

Could you please tell us about your background?

EL: Of course. I grew up near Oxford, the youngest of three and my father a pilot for British Airways so I had an amazing childhood, spending every school holiday travelling the world. I spent my undergrad years at Bristol University, then chose to move to London for vocational training, followed by two years Maxillofacial Surgery hospital jobs at UCLH, GOS and Guy's and King's. I then specialised

in orthodontics at the Eastman, a fantastic but hard three years leading to a MSc with distinction and the MOrth from the Royal College of Surgeons of England, allowing me to enter the specialist register for orthodontics.

What or who made you choose a career in orthodontics?

EL: I was interested in studying medicine but dentistry appealed more with the manual dexterity aspect and at the time more favourable working hours. So I spent my teenage work experience in the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Orthodontics Dept of the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and was totally inspired during this time. I nearly went down the maxfac route after dental school but after senior house officer jobs I knew orthodontics was my preferred choice.

Tell us more about your practice and how it is structured.

EL: I work at Harley Street Dental Clinic, which is situated in a beautiful Georgian townhouse on Harley Street filled with artwork. It's a multi-specialist practice over four floors with all aspects of dentistry under one roof, one of the

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main reasons I am based here. I've worked in several practices over the years and this made me appreciate the value of working as a team with all areas of dentistry in one place. Often new patient appointments are booked, for example, with a general dental check-up, a hygienist appointment and a consultation with me all on the same day. The patient feels that they are receiving an efficient service and as a clinician I know the patient is receiving the best care. So many adult patients have early periodontitis and to work on the same day as our periodontal specialist to see the patient jointly is really advantageous.



Digital dentistry and orthodontics

Specialist orthodontist **EMMA LAING** from the Harley Street Dental Clinic explains how incorporating digital dentistry into her orthodontic practice has resulted in more satisfied patients

Fact file

QUALIFICATIONS: BDS, MFDSRCS(Eng), MSc, MOrthRCS(Eng)

POSITION: Specialist in orthodontics, Harley Street Dental Clinic

DENTAL INTERESTS: Multi-disciplinary cases, labial and lingual fixed appliances, Invisalign, orthognathic surgery and digital dentistry innovations

INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF DENTISTRY: Spending time with my young children, keeping fit and travel.

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Can you tell us more about your work with Invisalign?

EL: I've been an Invisalign provider for ten years now. To be honest I was initially reticent about it having had such conventional training in which we only used fixed braces. So as my first patient I treated myself, having had some relapse since teenage orthodontic treatment. I was impressed by the ease of the treatment process, how comfortable the aligners were and the aesthetics. Interestingly I was seeing so many patients for consultation who never noticed that I was wearing aligners despite my gummy smile so this really made me think it was a very aesthetic and acceptable appliance to wear. More recently I have been using the iTero scanner and that has again improved my stance on Invisalign, via streamlining the treatment process and turnaround times and patient experience.

How has digital dentistry changed the way you work?

EL: In the 10 years I've worked as a specialist orthodontist in Harley Street, digital dentistry is undoubtedly the most significant advancement to affect my practice. Yet many patients don't know this, nor how far things have come, how easy their treatment has become and how fast and accurate. I was asked by Invisalign's PR recently to hold a 'digital smile awareness day' to promote this to the public, and the day really made me reflect on how far things have advanced now.

The patients I consulted had had previous fixed braces years ago, poor retainer wear, and their teeth had

moved. They really didn't like their teeth and had that self-conscious feeling of showing them. Even as the scanner went around their mouth they weren't keen to see their teeth on the screen, despite my excitement of the detail it shows. But equally the suggestion of braces again was an absolute no. They had busy lives and did not need any hassle with their treatment.

When I had the iTero Outcome Simulator through to show potential results suddenly the penny dropped. Those cynical views were gone and the 'wows' were heard. Not just the first patient but all of them. They certainly did not think those changes were feasible nor with such an aesthetic appliance. And they thought the scan was so easy to have done, so it gives a good impression of treatment that is to come. We live in a customer-led environment where we quite rightly want to see what we are getting for

our time and expense. And to see it now, not wait several days or weeks. That's the beauty of what the iTero scanner does for us and our patients.

An amazing part of my job now is that I feel I can truly offer patients what they've been looking for. Much faster, accurate, easy treatment processes that don't interrupt their work or social or home lives. Ten years ago, I couldn't offer treatment modalities with such ease. Even with Invisalign there were messy moulds and a slower turnaround time to get a Clincheck and then the aligners through. I ended up encouraging more conventional treatment because I knew it would lead to great results, hoping that this would sell it, despite the treatment process. But many just wouldn't go through this. So, without doubt I am now signing more patients up since the advent of the scanner and the advances in Invisalign aligner treatment.



How important is patient communication to you?

EL: It is the most integral part of what I do and the essence of informed consent. Everyone we see is permitting us to examine and treat them so of course we must explain things in their entirety. I find the use of visual aids such as the iTero scanner very beneficial. Like the saying goes that a picture tells a thousand words, I have found the power of photography, scanners and just letting the patient hold a mirror at each and every appointment ensures I engage with them effectively. When I had orthodontic treatment as a child I remember my headgear being fitted with minimal explanation and I haven't forgotten it to this day.

Are there any products that you couldn't live without in your practice?

EL: The iTero Scanner, DB Orthodontics Ixion instruments and Earl Grey tea.

What do you think about all the controversy in orthodontics today and general dental practitioners practicing short-term orthodontics?

EL: A dental degree encompasses all aspects of dentistry including orthodontics hence it is only natural that dentists wish to perform orthodontic procedures. There is also a reason for a three-year speciality programme in orthodontics. I see no issue provided dentists appreciate the need for specialist input in more complex cases.

How have patient expectations changed over the years?

EL: Patients are more informed than ever with so much dental information online. It can be beneficial that patients come with more background knowledge about treatments they would consider yet this does not replace the skill of an experienced clinician so it can work both ways. Frequently their only concern is anterior alignment when I know there are more pressing occlusal issues.

How do you stay abreast of modern techniques?

EL: I love learning hence spending eight years at university. But finding time can be difficult. I've recently really enjoyed



the Invisalign e-connect seminars as an hour of learning in the evening is convenient to fit in. WiN lingual's online resources are similarly good.

Professionally, what are you most proud of?

EL: This would be winning the Gold medal from Bristol University, a distinction in my orthodontics MSc and becoming an orthodontic specialist at the youngest possible age. But since becoming a mother I've been proud to be a working mum. With two children under three and taking just a few weeks maternity leave for each, my life changed immeasurably but in a good way.

Where do you get your motivation and drive from?

EL: Right now this comes from my kids as I find it hard being away from them so it has certainly made me more motivated and efficient. My drive started from my parents. My mum had three of us under age five to look after, which I now appreciate must have been

exhausting. And my dad's work ethic whilst still making time for each of us was remarkable. He was always either at work or do building works and it really hit home how hard they'd worked for us when I had my own family.

How do you relax in your spare time? How do you balance work and family life?

EL: The balance between work and family is certainly a challenge and it has tested me and my husband to be supremely organised. My husband is really hands-on with our boys and has always supported me working despite being so busy himself. There often don't seem to be enough hours in the day, but I've equally loved the chaos of a young family. Seeing my children having fun and stimulated by the simplest of things makes you really appreciate these times. My youngest loves poking his fingers around peoples' teeth so perhaps he will be the next dentist in our family. The travel bug was instilled in me from an early age and nowadays I grab every opportunity to travel. I look forward to travelling more with my kids also.

What are your plans for the future?

EL: Work-wise, to continue as a specialist, hopefully continually improving my standards and the experience patients receive, and specifically getting more involved in digital dentistry. But equally keeping that balance with home life. It makes a difference to regularly take breaks away from dentistry and put things in perspective. 