

HOW I DID IT

Written by Dr Christian Gollings



Here, Dr Christian Gollings explains how he set up his new dental practice in Ringwood, the gateway to Dorset...

My wife and I met at dental school over 25 years ago and it has always been a wish of ours to start our very own dental practice together.

Both of us, though, have worked in different practices, waiting until the time was right to realise our dream.

That time came last year. We were both in the position to set up a squat practice in a nearby town called Ringwood. We both had the financial resources and expertise to make the endeavour a success and the circumstances in Ringwood were just right. Two of the principal dentists already in the area were preparing to retire, which gave us the opportunity to start something new. I started by looking for a property, which involved me just scoping out potential premises. That's when I saw one building in the middle of renovation and I thought it would be perfect for our needs. I actually slipped a letter through the door saying I was interested in the property and what I wanted to do with it.

I was incredibly surprised when the owner of the property turned out to be one of my current patients! He had actually been travelling the 10 miles from his home in Ringwood to my practice in Highcliffe – and this essentially sealed the deal. He was just as enthusiastic about me setting up a dental practice on his doorstep as I was. We agreed that if the pre-planning application was



successful, I would buy the building from him. Fortunately, the D1 application was approved and we bought the property in May 2015.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Since the property was a 1930s residential property, we wanted to maintain the classic look throughout. Nevertheless, we needed

an architect to draw up the plans for a two-surgery practice that would make the best use of the available space. This, along with all the necessary submissions and applications, took approximately six months – but I wasn't in any particular hurry. I was still working at my previous practice and had budgeted for six months of planning and six months of renovation before we started trading.

It was important to me that the practice had a homely, non-clinical aesthetic. I was keen to incorporate the original-looking wooden doors and make a comfortable environment for my patients. To that end, our waiting room is more akin to a lounge than a clinic; it's carpeted and it's comfortable.

I also wanted to continue this trend throughout the rest of the practice. My surgery is very minimalistic. There's not a lot of equipment on show, just the chair in the middle of the room; the chair-side delivery and suction systems are all tucked away. I think this is an important decision to make and one that needs to suit your individual

THE PRACTICE

Southfield Dental Practice

115 Christchurch Road
Ringwood
Hampshire
BH24 3AQ

TELEPHONE: 01425 489283

WEBSITE: www.southfield-dental.co.uk

THE ETHOS

We are a private practice and offer treatment for all ages from young children to care of the elderly. The practice is owned by dentist couple Mr Christian and Mrs Caroline Gollings.

The team is complemented by a very experienced dental nurse, Lilli; and receptionist, Julie.

Our facility is a fully compliant and newly refurbished clinic with modern equipment and ground-floor facilities for less-able patients.

60
SECOND
TOUR



preferences. I wanted to create a space that patients wanted to be in, where they knew we would be giving them great service. My wife, in particular, was very keen to make a practice that would be welcoming for those patients who suffer from dental anxiety. The result was a bespoke, personal and uncompromisingly

comfortable private practice.

INSTALLATION

We then worked with Qualident on the actual installation of the surgery. I have known Russell for the last 16 years (I'm his dentist!) and in fact, when he first formed Qualident in

local Christchurch, he asked me if I would be his first installation. He designed and fitted a lovely room in my old practice and actually used it as his showroom until he was up and running properly. Even now, over 15 years later, that surgery is still in top condition, which is a testament to Russell's prowess. ►

PRACTICE DESIGN

It was a pleasure, therefore, to ask him to come and fit out my new practice. He supplied all of the equipment, including an A-dec 400 and LED light, a new OPG machine, cabinets, worktops and the suction and compressor systems. The quality of his work is exceptional – in fact, I often joke with him that he simply can't survive on repeat business: he always does such a good job the first time round!

I knew from the start I wanted to use A-dec. I've used their systems before and found them to be simple, cost-effective and good quality – which is ideal for my practice. They also offer a wide range of options on delivery systems, so I was able to choose something that synergised with the way I like to work. My patients like the chair too – and often comment on how comfortable it is.

GROWING THE PRACTICE

Our practice is now up and running, we already have about 200 patients on the books. My wife and I have decided to try a more intimate approach to increasing our patient numbers. We don't have Facebook or Twitter and I haven't invested much in external marketing. At the moment we're relying on word-of-mouth recommendations





and that seems to be working well for us. It may seem a bit old fashioned, and takes a little more patience, but it suits the way we like to work – and it gives us more time with our individual patients to form a strong relationship with them.

The result is a practice we're both very happy with. I offer general dentistry and dental implants – which is one of our main selling points since no other dentist in Ringwood can do so – and my wife works in family dentistry and also has an interest in facial aesthetics. Our second surgery is utilised on a part-time basis by our hygienist. It's a great place to work and our small team seem to really like it – as do our patients.

I think if you want to undertake a project

like this, you need to be really motivated and excited about it. There's no doubt it will be hard work and managing all of the different aspects involved, while also ensuring that it'll be successful, is difficult. You need to have a solid plan and stick to it, as well as understand what it is you personally want to achieve. When you start from scratch you have the benefit of final product that is exactly a reflection of what you personally value, and the patients will normally leave that as feedback. ●

COMPANIES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Qualident

Surgery equipment

TELEPHONE: 01202 477528

WEBSITE: www.qualident-dental.com

A-dec

Dental chairs

TELEPHONE: 0800 2332 85

WEBSITE: www.a-dec.co.uk

COMMENTS TO PRIVATE DENTISTRY

@ThePDMag