Costed Corporate Plan General **Dental** 2024 - 2026 Council



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## Foreword from Interim Chief Executive and Registrar

The GDC is the UK-wide statutory regulator of around 120,000 members of the dental team, and our primary role is protecting the public and ensuring that they have confidence in the dental professionals we regulate.

Our Costed Corporate Plan (CCP) sets out what we will do over the next three years, the fees that we charge, and includes our forecast of income and expenditure for 2024, as well as reporting on our progress and achievements in 2023.

2023 was the first year of our Corporate Strategy for 2023 – 2025 and our priorities around public protection remained unchanged. We introduced a new strategic goal that did more to recognise that risks affecting the public's safety and wellbeing are dealt with by the right organisations. As part of this, we brought together stakeholders across the sector into a Dental Leadership Network where we and they share challenges and issues with a view to finding common ground and ways we can work together.

Throughout 2023 the dental sector continued to face different pressures and challenges. Our research pointed to the dental system continuing to be overstretched. This included increased patient demand and more evidence of a shift in dental professionals moving away from NHS dental services to the private sector, creating significant access issues to NHS services for patients.

We remain committed and will continue to press for the opportunities that legislative reform may bring, but it cannot be guaranteed and will not resolve all existing issues. Therefore, we will continue to drive improvements within our current constraints while supporting and empowering the dental team to deliver safe and effective dental care to high standards of professionalism.

Notable achievements in 2023 included completing a review of our Fitness to Practise communications, to improve their tone of voice and to ensure they meet the principles of plain English; bringing the Specialist List Assessed Applications in-house to address ongoing stakeholder concerns and to streamline the process; and undertaking a work pattern data collection project as part of our efforts to deepen understanding of the dental workforce. We also implemented a number of new back-office systems to improve our operational effectiveness, including a new finance system that launched in January 2023, and a new data warehouse.

As we start 2024, we know that new priorities, not on our initial plan, such as Provisional Registration, will require significant work. However, I remain confident in our Costed Corporate Plan and how it will enable us to play our part in working with the whole dental sector to deliver the government's plans for the recovery of NHS dentistry, which include more legislative change regarding how we register overseas dental professionals.

Despite the changing priorities, we have been able to deliver much of what we set out to do at the start of 2023. Our plan for 2024 – 2026 will enable us to continue to deliver against our regulatory remit.

#### **Gurvinder Soomal** Interim Chief Executive and Registrar



## 2. Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2025

Our Corporate Strategy for 2023 – 2025 is the next step on a longer journey in achieving our long-term ambition of moving dental professional regulation increasingly toward preventing harm to patients and the public, rather than responding to the consequences of it.

Our role in public protection remains unchanged, while our strategy recognises that we need to modernise, and improve our performance in some areas.

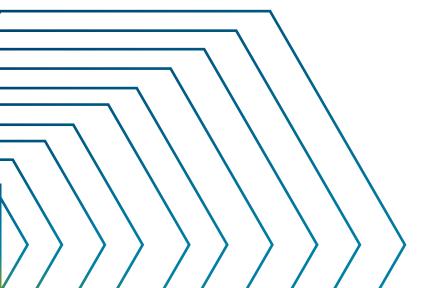
This Corporate Strategy sets out our further steps to continue to move the balance of our effort towards prevention in a different context of public protection, dental care and regulation. The implementation of this strategy faces a number of challenges including the delays and uncertainty over the plans to reform the health professional regulators, which is an essential component to achievement of our ambition, and the economic uncertainty that continues to affect patient choice, dental businesses, individual dental professionals and the GDC.

Flexibility and adaptability remain essential for us to respond to the challenges the sector faces, and this strategic plan builds in agility to be able to respond to a changing set of circumstances.

We will continue to press for the opportunities that legislative reform may bring, but it cannot be guaranteed and will not resolve all existing issues. Therefore, we will continue to drive improvements within our current constraints while supporting and empowering the dental team to deliver safe and effective dental care to high standards of professionalism.

Whatever context we face, our purpose remains constant: to protect the public.

At the core of what we do is ensuring that the register is maintained so that the public only receives dental care from safe and effective dental professionals. Flowing from this central task are our functions and processes, which we perform on behalf of the public and in co-operation with the professions, the sector, and other regulators. We will continue to perform these functions and processes and make them more efficient and effective.



Integral to the achievement of our strategy are our four new strategic aims. All our activity is aligned with one or more of these aims:

Strategic aim	Description
1	Dental professionals reach and maintain high standards of safe and effective dental care
2	Concerns are addressed effectively and proportionately to protect the public and support professional learning
3	Risks affecting the public's safety and wellbeing are dealt with by the right organisations
4	Dental professional regulation is efficient and effective, and adapts to the changing external environment



### 3. Review of the 2023 Plan

2023 was the first year of our Corporate Strategy for 2023 – 2025, which was approved by Council following extensive stakeholder engagement and sets out our priorities until the end of 2025.

Throughout 2023 the dental sector continued to face different pressures and challenges. Our research pointed to the dental system continuing to be overstretched. This included increased patient demand and more evidence of a shift in dental professionals moving away from NHS dental services to the private sector, creating significant access issues to NHS services for patients.

#### 2023 - 2025 strategic aims

Strategic aim	Description
1	Dental professionals reach and maintain high standards of safe and effective dental care
2	Concerns are addressed effectively and proportionately to protect the public and support professional learning
3	Risks affecting the public's safety and wellbeing are dealt with by the right organisations
4	Dental professional regulation is efficient and effective, and adapts to the changing external environment

#### 2023 CCP project summary

Throughout the year we monitored our planned activity to determine whether we continued to deliver our statutory purpose of maintaining patient safety and public confidence. There were 50 projects on our workplan for 2023. Of these 50 projects:

- 12 were completed.
- 23 are in progress and remain on track for delivery in 2024 or 2025.
- Six had their end dates moved, due to changes in resource availability, scope and schedule.
- Six were stopped and removed from the plan. Of these, two were combined with other projects, one
  was moved into business as usual activities and three were cancelled as they were either no longer
  relevant or deprioritised due to other activities on our workplan.
- Three are on hold awaiting decisions that may change the current project scope and start dates.

Status	Strategic aim 1	Strategic aim 2	Strategic aim 3	Strategic aim 4	Total
On track or completed	9	7	1	18	35
End date moved	2	0	0	4	6
On hold	0	0	0	3	3
Stopped	1	2	0	3	6
Total	12	9	1	28	50

#### **Achievements and progress in 2023**

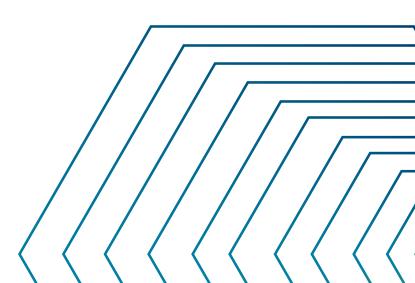
We progressed and delivered an extensive programme of projects and other activity in 2023. Examples of some of these pieces of work are described below, to reflect the wide range of activities we undertook to help us meet our regulatory remit.

We have listed these achievements in an order that highlights those that we feel will be of most interest to or have the greatest impact on dental professionals and stakeholders.

#### Improving the tone of our fitness to practise communications

Communicating in plain English, in a way that is easily understood by our audiences, is key to building trust. Consistency in tone of voice reinforces messaging over extended periods of time, avoids confusion and provides greater clarity to complex messages. Being trusted is central to our role as a regulator. We know that the fitness to practise (FTP) process is difficult for dental professionals who have a concern raised against them, and our research showed that the tone of voice in our FTP letters was a contributory factor to this. In 2023 we reviewed all our FTP communications and letters, to improve the tone of voice and ensure that they were rewritten using plain English.

The updated letters have been in use since the start of 2024 and the changes have been well received by stakeholders.



#### Work pattern data

Following stakeholder engagement, we undertook a work pattern data collection project as part of our efforts to deepen the professions' understanding of the dental workforce.

This activity resulted in the development of a short questionnaire where we asked dental professionals to share a few details of their working patterns. The first phase of this work was completed in December 2023 when dentists were asked, on a voluntary basis, to answer a small number of work pattern questions as part of their annual renewal. Dental care professionals will be asked to participate as part of their annual renewal in 2024.

We were able to address this challenge as we are in the unique position of having the most complete data available, a list of everyone who is registered to practise dentistry, across all the sector and the four nations of the UK.

We did not carry out this work in isolation, and we worked closely with stakeholders from across the sector, including the professional associations and Chief Dental Officers across the four nations, to gain support and buy in, and to encourage dental professionals to respond to the survey questions.

The responses we receive will help us and others to better understand:

- Where dental professionals are working.
- · What they are doing.
- The number of hours they are working.
- · Whether they are working in NHS or private practice.

We are doing this because having a better understanding of the working patterns of the dental workforce will provide the profession with valuable insights that can help support future workforce resource planning and provide useful evidence in developing the changes t that the profession and patients want and need.

We published the initial findings from the dentist work pattern data in March 2024.

#### Student and new registrant engagement programme

Ensuring that students and new registrants understand who the GDC is and what we do, and what it means to be part of a regulated profession, continues to be an important area of engagement for us. This programme is now in its fifth year, and in the 2022 – 2023 academic year we held 42 student and new registrant engagement sessions, engaging with around 3,200 people.

This included over 2,100 first and fifth year BDS students, 800 foundation/vocational dentists and over 250 dental hygienist and dental therapist students.

Dental nurse students are based across the UK in a variety of settings, and it is difficult to bring them together in large numbers. Therefore, in addition to the presentations, we recorded a series of short webinars, that we shared with professional associations and awarding bodies, and made available on our website.

#### New to UK dental practice

It is important that we help those who are new to UK dental practice to enhance their understanding of how public safety and confidence is promoted, where to access support and how to maintain their registration.

In addition to running a UK-focused student and new registrant programme we have also identified the need to engage with new dental professionals who have qualified outside the UK. Almost 50% of new dentists who joined the register in 2023 qualified outside of the UK. Following a pilot, we established a programme of webinars, targeted at this important group of dental professionals. The first event was held in October 2023, with over 100 people attending. Further sessions are planned throughout 2024.

#### **Dental Leadership Network**

We convened the Dental Leadership Network (DLN) in late 2022 and established it as a key engagement forum for dental leaders from across the professions in 2023, with events held in March, July and November.

The DLN is an opportunity for dental leaders from across the four nations to come together to discuss and highlight the key challenges and opportunities facing the profession and share how they are addressing these.

The objectives of the DLN are to share information and build relationships, create a better understanding of everyone's remit, priorities and shared challenges and encourage collaboration and ownership to resolve shared challenges.

The topics discussed in 2023 included 'Developing the whole dental team' in March, 'The system from the perspective of dental professionals' in July and 'The system from the perspective of patients and the public' in November.

Around one third of event attendees provided feedback. Feeback from stakeholders has been very encouraging with 100% of those who provided feedback in November, saying they believed that there were good or excellent opportunities to participate, compared to 83% for the event in July. In addition, 100% of attendees who provided feedback in November rated the overall event as good or excellent, compared to 93% for the event in July.

#### **Bringing Specialist Lists Assessed Applications (SLAA) in-house**

Dental professionals who are considered to be specialists provide a valuable role in oral healthcare in the UK. However, the process to assess applications to join the specialist lists had historically experienced some challenges. At the start of 2023 we decided to administer the process ourselves, to address concerns, streamline the process, and to make changes to the process for considering appeals.

Previously, all SLAA applications to join a specialist list were referred to the relevant Specialist Advisory Committee (SAC) to assess and make a recommendation on whether the dental professional demonstrated an equivalence to a UK Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST). They would then be admitted to the applicable specialist list.

In August 2023, following the recruitment of 43 panellists, the process was brought in-house. Nine panels were completed in the last three months of 2023, and it is anticipated that the backlog will be cleared by the end of March 2024.

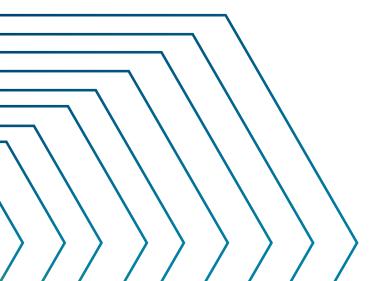
#### **Encouraging stakeholders to feedback on our consultations**

In 2023 we held seven consultations. We engaged with stakeholders on each of these to seek their views and to encourage them to respond to on our proposals. Six consultations closed in 2023 and the seventh closed in February 2024.

Several of these consultations related to our standards and guidance covering the safe practitioner framework of behaviours and outcomes for dental education, a revised scope of practice guidance, updated guidance on indemnity and insurance, and guidance on reporting matters. We also held several consultations relating to fitness to practise covering revisions to guidance for the Interim Orders Committee, and on the format of our hearings.

Finally, we consulted on the routes to registration for internationally qualified dentists and dental care professionals.

The consultation outcomes reports have been published and can be found on the <u>consultations section</u> <u>on our website.</u>



#### International registration

Following several years' discussion, negotiation and collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care, legislation was passed that had the following effect from 8 March 2023:

- The GDC is empowered to consult on and make Rules governing our international registration processes.
- The current Overseas Registration Examination (ORE) rules were revoked by the Order but were "saved" for 12 months, meaning that they continued to have effect until 8 March 2024.
- An individual holding an overseas primary qualification as a dentist is unable to apply for registration as a DCP.
- ORE candidates affected by the combination of the rule requiring both parts of the examination to be completed within five years and the suspension of the examination during the pandemic, had their time calculation discounted by the period of the exam suspension.

This means that from March 2024, our international registration processes are governed by new rules. We consulted on these rules in 2023, and they were approved by the Council in December.

Applications from dentists who qualified overseas but who applied to the DCP register have not been accepted since 8 March 2023. Applications received before that date will continue to be processed.

We received very large numbers of applications prior to the closure of the route, resulting in a backlog, of 5,700 applications. We dedicated additional resources to address this backlog, and by the end of 2023 over 2,000 applications had been assessed by registration assessment panels, resulting in over 1,200 registrations. In addition, we increased our panel assessment capacity from 150 per month in October to 250 per month in December and will continue with this increased assessment capacity in 2024. However, we don't anticipate clearing this backlog until the end of 2024.

We also reviewed the capacity for the ORE. We increased the capacity for the part one exams from 200 to 600 per sitting, increasing overall capacity from 400 to 1,200, and increased the number of part two exam sittings from three to four, increasing capacity from 432 to 576 per annum. This increased capacity will continue in 2024.

Work continues in 2024 to improve registration routes for professionals who have qualified overseas and who wish to work in the UK.

#### Improving how we work with associates

Associates are a vital part of the regulatory workforce, essential to many or our core activities such as assuring standards of education and conduct

Two projects completed in 2023 improved how we work with associates. The first considered the various groups, how they are used and how to optimise their work. The second established a database of our associates to enable more effective management. This included improvements to the associate recruitment and appointment process, engagement, workforce planning, development, remuneration and workforce reporting.

#### Implementing new systems to improve service to registrants and organisational effectiveness

Back office systems remain critical to our operational effectiveness and efficiency. We implemented several new back-office systems in 2023, including a new finance system that went live in January 2023. We are already seeing efficiency benefits as a result.

We introduced a new data warehouse to update systems that were no longer able to do what we needed them to. Our new system offers improved management information reports, providing up to date performance data for managers.

Registration with the GDC is, for most dental professionals, a one-time experience and we want it to be simple and not reliant on printing and posting paperwork.

We started the Paperless Office Programme in 2023, which is a service improvement project to explore the introduction of paperless registration services for both UK and overseas registrants. The project is progressing to plan, and the tender process for a software provider to support this service commenced in early 2024.

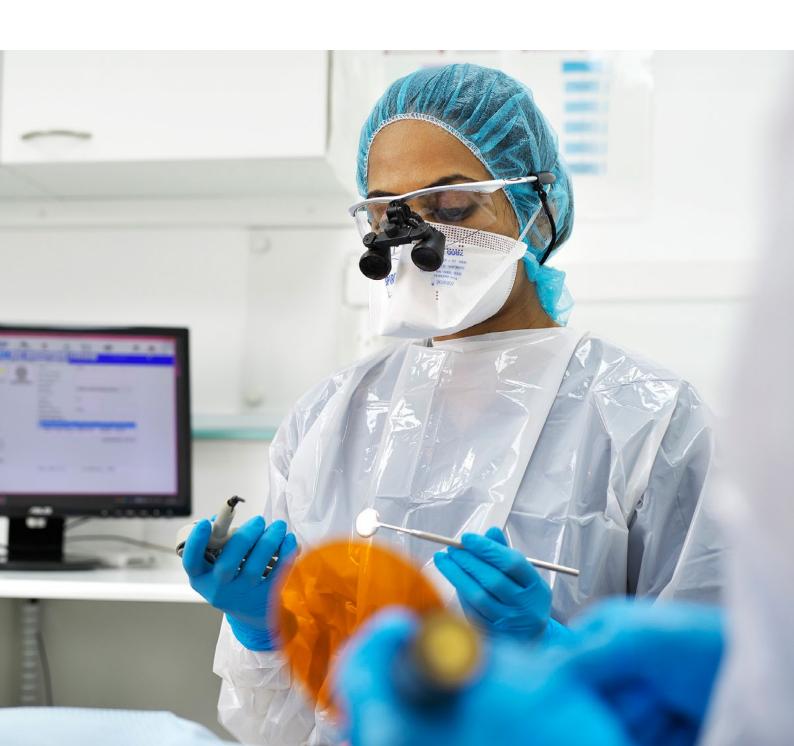
Once complete, this work will enable a more efficient and effective way of registering with the GDC. It will allow applicants to have a more streamlined experience, without the added costs of printing and posting records. The GDC will also benefit from having electronic records rather than paper archives, meaning that records will be easily accessible and physical storage requirements reduced.

All these systems will contribute towards improving our systems and processes for increased efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach.

#### **Regulatory reform**

The government consulted in 2023 on legislation which enables the first step in reform of professional healthcare regulation. We carried out detailed analysis of the legislative proposals and submitted a comprehensive response to the public consultation. While the initial reforms are focused on the General Medical Council, the legislation is designed to provide a template for professional regulation more widely.

We continue to engage with the government on the development of reform plans, despite there being no timetable for GDC reform.



## 4. Work programme for 2024 – 2026

There are 36 projects in the 2024 – 2026 work programme.

Our planned activities have been mapped across to one strategic aim. As with previous years, whilst we recognise that some projects will contribute to multiple strategic aims, we have allocated projects to a single aim.

A target year is provided for each project, indicating when it is scheduled to be completed. These timings are based on the information available during the planning period (Q4 2023) and are subject to a changing external environment and organisational priorities.

Of the 36 projects in the 2024 – 2026 work programme, 32 projects are on the workplan for 2024. Of these 32 projects, 24 are 'flow through' projects that started in previous years, and eight are new projects that will start in 2024.

Of the 36 projects on the work programme, 17 are due to complete in 2024, 15 in 2025 and three in 2026. There is one project where the end date is not yet confirmed.

One project, 'Implementing new Welsh language standards', has a speculative start date, as it is reliant on legislative change and subject to external timelines. This will be monitored throughout the year.

We continue to focus on ensuring that dental regulation is efficient and effective and adapts to the changing external environment (strategic aim four). This aim is focused on the organisation and how we perform, ensuring we have the right systems, processes, and technology in place. Improved effectiveness and efficiency should free capacity and enable us to shift more of our resource towards upstream regulatory efforts which anticipate and address potential public protection issues before they become problems.

The CCP only details the project work we plan to complete and does not include all our normal business as usual (BAU) activity that we undertake to ensure that we are able to deliver against our regulatory remit of ensuring public safety and public confidence in dental services. The cost of this BAU activity is included in the financial information, detailed in section 5.

This BAU activity includes our Registration and Customer Service teams, Fitness to Practise functions, Strategy, and the wider support functions. The costs for these BAU activities have been allocated to the relevant strategic aim, along with the project costs to provide a total cost breakdown, by strategic aim, for all the planned work and activities over the next three years.

In addition, we know that new priorities, not on our initial plan, such as Provisional Registration, will require significant work. We will continue to review our plan throughout the year to ensure we are able to deliver our planned activities.

Details of the forecast expenditure by strategic aim can be found in section 5.

#### Details of the 2024 – 2026 workplan, by strategic aim and year of completion

#### Strategic aim 1

Dental professionals reach and maintain high standards of safe and effective dental care

#	Strategic aim 1 projects due to complete in 2024
1.1	Revise the standards for education
1.2	Revised international registration processes
1.3	Indemnity models
1.4	Specialist list assessed application
#	Strategic aim 1 projects due to complete in 2025
<b>#</b>	Strategic aim 1 projects due to complete in 2025  Outcome-focused model for lifelong learning
1.5	Outcome-focused model for lifelong learning
1.5	Outcome-focused model for lifelong learning

#### Strategic aim 2

Concerns are addressed effectively and proportionately to protect the public and support professional learning

#	Strategic aim 2 projects due to complete in 2024	
2.1	Strengthen the separation of the adjudication function	
2.2	Complaints resolution	
#	Strategic aim 2 projects due to complete in 2025	
2.3	FtP decision making guidance	
2.4	Software for empanelment and Hearings procedure	

#### Strategic aim 3

Risks affecting the public's safety and wellbeing are dealt with by the right organisations

#	Strategic aim 3 projects due to complete in 2024
3.1	Digital communication improvements

#### Strategic aim 4

Dental professional regulation is efficient and effective, and adapts to the changing external environment

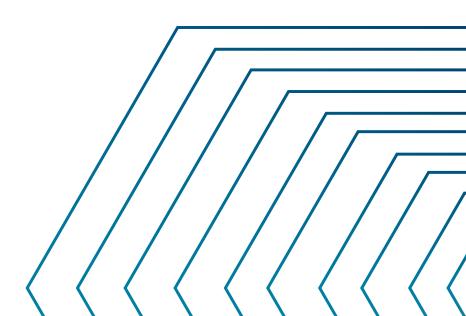
#	Strategic aim 4 projects due to complete in 2024
4.1	Case management and operational improvements to hearings process
4.2	Improving communications and support
4.3	IT hardware, infrastructure & peripherals upgrade
4.4	Paperless registration operations supporting registrant self service
4.5	Review and improve the intranet
4.6	Implementing new Welsh language standards
4.7	SharePoint upgrade
4.8	Total reward
4.9	Replace credit card processing systems
4.10	UK registration paperless
4.11	Windows 11 upgrade rollout

#	Strategic aim 4 projects due to complete in 2025
4.12	Registration operations - developing CPD process
4.13	CRM data quality review and clean up
4.14	Applications fees review for strategy cycle
4.15	Non-UK paperless registration
4.16	SharePoint document management
4.17	Registration improvements
4.18	Regulating modern dentistry
4.19	Implement new procurement and contract management process
4.20	Workforce development
4.21	Improve planning and delivery of the CCP portfolio

#	Strategic aim 4 projects due to complete in 2026
4.22	Post delivery review – paperless office
4.23	Replace the GDC's websites

There is one project that will be started in the 2024 – 2026 period but does not at this stage have a planned completion date confirmed. This is:

rategic	trategic aim	Strategic aim	e Strategic ain
		GDC estate 4	of GDC estate 4



### 5. Forecast expenditure and income

#### Forecast expenditure by strategic aim 2024

The total forecast expenditure for three year period from 2024 to 2026 is £127.6m, compared with the agreed budget for 2024 of £126.3m, which is an increase of 1.0%. This is due to the increased resource requirements across our support services as part of our ensuring compliance and inflationary pressures.

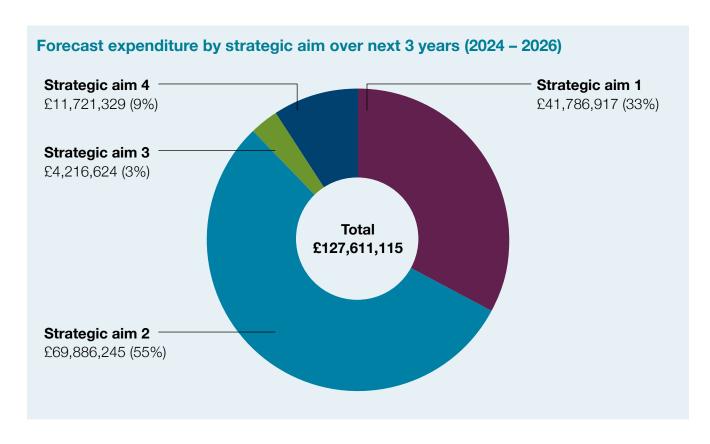
The total 2023 provisional expenditure outturn is £39.3m, which is an underspend of £4.2m against the budget. The main reasons for the reduction are:

- An underspend in our staff cost budget due to unplanned staff vacancies and increased recruitment lead times throughout the year. This further impacted on our ability to deliver planned work.
- An underspend in our legal team activity as a result of the deferred activity in the Fitness to Practise process, which was due to staff vacances that resulted in lower levels of referrals to our ILPS and ELPS teams.

The breakdown of forecast spend by strategic aim includes both the CCP project activity detailed previously, in addition to the normal business as usual work and operational activities that are completed across the GDC throughout the year.

The forecasted budget for 2024 is £43.2m.

#	CCP 2024 – 2026 Strategic aim costs mapping	2023 outturn (£)	% of total	Initial 2024 forecast (£)	% of total
1	Dental professionals reach and maintain high standards of safe and effective dental care	10,007,532	25%	14,243,276	33%
2	Concerns are addressed effectively and proportionately to protect the public and support professional learning	24,804,968	63%	23,177,398	53%
3	Risks affecting the public's safety and wellbeing are dealt with by the right organisations	1,019,843	3%	1,604,326	4%
4	Dental professional regulation is efficient and effective, and adapts to the changing external environment	3,490,361	9%	4,180,444	10%
Total		39,322,703	100%	43,205,444	100%



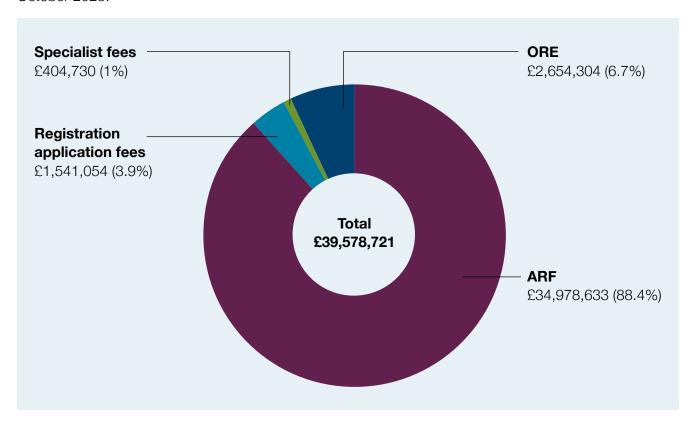
The three-year expenditure forecast, by strategic aim, for 2024 to 2026 is £127.6m.



#### **Income projections**

Our income forecast for 2024 is £39.6m, with 88.4% of income forecast to come from the ARF.

This is a £2.9m reduction on 2023, as a result of the reduction in the ARF levels announced in October 2023.



The three-year income projection for 2024 to 2026 is £122.0m.

#### **Reserves policy**

Our <u>reserves policy</u> has been designed to ensure that we retain our financial viability to maintain our statutory purpose and functions. It recognises our financial risk exposure and ensures that we have adequate levels of working capital throughout the year.

We have aligned our budget expenditure, income and reserves target to our corporate strategy. Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by Council and was last considered in October 2023.

## 6. Registration and application fees

#### **Annual Retention Fee (ARF)**

The ARF level has been set to align to our forecast of activity, expenditure and reserves. We have worked to ensure that we have removed cross subsidy, where possible, so that the cost of regulation is borne by those most closely associated with that activity.

Our fee-setting policy established three key principles:

- 1. Fee levels should be primarily determined by the cost of regulating each registrant group.
- 2. The method of calculating fee levels should be clear.
- 3. Supporting certainty for registrants and the workability of the regulatory framework.

Following a detailed and thorough review, Council approved the GDC's plans for 2024 and in doing so, set the budget and Annual Retention Fee (ARF) for 2024.

This resulted in a reduction in the annual retention fees for all dental professionals. For 2024 these are:

- £621 for dentists (a reduction of £69 or 10%, compared to 2023).
- £96 for dental care professionals (a reduction of £18 or 15.8%, compared to 2023).

It is our ambition to keep fees at a reasonable level. The fees have been set at a level that ensures we can continue to fulfil our statutory role of maintaining patient safety and public confidence for the next year. Although we will review the GDC's plans again next year, we will go into this with an intention to maintain the ARF at the same level in 2025.

#### First registration application fees

This is made up of two parts, a processing fee currently set at £36.33, with an additional variable rate dependent on the complexity of the application assessment.

#### Specialist fees

We apply a fee for initial applications for entry to specialist lists, which is £345 (per specialty). There is then an annual specialty retention fee of £72 (per specialty).

#### **Overseas Registration Examination (ORE)**

The ORE is an exam that overseas qualified dentists have to pass in order to register with the GDC. It tests the clinical skills and knowledge of dentists whose qualifications are not recognised in the UK. Candidates are expected to meet or exceed the standard of a 'just passed' UK BDS graduate.

#### It is made up of:

- Initial application fee: £96\*
- Part 1: Written exam, with a fee of £806\*\*
- Part 2: Clinical exam, with a fee of £2,929\*\*
- \* from 9 March 2024
- \*\* until 31 December 2024





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