

Inspection Report

7 April 2025



Belmont Orthodontics (Downpatrick)

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

Organisation/Registered Provider: Ms Grainne O'Regan and Mr Paul Clifford	Registered Manager: Mr Paul Clifford
Responsible Individuals: Ms Grainne O'Regan and Mr Paul Clifford	Date registered: 12 April 2018
Person in charge at the time of inspection: Practice Manager	Number of registered places: One
Categories of care: Independent Hospital (IH) – Dental Treatment	
Brief description of how the service operates: Belmont Orthodontics (Downpatrick) 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 one registered dental surgery and provides private and health service orthodontic treatment and does not offer conscious sedation. Ms Grainne O'Regan and Mr Paul Clifford also operate two other dental practices registered with RQIA which are Belmont Orthodontics Newtownards and Belmont Orthodontics Belfast.	

2.0 Inspection summary

This was an announced inspection, undertaken by a care inspector on 7 April 2025 from 10.00 am to 1.45 pm.

It focused on the themes for the 2025/26 inspection year and assessed progress with any areas for improvement identified during or since 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; management of complaints and incidents; and governance arrangements.

One area for improvement was identified against the standards regarding oversight of radiation safety within the practice.

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 inspection was facilitated by the practice manager.

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.

Two patients submitted responses. Patient responses indicated that they felt their care was safe and effective, that they were treated with compassion and that the service was well led. Both patients indicated that they were very satisfied with each of these areas of their care. Patient responses included comments that the practice was very well run, clean and staff were friendly and helpful.

One staff submitted a questionnaire response. The staff response indicated that they felt patient care was safe, effective, that patients were treated with compassion and that the service was well led. The staff member indicated that they were very satisfied with each of these areas 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 Belmont Orthodontics (Downpatrick) was undertaken on 20 September 2022; 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.

Mr Clifford and the area manager for Belmont Orthodontics oversees the recruitment and selection of the dental team and approves all staff appointments. Discussion with the practice manager confirmed that she had access to all recruitment documentation and that she had a clear understanding of the legislation and best practice guidance.

A review of the staff register evidenced that one new member of staff had been recruited since the previous inspection. A review of the personnel file of the newly recruited staff member 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.

The practice manager confirmed that members of the dental team have been provided with a job description, contract of employment 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.

During induction staff are provided with details of mandatory training to be undertaken and the frequency of this in line with any professional requirements, and the training guidance provided by RQIA. Following the inspection RQIA received confirmation that a training policy has been developed that outlines the mandatory training to be completed by staff.

A record is kept of all training (including induction) and professional development activities undertaken by staff, which is overseen by Mr Clifford and the practice manager, 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.

In the main systems were in place to ensure that emergency medicines and equipment do not exceed their expiry date and are immediately available. However, some of the medical emergency equipment had not been provided in line with the Resuscitation Council UK guidance. Following the inspection, RQIA received confirmation that the required equipment had been provided.

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.

The practice manager advised that members of the dental team are 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.

As a result of the action taken following the inspection sufficient emergency medicines and equipment are in place and the dental team are 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.

The practice manager confirmed that conscious sedation is not offered in Belmont Orthodontics (Downpatrick).

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 IPC measures to prevent transmission of respiratory illnesses in the practice was discussed with the practice manager.

It was confirmed that arrangements are in place in keeping with the Health and Social Care Public Health Agency guidance [Infection Prevention and Control Measures for Respiratory illnesses March 2023](#) and the [Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Northern Ireland](#). The practice manager regularly checks 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. Review of these documents demonstrated that they reflected legislation and best practice guidance. The practice manager 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. A review of a sample of staff personnel files confirmed that vaccination history is checked during the recruitment process and vaccination records are retained in personnel files.

The practice manager confirmed that members of the dental team had received IPC training relevant to their roles and responsibilities and they demonstrate 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 Department of Health (DoH).

There was a range of policies and procedures in place for the decontamination of reusable dental instruments that were comprehensive and reflected legislation, minimum standards and best practice guidance.

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.

The practice manager advised that members of the dental team 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 one orthopantomogram (OPG) machine, which is located in a separate room from the dental surgery. The equipment inventory reflected all the radiography equipment in place.

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.

A review of the file confirmed that the Employer had entitled the dental team to undertake specific roles and responsibilities associated with radiology and ensured that these staff had completed appropriate training. The RPS oversees radiation safety within the practice however it was noted that the annual review of the radiation protection file had not been completed by the RPS. Following the inspection RQIA received assurances that the radiation protection file had been reviewed by the RPS to ensure it is accurate and up to date, with any necessary action taken.

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.

The practice manager confirmed that no new radiology equipment had been installed since the previous RQIA inspection.

The most recent report generated by the RPA (25 September 2023) evidenced that the x-ray equipment had been examined. There was no evidence that the recommendations made in the report had been actioned. Following the inspection RQIA received assurances that the recommendations within the RPA report had all been actioned.

A copy of the local rules was on display near the x-ray machine observed. However these were not the current local rules corresponding to the most recent RPA report form September 2023. Following the inspection, RQIA received confirmation that updated local rules had been displayed near the x ray machine. Appropriate staff had signed to confirm that they had read and understood these. The practice manager advised the dental team demonstrate sound knowledge of radiology and radiation safety including the local rules and associated practice.

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 x-ray audits and digital x-ray processing.

As a result of the issues identified above regarding radiology and radiation safety one area for improvement has been made against the standards to ensure that the oversight of radiation safety within the practice is reviewed in line with best practice guidance and legislation.

Addressing the area for improvement will strengthen the radiology and radiation safety arrangements and procedures 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 their representatives were made aware of how to make a complaint by way of information on display in the practice.

Arrangements were in place to record any complaint received in a complaints register.

Advice and guidance was provided to further develop the complaints register to contain 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. Following the inspection RQIA received confirmation that this matter had been addressed.

A review of records confirmed that no complaints had been received since the previous inspection.

Discussion with the practice manager confirmed that an incident policy and procedure was in place which includes the reporting arrangements to RQIA. The practice manager 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.

The practice manager advised that the dental team are 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.

As a result of the actions taken following the inspection, it is determined that systems are in place to ensure that complaints and incidents are 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.

Mr Clifford is the nominated individual with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the practice. The registered provider monitors the quality of services and undertakes a visit to the premises at least every six months in accordance with legislation. Reports of the unannounced monitoring visits along with any identified actions were available for inspection.

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 the practice manager.

6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

Areas for improvement have been identified where action is required to ensure compliance with with the Minimum Standards for Dental Care and Treatment (March 2011).

	Regulations	Standards
Total number of Areas for Improvement	0	1

Areas for improvement and details of the QIP were discussed with the practice manager, as part of the inspection process. The timescales for completion commence from the date of inspection.

Quality Improvement Plan	
Action required to ensure compliance with the Minimum Standards for Dental Care and Treatment (March 2011)	
<p>Area for improvement 1</p> <p>Ref: Standard 8.3</p> <p>Stated: First time</p> <p>To be completed by: 7 April 2025</p>	<p>The responsible individual shall ensure that the oversight of radiology and radiation safety within the practice is reviewed in line with best practice guidance and legislation.</p> <p>Ref: 5.2.7</p> <p>Response by registered person detailing the actions taken: All recommendations have been actioned regarding radiology and radiation safety within the practice. RPS has completed the sheet in the radiology file to identify/confirm themselves as the RPS. RPS has reviewed the radiology file to ensure it is up to date and the annual review has been signed off. Entitlement forms have been updated/completed. Any recommendations from the RPA report have been actioned and signed off by the RPS. There is no further action required regarding the lead lining of the wall and a policy is in place when taking xrays as agreed with One Photon.</p>

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