

Refurbishment profile – West Calder Dental Care



The former council building was opposite the old practice

Paul Roberts took over West Calder Dental Care in 2006 after the former owner, Marie Montgomery, left to start a family. The practice had been in operation for 12 years and consisted of just two surgeries along with a shared waiting room and reception area.

With a growing patient list and new contamination guidelines to adhere to Paul soon decided that he needed to find new premises if he was going to be able to fit in an LDU and provide room for expansion. In 2007 Paul started looking for a new building in the local area and as luck would have it the house opposite the current practice was on the market.

After spotting their advert in Scottish Dentist Paul contacted Dereck Lang of SAS Shopfitters for advice as to whether this building would be suitable to convert from a residential property into a four-surgery dental practice. Dereck visited the site with Paul, advised him that it would be ideal and Paul bought the new property in February 2008.

However, it would be another year before work could start converting the building due to a major problem with planning permission. Paul had already enquired as to the change of use for the building before he bought the property but the planning permission was referred to the Scottish Building Standards Agency who indicated that Paul might need to install a disabled lift into the new practice.

The new lift would have set Paul back in the region of £150,000 with ongoing maintenance costs on top, meaning he might have to reconsider the whole project if they ruled one was required. The ruling

dragged on for months with Paul phoning, emailing and writing to the council for clarification in an attempt to resolve the issue. It even got to the stage where he enlisted the help of his local MSP Gavin Brown who wrote to the council himself in an effort to speed things up.

Much to Paul's relief the ruling came back that the practice didn't require a disabled lift and, 12 months on from buying the property, in February this year work began on converting the building. After recruiting an architect to design the new internal layout of the building Paul brought SAS Shopfitters back on site and they designed the layout and finish of all the surgeries as well as the reception area, waiting room and LDU.

Paul said: "I can't praise Dereck and his team from SAS enough, they were extremely helpful throughout the building work and their attention to detail was second to none. Every aspect of the practice was thought through, such as patient flow and how the staff will be moving around the various areas within the practice."

Paul explained how during the building work he would spend most nights walking around the new premises seeing how the work was progressing and jotting down ideas and details that came to mind. When he took these notes to the team from SAS they never complained and always did their very best to accommodate Paul's wishes. Although, he readily acknowledges that they had often thought of the details before Paul had brought them up with them!

The new practice was opened at



One of the refurbished surgeries



The waiting area and reception

the end of May and the feedback from both staff and patients has been extremely positive. Paul explained that before the building was converted into a residential property it was owned by the council and a number of Paul's patients have since approached him saying that they used to pay their rent in the building. They have also remarked that they are glad it has been put to good use as it had laid empty for around two years prior to Paul buying it.

Paul's staff have also raved about their new place of work which provides them with more space and more light than the old practice. Paul explained that they were so short of space that they had to use the waiting area as a staff room so that they could have lunch, which meant closing the practice for an hour whilst they all had their break. The new practice has a separate waiting room, reception area as well as a spacious new staff room so that staff can relax in comfort and enjoy their lunch break.

As of the beginning of August Paul has got all four of the new practice's surgeries up and running meaning they have a full complement of four dentists, six dental nurses, a receptionist and practice

manageress Donna Touray. Paul explained that he couldn't have completed the move if it wasn't for Donna's impeccable organisation and managerial skills. Donna not only helped orchestrate the move but had vital input with regards to the design of the practice from colour scheme and other style ideas to more practical concerns. She also interviewed all the candidates for the new staff positions and made sure the existing staff were happy in their new environment.

And despite a few early teething problems with smoke alarms and over-eager fire doors, the staff have settled into their new surroundings perfectly. Paul explained that the new practice is brighter and airier than the previous one creating a better working environment as well as a more comforting surroundings for patients. In fact Paul has seen a marked increase in patient enquiries, which have tripled, as word spreads through the area of the new and improved practice. So, despite the initial headaches and wrangles over planning permissions which took the best part of a year to overcome, Paul insists it has all been worth it in the end as he contemplates a rosy future in his new practice.