

‘Why are there no dentists for children?’

As **Kunal Patel** opens his latest practice – **Love Teeth Kids** – we find out what made him focus on paediatric dentistry

With all the headlines drawing our attention to a growing recruitment crisis, or a lack of NHS funding, there is another problem area within dentistry that seems to be slipping through the net.

A shortage of paediatric dentists has been spoken about on numerous occasions over the past few years within dentistry. And this has resulted in practices specifically targeting child patients becoming even more rare.

But it's a trend Kunal Patel, owner and clinical director of the Love Teeth brand of practices, is looking to reverse.

A practice made for kids

‘The last few years have been a huge disaster for children’s dentistry in the UK – before we start even looking at NHS dentistry,’ Kunal Patel points out.

‘The waiting lists are ridiculous.

‘I looked around and now I’ve become a father, I’ve got two young boys and a 14-year-old daughter.

‘Who will look after their teeth? If I’m not there, who would I really trust? Where are the specialists?’

‘It’s virtually impossible to find one.

‘That was part of the reason I realised, this is where we have to go.’

Love Teeth Kids held its official launch on Friday 28 October, inviting members of the profession and local community to join and celebrate.

Built from the ground up with children in mind, the practice includes a games station for children to play while waiting, a lounge area filled with replica toys from popular Disney films and TVs throughout the practice to help distract nervous children.

‘This was supposed to be an adult clinic. It was always planned as an adult clinic,’ Kunal explains.

‘It was my Barclays Bank growing up. So, it always



had a special place.

‘Three months ago, my son said to me: “Daddy, why are there no dentists for children?”

‘I explained we’ve got all these dentists and I’ve taken him to the clinics.

‘He replied: “But they’re not for children, they’re for big people”.

‘All of a sudden, I realised I was going against what I believed in. And that was listening to people.

‘I’d stopped listening because I was so engrossed and I was focused.’

It was then that Kunal made it his mission to open

a child-focused dental practice.

Membership only

Walking through the dental practice, everything is colourful and fun – built for a child’s eye.

There is nothing ‘typical’ about the dental practice, however. The glass partitions mean when a patient isn’t in the surgery, children can see the dental chair and all the equipment the dentists and dental team use.

It enables them to get used to the sights and sounds of the surgery, while still in a comfortable environment.

The five surgeries are also bright and airy. And each contains a TV on the ceiling to help distract any nervous patients.

‘Every single patient has to sign up to a membership plan,’ Kunal points out.

‘What we want to stop is one-stop dentistry – it’s our mission as well.

‘That means you can’t just pay for a filling, or you can’t just pay for a checkup as a new patient.

‘We want to make it membership only.

‘That makes it more preventative over restorative.

‘We’re going in low with cheap membership plans.

But we want patients who are willing to invest in themselves. Because most of the work has to happen with them every day at home.

‘We will invest time back into you, providing you’re willing to invest time in yourself.’

Incredible growth

Love Teeth Kids is the latest practice to launch under the rapidly growing Love Teeth umbrella.

Now numbering five practices, Love Teeth is based in Surrey. The focus is on ‘achieving amazing smiles for patients’ – but working with the patient to achieve this.

And Kunal doesn’t intend to stop here. With four practices opened over the last 12 months, he has plans for another early next year.

‘We started in 2014 and then very quickly, three years down the line, I became the leading provider of

Invisalign,’ Kunal says.

‘We went from 95% NHS to 95% private. And I thought these were normal numbers.

‘We became a three dental surgery chair practice turning over £3.5 million.’

But it was during Covid-19 and networking with friends and colleagues that Kunal noticed his figures and growth were different from what others were experiencing.

A workflow that works

‘During Covid-19, we had some time to sit down,



pause and think about what made us special or different,’ he continues.

‘It was our workflows. I figured out it was just the way our workflows were working and I thought – let me prove the concept.

‘Let’s see if I can just multiply this across practices, because it was a very simple workflow. I wasn’t doing anything special that I thought.

‘During the pandemic, I heard all the banks were shutting down.

‘So, I decided to focus on Barclays because Barclays traditionally always acquired the best plots in every town.’

And from there, one thing led to another before Kunal had bought five additional sites he intended on converting to dental practices.

And with five practices down and a sixth in the pipeline, Kunal is proving his workflows are working – and he is showing no signs of slowing down either.

But he’s also formed growing relationships with contractors and his ‘amazing dental team’.

‘We’re actually starting the next site – we’re not supposed to,’ he points out.

‘I just had a baby so I’ve promised my family until the end of this year, I’ll give them some time.

‘And, just as important, the contractor that’s working with me.

‘He’s become my best mate. He’s made sacrifices like me. I need to give him a bit of a break.

‘The contractor is called Dentalux and his name is Karl. He’s been phenomenal.

‘From the start, we’ve been nonstop every day in each other’s pockets.’

With such phenomenal support, bulletproof workflows and a dedicated team willing to put fancy dress on to help launch Love Teeth Kids – Love Teeth Dental is well on the path to transforming dentistry not just for adults, but whole families in Surrey. **D**