented and investigated in line with legislation. All relevant incidents are reported to RQIA and other relevant organisations in accordance with legislation and RQIA [Statutory Notification of Incidents and Deaths](#). Arrangements are in place to audit adverse incidents to identify trends and improve service provided.

Mrs Barr was knowledgeable on how to deal with and respond to complaints and incidents in accordance with legislation, minimum standards and the DoH guidance.

Arrangements were in place to share information with the dental team about complaints and incidents including any learning outcomes, and also compliments received.

Systems were in place to ensure that complaints and incidents were being managed effectively in accordance with legislation and best practice guidance.

### **5.2.9 How does a registered provider who is not in day to day management of the practice assure themselves of the quality of the services provided?**

Where the business entity operating a dental practice is a corporate body or partnership or an individual owner who is not in day to day management of the practice, unannounced quality monitoring visits by the registered provider must be undertaken and documented every six months; as required by Regulation 26 of The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

Mrs Barr is the nominated individual with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the practice and is responsible for reporting to the registered provider. Mr Mercer, Responsible Individual monitors the quality of services and undertakes a visit to the premises at least every six months in accordance with legislation. The most recent visit during July 2025 was recorded however, the report lacked detail regarding what the visit entailed. Advice and guidance was given and following the inspection and a sample Regulation 26 report template was emailed to the practice for future reference. Following the inspection RQIA received confirmation that any future reports of the unannounced monitoring visits will include more detail and will include any identified actions.

**5.3 Does the dental team have suitable arrangements in place to record equality data?**

The arrangements in place in relation to the equality of opportunity for patients and the importance of staff being aware of equality legislation and recognising and responding to the diverse needs of patients was discussed with Mrs Barr.

**6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement**

This inspection resulted in no areas for improvement being identified. Findings of the inspection were discussed with Mrs Barr. Registered Manager, as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.



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