

# *How I did it*

**Dr Arshad Ali** details the highs and the lows of opening the  
**Scottish Centre for Excellence in Dentistry**



On 28 April 2009 I realised my dream with the official opening of the Scottish Centre for Excellence in Dentistry.

The centre took nearly two years from design to completion, but the idea – a plan to have a purpose-built practice with the facilities to provide our own patients, our referral patients and GDPs with an exceptional experience – started many years prior to this.

## Aspirations

I established the Niddrie Square Clinic in 2001, but due to the continued growth of the clinic, we had quite simply outgrown the building and the need arose to move.

During this time, I feel we were building the foundations, gaining knowledge, fine-tuning expertise and building a team that would lead us forward. As a practice, we were ready for the next stage in our development but I knew finding the right building in the right area would be a challenge. It took more than a year to find the business park location where I acquired a 7,240sqft shell building.

My aspirations were for the centre to feature the epitome of modern design with clean lines, an abundance of natural light, space for everyone to flourish and first-class equipment and furnishings. I chose Issy Spector from aiBDA Architects to do the design. Having seen some of his projects previously, I felt his style, flair and professionalism fitted the bill.

The planning stage took nearly six months, with several adjustments to make sure it was exactly what we wanted. One of the main highs to this project was actually gaining planning permission; it meant we were actually on our way.

The centre was to have 25 rooms:

- Five surgeries
- One consultation room
- One operating room
- One dental hygiene room
- One decontamination room
- One CT scanner room
- One OPT room
- One payment office
- One treatment co-ordinator room
- Two reception areas
- One on-site laboratory
- One staff and seminar room
- Four staff offices
- One call centre
- One alternative therapy room
- One staff refreshment area
- One staff gym with shower facilities.

## Building commences

Having finalised the plans and chosen a team of equipment and services suppliers, building work commenced in August



PRACTICE FACT FILE

The practice:

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2007. The budget for the project was £3 million – this was split between £1.5 million for the building, £850,000 for the fit-out and £650,000 for the equipment. Funding was organised through the bank and although agreed, it was to prove very troublesome later into the project.

I knew the project was going to take around 18 months to complete and during that time we needed to all keep working at the existing practice to keep the business going. For this reason, we chose a local project manager and local fit-out company. Many evenings after work I would visit the site, check on progress and talk through any challenges.

The building part of the project took 12 months to complete and we had our fair amount of setbacks – many of which were due in no small part to building over a very bleak winter in Glasgow! That said, the highs compensated for this when I saw the building coming together and exceeding all my expectations.

The fit-out started in August 2008 and lasted until February 2009. During this time, we also commissioned a local PR company and Designer Dental to handle the branding and marketing. We decided on similar branding to the old clinic for continuity. However, the name of the business needed to change because the original one was location-based: Niddrie Square Clinic, based in Niddrie



**Top left:** The main waiting area for patients **Top right:** The second waiting area for patients  
**Bottom left:** The fish tank in the main waiting room is one of Dr Ali's favourite features and provides an eye-catching focal point **Bottom right:** The Scottish Centre for Excellence in Dentistry's call centre



Square. We wanted a name that was memorable and reflected the very essence of the centre – I chose Scottish Centre for Excellence in Dentistry. This name needed approval from the GDC and the Secretary of State.

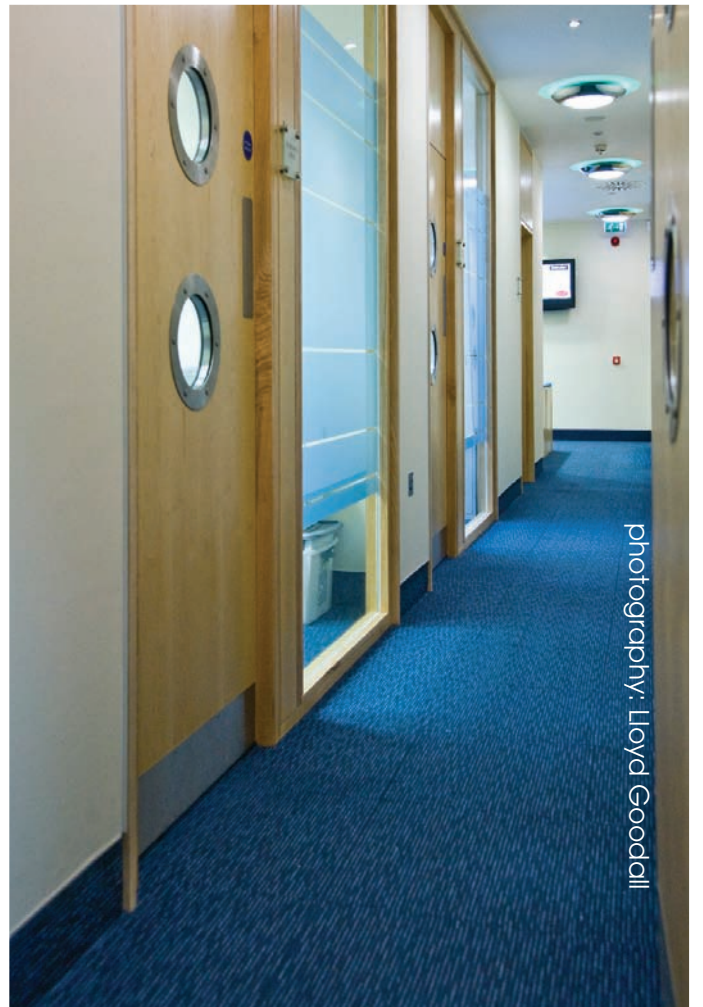
Every piece of equipment and fitment was chosen with quality and longevity in mind. I decided early on in the project that there would be no cutting corners, both in workmanship and cost. I wanted everything to be first-class, fit for purpose with no compromises. It came at a cost, but I reasoned that I was only going to do a project of this size once, and I wanted to get it right.

### The equipment

All surgeries have A-dec and Belmont side delivery units with full fibre optics, built-in scalers and intra-oral cameras. All of the surgeries and the hygiene room have LCD screens, with one surgery having an adjoining consultation area. Each surgery has digital intra-oral radiography and Lole LED operating lights, apart from the surgical room that has a Brandon LED three-pod surgical light with an in-built Sony video camera. This room also has a ceiling mounted camera and a two-way radio link to our seminar room, which is used during our live teaching days. Three surgeries have Global operating microscopes. We have a plant room with Cattani compressors and suction, with back-ups for both in the event of either failing.

To aid in diagnosis and treatment, we have an i-CAT cone beam CT scanner and a Kodak 8000 digital OPG machine. All the CT and radiographic images are networked throughout the centre.

We have two main patient waiting areas – one on the ground floor and the other on the first floor. The main waiting area has the eye-catching focal point of a combined large marine fish tank and seating area. This has to be one of the favourite features among both staff and patients.



photography: Lloyd Goodall

**Above:** The staff refreshment area

**Bottom:** One of the many connecting corridors in the centre



Top left: The branding is visible throughout the centre Top right: The decontamination room  
Bottom left: The on-site laboratory Bottom right: The decontamination room  
Opposite page: One of the five surgeries at the centre



### **GDP course facilities**

One of the main aims of creating a new spacious centre was to have more facilities for referring dentists. I wanted to expand the range of courses offered. To do this we needed a seminar and refreshment room, and an operating room and IT links to all surgeries. We are now able to offer all our referring dentists excellent on-site facilities and for GDPs who attend our year-course, the facility of bringing their own patients to the centre to treat, while learning under our supervision, is offered.

### **On-site laboratory**

As a large centre we wanted our own on-site laboratory. The laboratory is equipped to a high standard and has two full-time technicians. This decision has proved to be very successful. Our technicians will often see our patients with us, which helps greatly, especially when replacing teeth in the aesthetic zone. We have very close communication throughout the laboratory stages and can often make adjustments while the patient is present. This helps us manage our cases more efficiently.

### **Finding the perfect team**

Of course, you can't have a perfect practice without having a perfect team. We have specialists in restorative dentistry, prosthodontics, orthodontics, periodontics, implantology, endodontics, as well as oral and maxillofacial surgery. I'm also delighted to have Dr Frances Paterson on my team who specialises in hypnotherapy.



Top: The surgeries at the centre all incorporate state-of-the-art equipment  
Bottom left: The i-CAT cone beam CT scanner Bottom right: Music is networked around the centre  
Opposite page: The hypnotherapy room



The clinical team at the centre includes Dr Abid Faqir, Dr Ross Jones, Dr Mark Lang, Dr Alan Maxwell, Dr Frances Paterson, Professor Robert Yemm, Mr Andrew Carton, Mr John Devine, Mr Stuart Hislop, Professor Khursheed Moos, and myself. I consider myself very lucky to have Dr Robin Duckworth and Dr Chris Greenhalgh, two specialist anaesthetists, working alongside me.

The clinical team is not alone. We also have the laboratory team (Kevin McLaughlin and Rodger McLaughlin); the nursing team (Fiona Anderson; Lesley Chalmers; Elaine Docherty; Pamela Douglas; Sandra King; Claire Sweeney; Lisa Twaddle; Fiona Wylie; Clare Dempsey; Vicky Partridge; Melissa Marshall and Suzanne Gibson), and the admin/reception team (Nassim Ali; Kay Cuthbertson; Lorraine Eccleson; Heather McCaffery; Angela McGill).

Both our hygienists, Marie Dorrian and Louise Warden, as well as our facial aesthetic nurse, Karen Addison, provide crucial services at the centre. So too does our IT consultant Ian Wilson.

At the planning stage I wanted to ensure that the whole team would benefit from the new centre, so we included a spacious refreshment and kitchen area, shower facilities and a fully equipped gym. These have been great decisions and all help to create a positive team morale.

### **PR and marketing**

As soon as the centre's name had been chosen, it was all systems go with the PR and marketing. Press releases were sent out to local newspapers, magazines and business journals.

With the help of Designer Dental, we produced eye-catching literature, patient packs, GDP packs, leaflets, postcards, adverts and posters. We also





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Above: The changing room

organised a comprehensive website ([www.scottishdentistry.com](http://www.scottishdentistry.com)).

This is really just the start of our PR and marketing, as we have an ongoing budget for this area.

### The bombshell

I mentioned the issue of funding earlier. Six weeks before we were due to pay for the building, the bank pulled the finance. This had to be one of the lowest points in the project and one of the most worrying. With only weeks to go we needed to re-finance. We managed to do this with the same bank but with new terms. The relief when this was agreed was immeasurable.

### The official opening

The project was completed in February 2009. We held the official opening on 28 April to celebrate with everyone who was involved in the project. The team and invited guests could take a look around and enjoy the achievement of the project. The centre was opened by Lord Smith of Kelvin and the unveiling of the plaque was done by Nicola Sturgeon, MSP for Glasgow Govan. It was a great day for everyone; a day when the project was officially finished and a day of reflections.

I am absolutely delighted with the project outcome and it has given us the facilities to grow, move forward and evolve. In our first year, we won many awards, including Best Practice Scotland in the Dentistry Awards and Highly Commended Practice of the Year at the Private Dentistry Awards. We were also recognised as one of the Leading Dental Centers of the World. We are the only centre in the UK outside London to achieve this and one of 37 centres in the world to have been awarded this accolade. **PD**