Your quarterly news update from Sintons
Dental practice set for investment after changing hands

A family-owned dental practice is set to receive significant investment after being sold by its long-standing former owners, in a deal completed by a number of North East dealmakers.

Ridgeway Dental Practice, in Chester le Street, has been owned by Paul and Marjorie Ridgeway since 1996, and has grown significantly during that time.

The practice has expanded from its original home on the town’s High Street into much larger premises on South Burns, increasing from one to six surgeries and raising patient numbers five-fold to 25,000. Ridgeway Dental Practice now has seven dentists working there and employs 13 other people.

Now, the practice has been sold to Dr Anjali Malhotra and her husband Rajan, who are now planning to invest in their new fast-growing business – which is adding 100 new patients a month to its books – fast-growing business – which is adding who we believe will bring the business on. It was important to us not to sell to a big corporate, but instead someone who would have the same approach as us and run it as a family business.”

Anjali, who graduated with her Masters in dentistry earlier this year, said: “The opportunity to purchase Ridgeway Dental Practice was the next step for me in my career and I was delighted when my offer was accepted.

“T worked in the practice as an associate while my sale agreement was being prepared, which gave me the time to get to know and understand the practice, patients and the staff. I think this really helped with the announcement of the sale so the transition was easy, as I was already part of the family.

“The future of the practice has never been stronger. It truly is an exciting time to be part of Ridgeway Dental Practice and I am grateful to have an experienced team working alongside me to support the future vision of the practice, building on the strong foundations that Paul started 20 years ago.”

The sale of Ridgeway Dental Practice was brokered and completed by dealmakers at law firm Sintons, accountants UNW and specialist business property advisor Christie & Co, all of which are prominent advisors in the healthcare sector and have collectively overseen a number of major deals in this sphere.

Paul and Marjorie – whose two sons are following in their father’s footsteps by becoming dentists – admitted it was a “wrench” to sell their flagship practice after so many years but will retain ownership of another dental surgery in Wallsend.

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The Malhotras were represented by Betsan Powell from JCP Solicitors in Swansea and John Minford from Minford Chartered Accountants, York.

“Following a successful marketing campaign and multiple bids being received, we found the perfect buyer. The business sold in excess of the original asking price, highlighting the continued demand for dental practices across the region with demand outstripping supply.”

The Malhotras were represented by Betsan Powell from JCP Solicitors in Swansea and John Minford from Minford Chartered Accountants, York.

Paul Graham, director at Christie & Co, handled the sale. He said: “It was great to be part of this significant sale and work alongside Amanda and Alan, who helped ensure a smooth transaction. Paul and Marjorie leave an excellent dental legacy for Anjali to develop further. We wish all parties the very best for their respective futures.”

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Alan Suggatt, head of the dental business unit at UNW, said: “We are delighted to have helped Paul and Marjorie sell their practice and thrilled that the buyer Anjali was another UNW client – although sadly, due to a conflict of interest, we couldn’t act for both parties in the transaction. Paul and Marjorie leave an excellent dental legacy for Anjali to develop further. We wish all parties the very best for their respective futures.”

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Developing Innovative Solutions to Support the Development of NHS Non-Clinical Services.

QE Facilities Limited (QEF) was established in 2014 (as a subsidiary of Gateshead Health NHSFT) to create a new model for the delivery of non-healthcare services to the NHS. The creation of the subsidiary has been a catalyst for change, leading to significant improvements and efficiencies in the delivery of non-clinical services. QEF is recognised as a successful, innovative company with a clear ethos and culture directed at improving non-healthcare services to the NHS.

Primarily a property and facilities management company, we have diversified into a number of successful markets. We recognised that QEF, and the NHS as a whole, has a significant amount of experience in delivering a wide range of services.

This experience is not only recognised in our knowledge of the specific industry but also how those industries need to provide services to the NHS which are fit for purpose for customers. Our main aim is to reduce the cost of running hospital services for our clients; this can take many guises but primarily focuses on efficient management of procurement routes and re-structuring the workforce roles to provide flexibility, more interesting work and better skilled people who can effectively and efficiently deliver our service to our clients. We recognise that our Parent company is our client in the normal business sense; however our people have a real understanding that every patient and visitor to our hospitals is also our client.

OUR SERVICES
As we have mentioned, QEF’s primary business is to deliver property and facilities management to our Parent. However, in the past four years we have built other businesses which reflect our core goals of providing innovative services to the NHS and wider business community.

We have established two further brands, to differentiate our service offerings - QE Procurement and QE Integrated Solutions.

A further brand is in the process of being created - QE Transport Services.

QE PROCUREMENT
The QE procurement team launched a nationally available framework for the provision of Clinical IT solutions. Unlike many framework agreements this framework is free to access and will provide support for NHS Trusts during all phases of the procurement. The framework has been advertised in OJEU and offers NHS organisations the ability to procure compliantly, complex IT solutions quickly ranging from small departmental systems through to Electronic Patient Record systems.

Trusts have the option of awarding contracts under the framework via an opening of competition or as a result of a direct award. Unlike some frameworks, the final specification for the Trust’s requirements is set by the Trust ensuring the specification meets every detail of the Trust’s requirements. These solutions are supported by NHS standard contracts which are tailored to the local set of requirements. As a result the Trust will procure a tailored solution with a contract to match, which represents value for money.

The framework team will review the specification to ensure the questions are as targeted as possible for the requirements. The framework team are not clinical and therefore cannot build a specification or comment from a clinical perspective. However with the years of experience in the team a review of the specification will be done with the aim to tighten questions and remove ambiguity.

The cross functional experience of the team will also support the Trust in ensuring the technical specification elements are phrased tightly to minimise the opportunity for error or misinterpretation.

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REVIEW
The procurement strategy is vital to ensuring the procurement progresses minimising the ability for challenge. While a challenge can never be fully mitigated, having a robust strategy for the procurement, document release and information exchange with the bidders will mitigate the opportunity for procurement challenge as far as it can. The framework manager at QE Procurement will work with the Trust team to ensure the strategy is robust, effective and efficient, meeting Trust timelines and objectives.

QE TRANSPORT SERVICES
This is our VAT compliance and advisory arm, delivering VAT services primarily to the NHS but also to subsidiary companies of NHS bodies and companies that deliver goods and services to the NHS.

QE Integrated Solutions is a fledgling business that employs highly experienced NHS VAT specialists with over 60 years of NHS VAT experience in its senior manager group. QE IS is in a unique position; our close working practices with our Parent provide us with insights which are not available to other VAT advisors. We understand both how the NHS works and how the VAT is applied. This distinctive approach has enabled QE IS to deliver significant savings to our Parent through our close working relationship with the information technology team, senior officers of the Trust and clinical teams.

Our consultancy business provides advisory services to other NHS bodies that are considering establishing a subsidiary company of their own. Our team includes specialists in estates, facilities, human resources, procurement, VAT and finance.

Our services are designed to enable NHS bodies to establish robust subsidiary companies using the ‘Gateshead Model’. It is our objective to provide the benefit of our experience to avoid the pitfalls that we and our Parent encountered on establishing QEF, whilst enabling the subsidiary to develop its own identity, vision and focus.
This includes an extension of the service to cover weekend work to alleviate the pressure within the hospital. This is in line with the clinical strategy to provide 7 day working. This has also enabled QEF to work much more closely with the FT staff to manage the discharge lounge and enable a better flow from ward to home. This fits around the SAFER bundle which discharges patients ensuring 50% of discharges happen before 12 noon daily.

QEF also provides a homecare pack for our most vulnerable patients and ensures they have everyday essentials at home such as bread, milk, tea, coffee etc. The feedback from patients has been outstanding.

HOSPITAL PRESENTATION AND ESTATE MAINTENANCE
QEF prides itself on the cleanliness and high standards of maintenance seen from the eyes of patients. We constantly ensure that even the oldest parts of the estate are kept in good physical condition, clean and refreshed.

We have adapted zonal inspection where building officers from other zones check each other’s independently to ensure all faults and problems are identified and dealt with quickly. We have new shift patterns, new multi-skilled craftsmen and an in-house small works team who have, for example, fitted out our outpatient pharmacy saving 38% against a commercial alternative provider.

We have in-house painters who manage an effective programme all year round to make everything look good. This has resulted in savings from previously external contracts.

Both our 2017 & 2018 Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE) have once again scored above the national average.

Our Estate management team have become so well renowned we have won work on another acute site from a neighbouring trust where we deliver savings for them with well received accolades from staff on the receiving site.

STOCK MANAGEMENT AND INTEGRATION
The subsidiary handles all stock for the FT and has specialist procurement staff who have instigated savings of £1m per annum by better buying and efficient management of stock, consumables and specialist theatre instruments. Our CSSD department now works with theatres more closely than ever before and manages theatre trays which alone have saved £330k per annum.

QEF CURRENT CONSULTANCY PORTFOLIO

- Procurement Services inc Clinical IT, financial and AI frameworks
- Outpatient Pharmacy Service
- Drugs distribution services
- Supply of Medicines to home
- Pathology Courier Service
- Patient and staff Transport Service
- Specialist VAT advice
- Consultancy Services
- Asset Valuation
- Estates & Facilities
- Conflict resolution training

AREAS WHERE QEF HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOPED:

- We have taken over the estates function of a nearby Trust. This function had previously significant areas of non-compliance, difficulties in recruiting and training staff, poor culture and workforce morale and as a result provided a poor quality of service. In the 18 months that QEF has taken over this service it has been transformed to being fully compliant, recruited to full establishment, improved culture and morale and received excellent feedback on the responsiveness and quality of service provided.
- Set up a national clinical IT framework which has already procured significant levels of investment
- Provision of a specialist NHS VAT consultancy service
- Provision of a consultancy service to assist other Trusts to set up their own subsidiary company in line with the ‘Gateshead model’
- Set up a small works building service
- Brought in-house a 3rd party security service
- Provision of conflict resolution training services to local Trusts
- Set up an outpatient prescription pharmacy service
- Provision of hospital at home service and licenced drugs distribution
- Set up a specialist pathology courier service providing services to 2 adjacent Trusts
- Took over the patient transport services from a 3rd party provider
- Set up a range of transport services such as shuttle bus, taxis and general courier services
- Recently awarded a pathology courier services contract for Coventry and Warwickshire Pathology hub. This is a significant contract which is currently being delivered by 16 separate providers.

OUR EMPLOYEES
The QEF corporate pillars of Professional Proud and Passionate are reflected in the staff survey results which see year on year improvement. We recognise that our people are key to our success and as a business we are committed to recognising individuals and teams whose customer service or innovation goes over and above that normally expected.

WHAT THOSE EMPLOYEES SAY
Overall the results of the most recent QEF Staff Survey show a positive picture. Many scores have improved when compared to the last NHS Staff Survey the Trust undertook in 2015 which included estates & facilities staff pre transfer. As a result, we achieved excellent staff survey results which see year on year improvement. We achieve very good retention and recruitment of staff across all disciplines based on our local terms and conditions.

In areas where the FT previously had retention and recruitment problems, we have been able to address this by paying higher salaries than before, we have for example employed multi-skilled craftsmen at £6k above AFC rates and now have a more efficient and higher skilled workforce. All new staff are subject to the auto enrolment within the NEST pension scheme.

At the point of the creation of QEF, the Trust transferred 80 Estates employees into the newly created subsidiary.

Due to the success of the organisation, we currently employ over 640 employees which will increase still further as the business continues to expand.

SAVINGS ACHIEVEMENT
As a result of QEF’s success, the Gateshead Group is currently saving circa around 4% of the Trust’s annual turnover.

Industry awards to date:
- Gold and platinum Go Sustainability Awards
- Regional and national winners of RICS awards for infrastructure
- Finalist for Go Procurement awards
- Finalist for HSJ Finance Director of the Year
- Winner HSJ Estates and Facilities Management Team

Information on QE Facilities Limited the company and its services is available at www.qefacilities.co.uk

If you would like to find out more about how QEF could help your organisation please contact:
Mr Robert Anderson, Company Secretary and Business Development manager
ghnt.qef.enquiries@nhs.net
What is life as a non-executive director like?
I have been a non-executive director for the last 22 years. How and why did I become one? As a senior partner in a firm of solicitors working full-time it was perhaps not an obvious choice to consider taking on an extra role. However, I can say that being a non-executive director has undoubtedly enhanced my life as a lawyer and as an individual and I would recommend it to all but with some caveats.

1. My route to becoming a non-executive director
I was originally approached by the Association of Women Solicitors to ask whether I would be interested in being a board member on the newly formed NHS Trust. I said that I might be interested, but in truth I had little idea of what the job might entail. I submitted my curriculum vitae and thought little about it. About a year later I was telephoned to ask whether I was still interested and I indicated that I was. I was interviewed by the Chief Executive and the Trust Chair and was appointed to the Freeman Hospital NHS Trust in 1997. I have to admit that I had done little homework and had little concept of what my role would be.

This is not a recommended route and indeed today I am sure that I would not be appointed given the stringent interview process that now takes place!

To say that it was a baptism of fire is a bit of an understatement. Although my family is a hugely medical family I have no personal background in medicine and indeed at that time I knew nothing of the structure of the NHS. I had to learn fast and I did! Nowadays new non-executive directors go through lengthy induction processes to immerse you in the NHS Trust to which you have been appointed.

2. What is the role of a non-executive director?
The primary role of any non-executive director within the public sector is to hold the executive directors to account and to ensure that the organisation operates within good governance standards. In light of Northern Rock and the many subsequent corporate disasters, the role of the non-executive director has been looked at with a far greater degree of interest than at any time previously. I have always been of the opinion that a non-executive should almost always be prepared to ask the stupid question and interrogate the responses. The question is always “Why do we do it this way” even if a particular system or process has been in place for some time.

3. What does the Board get from its non-executives?
It should get perspective and constructive challenge. Perspective cannot be underestimated. It is difficult for a long established executive director to have the perspective which comes from someone who has not spent their entire working career within that organisation or sector. Sometimes a fresh look can really produce fresh ideas.

4. What does the non-executive get from their involvement?
I felt that I had made a contribution to the NHS and to patient care and I have benefited from the ability to see how the world works in a completely different sphere. I think it has made me a better lawyer and perhaps even a better person. There are not a lot of jobs where you can say this has happened!

It is hard work and the commitment has been huge but really worthwhile.
Spotlight on Keith Land

Keith qualified as a solicitor in January 1999. He is a partner and Head of the Employment Team and is the lead in the management and delivery of HR and employment law advice at Sintons.

EXPERIENCE
He has 19 years’ PQE and is widely recognised as an expert in his field, being ranked in Band 1 by Chambers and Partners and being described by one source as “by far the best employment law specialist I have worked with in my career. He provides excellent advice, is incredibly knowledgeable, and solutions-orientated”.

Keith acts for clients in and out of the Employment Tribunal and within the public and private sectors, including the NHS, transport, retail, education, manufacturing and construction.

Within the Employment Tribunal Keith is an exceptional and highly experienced litigator with a great eye for detail and a natural ability to weigh up the strategic and cost considerations for clients and has represented hundreds of clients in the Tribunal.

He handles the most complex matters on behalf of clients and recent matters include:

• Successfully defending multiple unfair dismissal claims following the transfer of health services between two NHS providers;

• Defending a claim of unfair dismissal and disability discrimination arising from the dismissal of an employee by reason of his conduct and the guidance of employers through performance management matters & the successful defence of subsequent claims for disability discrimination arising from the actions taken.

In the Legal 500 2018 Guide Keith was praised for his “measured, honest and practical approach”, with his team being described as “always offering reasoned and appropriate advice”.

The Chambers UK 2019 Guide again recognised Keith as being a notable practitioner.
Sintons Law

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