

**General
Dental
Council**

GDC consultation response

**Scottish Government consultation:
Near Me video consulting service**

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National Near Me Lead
Technology Enabled Care Programme
Scottish Government

Feedback on Scottish Government 'Near Me' video consulting service

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the organisation which regulates dentists and dental care professionals in the UK. The GDC's primary purpose is to protect patient safety and maintain public confidence in dental services. To achieve this, we register qualified dental professionals, set standards for the dental team, investigate complaints about dental professionals' fitness to practise, and work to ensure the quality of dental education. Protecting the public from harm is one of our key concerns, together with monitoring developments in the evolution of dental services which may have an impact on the dental services offered to the public.

Remote services, including those for healthcare and dentistry, are increasing in prevalence and can provide significant benefits for patients, particularly in terms of access and affordability. The move to remote provision of healthcare has gained more momentum and urgency because of the current pandemic, which has forced society to rethink traditional patient / professional interactions.

In dentistry, we are aware that providers are increasingly making use of remote platforms to facilitate and maintain patient access to dental services. The GDC is alive to the significant benefits that remote access can potentially bring to patients and is keen to see innovation develop in this area, where it can be done safely.

However, as with any innovation in dentistry, the GDC needs to satisfy itself that patients are protected and that our registrants can apply the [standards for the dental team](#) to this emerging context of dental practice. The standards for the dental team provide a framework within which dental professionals use their professional judgement and make decisions based on what is in the patient's best interest. Among other things, this includes safe and effective treatment planning and valid consent for such treatment.

In many cases, physical and tactile assessments of the patient's head, neck and dentition will be necessary to inform clinical judgements that support a prescribed course of treatment and to address any underlying oral health problems. As such, face-to-face interactions remain an essential aspect of many dental interventions though that may vary depending on the stage of the intervention: screening, diagnosis, or treatment.

The GDC has made a commitment to continue to gather evidence about the potential risks and benefits of the remote provision of various forms of dental care. We await with interest the outcome of the Scottish Government's clinician survey and public engagement exercise regarding the Near Me video consulting service, and would welcome conversations about your findings, in particular how they may affect services delivered in Scotland and any implications for how we balance the benefits to patient access against the risks to patient safety.

Head of Public Policy
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