

**General
Dental
Council**

protecting patients,
regulating the dental team



Advice for those
who employ dental
professionals

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Whether you employ dental professionals directly or through NHS contracts they should be registered with the General Dental Council before they work in the UK.

This leaflet explains:

- the role of the General Dental Council;
- the standards we expect of our registrants; and
- how our fitness to practise system works to ensure patient protection.

Contact us for more information:

Web: www.gdc-uk.org

Phone: **0845 222 4141**

Textphone: **18001 0845 222 4141**

Email: information@gdc-uk.org

Role of the General Dental Council

The General Dental Council is the UK's dental regulator. Our role is to protect dental patients. We were set up by Parliament but are independent of the Government and the NHS. By law, dental professionals (both NHS and private) must be registered with us to work in the UK. Dental professionals on our registers are called 'registrants'.

Our priority is to protect dental patients. We:

- register dental professionals;
- set high standards of practice and behaviour;
- check the quality of dental education and training;
- encourage professionals to keep their skills and knowledge up to date as required by law; and
- take action when a dental professional's ability, behaviour or health makes them unfit to practise.

By law, the following dental professionals must be registered with us to work in the UK.

The titles of these professionals are protected:

- dentists
- dental nurses
- dental technicians
- clinical dental technicians
- dental hygienists
- dental therapists
- orthodontic therapists

Any person who practises under a protected title who is not registered with us will be liable to prosecution in a magistrate's court, where they may face a fine of up to £5,000.

Standards for registration

In order to register with us a dental professional must meet our education and health standards and have adequate indemnity. They must agree to abide by official guidelines set out in the seven booklets that make up the 'Standards for dental professionals' packs (available on our website), and engage with a programme of continuing professional development throughout their careers.

Indemnity

All registrants are required to make sure that there are adequate and appropriate arrangements in place so that patients can claim any compensation they may be entitled to.

The only appropriate arrangements recognised by the GDC are:

- membership of a dental indemnity organisation, i.e. Dental Protection Limited, Dental Defence Union or the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (whether professional's personal membership or employer's membership);
- professional indemnity arranged by dental professional or employer; or
- NHS/Crown indemnity.

There is no GDC rule that says individuals must have their own indemnity policy or defence organisation membership if they are covered by an employer, but registrants are responsible for checking that they are fully covered by their employment contract, and what the arrangements are.



Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

All dental professionals have a duty to keep their skills and knowledge up to date so that patients receive the best possible treatment. We encourage employers to support their staff in their learning.

By law, dentists must keep records of 250 hours, and dental care professionals 150 hours of CPD every five years. CPD activities are broad ranging and need not be expensive. Often, formalising tasks you already carry out can contribute, for example conducting staff meetings with specific learning outcomes.

In our 'Principles of dental team working' guidance we require those who employ, manage or lead a team to make sure that:

'all your team members have access to the training they need and the opportunity to take part in continuing professional development.'

('Principles of dental team working', 5.4)

By supporting your employees in their development you can maximise staff potential and improve the range and quality of services offered to your patients. Encouragement will also improve staff morale and help motivate your team, building positive working relationships and presenting a positive image to your customers.



Employing professionals with an overseas qualification

Dentists who gained their primary dental qualification from a university that is not in either the European Economic Area or Switzerland will usually be required to pass the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) before being able to register with us.

Candidates can work in the UK while waiting to complete the ORE, but must have temporary registration with us.

Full details (including the English language requirement) are available on our website.

An assessment panel considers applications from other types of dental care professionals on a case by case basis.

Temporary registration

Temporary registration allows dentists who are not eligible for full registration to practise in the UK in supervised posts for training, teaching, or research purposes only, and for a limited period (this is up to five years, but not five consecutive years). Other dental professionals are not eligible for temporary registration.

Posts approved for temporary registration by us allow dentists to work in dental schools or hospitals. Apart from these approved settings, temporary registration does not allow dentists to work in general or private practice, or in community dental services.

To find out more, contact our Customer Advice and Information Team, as temporary registrants are not added to our online register.

How to check registration

We issue each professional with a unique registration number when they first register with us, and provide a certificate every year once they have paid their annual retention fee.

If you need to check the registration of your employees you can use the online register or call us. You'll need the surnames and professions of your staff members.

The registers show whether professionals are currently suspended, have any conditions on their registration (e.g. supervision for a period of time or further training required), have a warning published against their name or whether they have been suspended.



Advice for Trusts and Health Boards*

We are happy to co-operate with organisations that are required to verify declarations made by dental professionals who are on or applying to join dental lists.

We aim to respond to requests in five working days but cannot respond to bulk or multiple requests. We can provide a faster and more efficient service if your request contains the necessary information and the professional's consent in appropriate terms.

Some of the information you need is not publicly available on the registers. We therefore need to see a copy of the dental professional's consent for us to disclose this information. You can visit our website for an example of standard consent wording.

We also need:

- full name of the dental professional;
- their signature, which should be an original or validated by the requesting authority;
- GDC registration number; and
- date on which the consent form was signed.

*Advice for Primary Care Trusts (England), Local Health Boards (Scotland), Health Boards (Wales) and Health and Social Care Trusts (Northern Ireland)

Taking action when things go wrong

Where possible we encourage patients and professionals to try and resolve concerns locally. We make it plain in our guidance that dental professionals should have a complaints procedure in place that is visible to patients and easy to use. Full details can be found in our 'Principles of raising concerns' leaflet.

If you are unsure whether or not to raise an issue with us, call our Customer Advice and Information Team.

We will let you know if we begin investigating an allegation against one of your employees. If this happens, you should think about the extent to which you wish to be involved and stay informed about the case.

In most cases the registrant will be allowed to continue to practise by us until a final decision is reached. However, in some circumstances, they may be prevented from practising while the allegation is being considered.



What and when to report

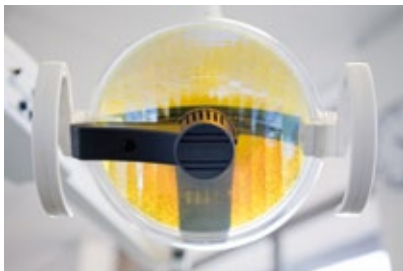
Our role is to protect the public from registrants whose fitness to practise is impaired.

Reporting a possible case to us is appropriate only when you believe the conduct, practice or health of a registrant mean it is not suitable for them to continue working as a dental professional. There are some things we can't look at. For instance, if you are trying to find out about financial compensation for patients, we cannot help.

Fitness to practise may be impaired by for many reasons, for example by:

- misconduct;
- lack of competence;
- a conviction or caution (including a finding of guilt by a court martial);
- physical or mental ill health;
- a finding by any other health or social care regulator or licensing body that fitness to practise is impaired; or
- a fraudulent or incorrect entry in our registers.

While it is impossible to compile a definitive list of complaints that we investigate, the following examples will give you a broad overview of situations that could form the basis of an allegation.



Misconduct

Misconduct is behaviour which falls short of that which can reasonably be expected of a registrant, such as:

- physical or verbal abuse;
- theft;
- deliberate failure to deliver adequate care; or
- deliberate failure to keep proper records.

Lack of competence

This covers lack of knowledge, skill or judgment where the registrant is unfit to practise safely and effectively in any field in which they claim to be qualified or seek to practice, such as:

- a persistent lack of ability in correctly and/or appropriately calculating, administering and recording the administration or disposal of medicines; or
- a persistent lack of ability in properly identifying care needs and, accordingly, planning and delivering appropriate care.

Conviction or caution

The types of conviction or caution that could lead to a finding of unfitness to practise include:

- theft;
- driving while under the influence of alcohol;
- fraud or other dishonest activities;
- violence/assault;
- sexual offences;
- accessing or downloading child pornography or other illegal material from the internet; or
- illegally dealing or importing drugs.

Health conditions

Health problems include:

- alcohol or drug dependence; and
- untreated serious mental or physical illness.

How to report a professional

If you have a concern about a dental professional but are not sure if we can help, please contact our Customer Advice and Information Team.

Our advisers will talk you through the different options open to you, which may include suggesting other organisations which might be able to help.

All allegations of impairment of fitness to practise should clearly set out the complaint against the registrant and be supported by appropriate evidence, including:

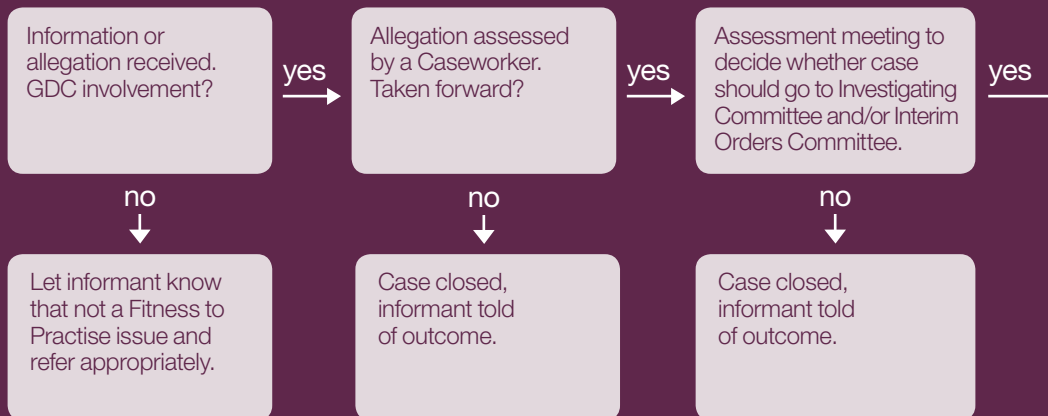
- the registrant's full name, registration number (if known) and current or most recent address;
- their position at the time of the allegations and key aspects of the post that may be relevant;
- a brief description of the context or circumstances of the incident (for example, the number and types of patients the registrant was responsible for, and who else was on duty at the time);
- copies of witness statements (consent will be required from witnesses for us to release their identity to the registrant and use the information they provide to access their dental records, if relevant to the case);
- copies of any relevant documents such as care plans and records, adverse incident forms, medicine administration records, financial records and work diaries;
- copies of notes of any investigative or disciplinary meetings; and
- details of any police involvement and the name and contact details of the officer in charge of the case (if known).

You can find more detailed information on what to provide on our website.

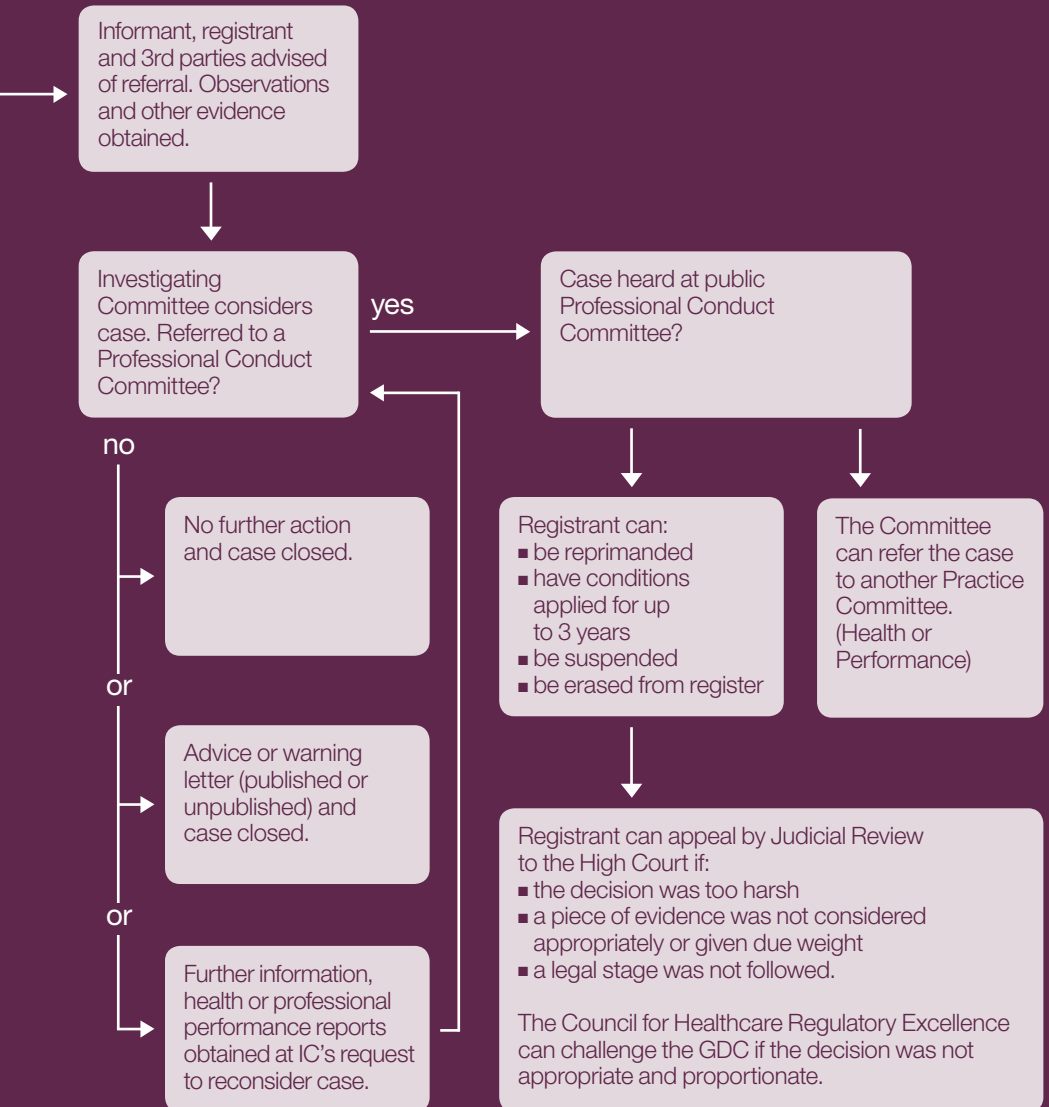


What happens next?

As soon as we have enough information, we start our investigations. A single Caseworker manages the case throughout the process.



At all stages of our procedures the Interim Orders Committee can suspend a registrant's registration or use conditions to restrict their practice.



Check your dental professional is registered,
visit: www.gdc-uk.org or call: 0845 222 4141

We want to make sure all of our services are accessible to everyone.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in a different format (for example, in large print or audio) or in a language other than English, please contact us.

GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL

37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ

Phone: **0845 222 4141**
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