

Corporate Strategy

2013 – 2015

Public
confidence
in dental
regulation

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Our role is to protect the public by regulating dental professionals. We do this by:

- Registering qualified dental professionals
- Setting and enforcing standards of dental practice and conduct
- Protecting the public from illegal practice
- Assuring the quality of dental education
- Ensuring professionals keep their knowledge and skills up to date
- Investigating and acting upon complaints received about fitness to practise
- Helping patients and the profession to resolve complaints about private dentistry, through the Dental Complaints Service

Effective regulation of dental professionals enhances patient safety, improves the quality of dental care and helps ensure public confidence in dental regulation.

We aim to regulate in a way that is proportionate, accountable, transparent, consistent, targeted, and responsive to changing demands, risks and priorities.

We are committed to reducing costs through efficiency measures that do not compromise our key purpose of maintaining patient protection.

About this strategy

This document outlines a three year strategy to deliver regulation of the dental profession that is in the best interests of patients and the public.

The audiences for this corporate strategy include: patients and the wider public; dental professionals; other regulators in the healthcare sector; parliamentarians; the media; professional associations and campaign groups.

Underpinning the strategy is a detailed business plan and budget for 2013 outlining specific activities and their costs. You can view and download this document on our website: www.gdc-uk.org



Future opportunities

Over the past few years, the GDC has focused on continuous improvement and this is now an established approach.

The regulation of healthcare professionals in the UK is undergoing major change and Government expectations about regulation, as outlined in 'Enabling Excellence: Autonomy and Accountability for Health and Social Care Staff', relevant to the UK regulation of dentistry, are likely to result in significant changes in the way the GDC operates.

We will make the most of the opportunities that arise from the changes to improve our performance. Furthermore, the Law Commissions have recently consulted on a set of proposals which, if enacted, will provide significant opportunities for the GDC to become more responsive and accountable to patients, the public and other stakeholders.

Greater scrutiny of how we fulfil our statutory purpose

All the UK healthcare professional regulators are subject to ongoing scrutiny by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA, previously the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence), which conducts an annual review of our performance. We also report annually to the parliaments and assemblies of the four countries. In addition, there is scrutiny by consumer bodies, such as Which, and bodies with a statutory responsibility, such as the Office of Fair Trading. We welcome the fact that interest groups and the public have more opportunities to communicate their concerns about issues relating to the regulation of dental professionals and we are determined to address those concerns.

Greater autonomy and more effective governance of our work

Whilst we will be under greater scrutiny, it is also proposed⁽¹⁾ that we, along with other healthcare regulators, should have greater autonomy to make rules to deliver our statutory functions. This will enable us to respond directly to public protection concerns. In preparation for regulatory changes, we have recently reviewed our governance arrangements to ensure our decision making is as speedy and effective as it can be.

This includes plans to appoint a new, smaller Council of 12 in 2013, comprising six lay people and six dental professionals. As a result, we are reviewing the ways in which we work to ensure that the new GDC Council and committees perform well in partnership with GDC staff. We will continue to prepare for any further changes to the constitution of our Council, in 2016, which might result from the Law Commissions' proposals.

Co-operating with other regulators to deliver right touch regulation

We will continue to enhance our performance by adopting the principles of 'right touch' regulation, and ensuring that, where we take action, it is proportionate to the level of risk. We will also find better ways of collaborating with other regulators including: the Care Quality Commission, the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland, the Health Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Improvement Scotland. We will also liaise closely with NHS commissioners and employers.

We will ensure that the GDC takes into account the differing approaches to healthcare policy in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland as well as European legislative developments. Overall, we aim to ensure that our extensive experience in regulating dental professionals is used in the development of new policy and legislation that will reflect interests of patient and public protection.

Economic, social, demographic and technological trends

In developing, implementing and reviewing our strategy, we take into account trends in the healthcare environment and how they impact on what we do. There are social and demographic changes in the UK population that are likely to impact on our work. These changes include better informed and more confident patients and an ageing population, resulting in an increased emphasis on preventative care.

The provision of dental treatment in England is also likely to change as a result of National Health Service restructuring and the possibility that patients, in all four countries, may gain 'direct access' to members of the dental team (such as dental hygienists) without the need for a referral from a dentist. The growth in dental bodies corporate and high street services will expand services for consumers. The potential growth in private schools of dentistry will result in the expansion of our existing role to quality assure dental education.

We will make the best use of technological advances, such as online services, to improve the delivery of regulation. This will include using performance data to monitor how well we are fulfilling our duties as a regulator.

⁽¹⁾The coalition Government has commissioned a simplification review of the legislative framework for professional regulation, with a view to giving greater autonomy to the regulatory bodies to decide how best to meet their statutory duties. The Government has asked the Law Commissions to undertake a simplification review of the existing legislative framework and to develop a draft Bill for consultation.

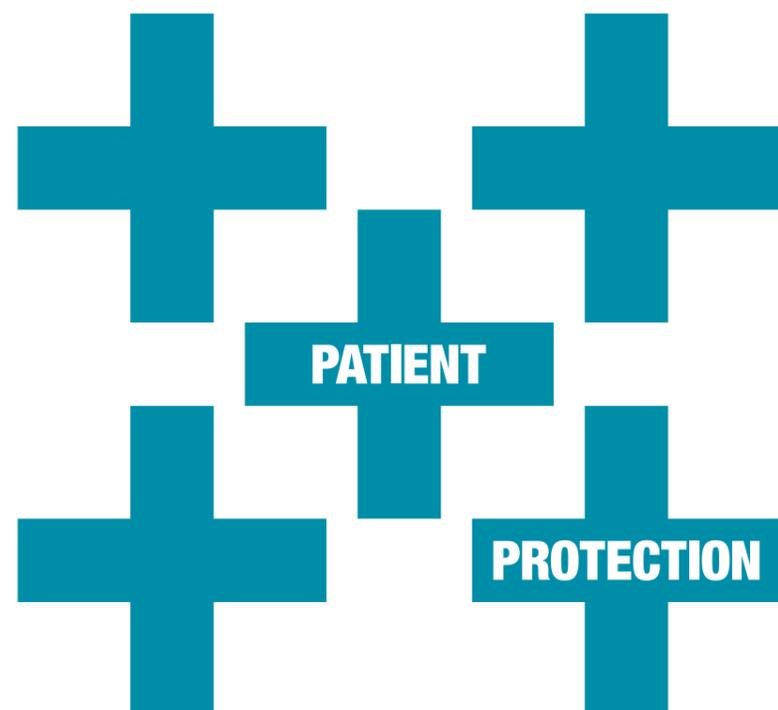
Strategic objectives

1.0

Analyse and respond effectively to patient needs and public expectations to maintain public confidence in dental regulation.

Patient protection is at the heart of what we do. In order to deliver effective regulation for patients, we must fully understand their needs and expectations. We have conducted our first annual patient survey and the findings from this and further annual surveys will inform the development of our policies.

Strategy	Outcome
1.1 Enhance our patient and public engagement strategy in the light of feedback	The patient and public perspective informs the development of our policies
1.2 Identify and implement new channels of communication	We have better intelligence about the needs of patients in relation to the regulation of dental professionals
1.3 Conduct our work more transparently	The public has access to the information it requires
1.4 Review the role of the Dental Complaints Service	The Dental Complaints Service meets the needs and expectations of patients who have concerns about private dental treatment



2.0

Deliver proportionate and targeted regulation of dental professionals to improve public protection and enable the public to have confidence in dental regulation.

This is the primary purpose and focus of our work and we have embarked on an extensive range of reforms of our fitness to practise processes. Reforms have already been implemented, in particular those aimed at speeding up the most serious cases and resolving less serious cases at the earliest opportunity and we have implemented a new IT case management system. These reforms are essential at a time when the number of complaints continues to rise. We will improve the management of fitness to practise cases further by introducing more fundamental procedural changes which require changes to our legislation.

We are also revising our continuing professional development (CPD) scheme which requires all dental professionals to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. In due course, this will be supplemented with a system of revalidation for dentists which will require them to demonstrate that they continue to remain fit to practise.

In addition, we are enhancing our registration procedures to guard against fraudulent entry to the register and to ensure that all applicants, wherever they are qualified, have the requirements necessary to ensure the safe practice of dentistry.

Strategy	Outcome
2.1 Implement fitness to practise reforms that improve patient protection	Fitness to practise cases are progressed in a timely way, decisions are subject to a limited number of legal challenges, complainants are satisfied with the service they receive and we remove those from the register who are not fit to practise or impose other appropriate sanctions
2.2 Implement online registration for dental professionals	Online registration results in a more cost effective, secure and customer friendly service
2.3 Implement and effectively communicate the new professional standards	The new Standards ensure that high quality patient care is delivered and make clear to the public and patients what they can expect from registrants
2.4 Review and implement scope of practice and direct access policies and guidance	The roles of dental professionals are clarified and patients, employers and registrants fully understand the scope of practice of those dental professionals
2.5 Complete the development and piloting of a revalidation system aimed at ensuring dentists continue to remain fit to practise	The revalidation scheme is piloted and any further refinements are made in preparation for full implementation
2.6 Expand our consultation and research programme to provide evidence for policy development and risk-based regulation	The consultation and research programmes are targeted at the right groups and are used to inform policy development and decision-making



3.0

Ensure that new entrants to the profession are safe to practise through an increasingly integrated approach to the regulation of dental education and training.

We are determined that our quality assurance systems for education and training serve to ensure that all dental professionals are safe to practise from the moment they join the register and that they maintain this state throughout their career.

We are implementing a new system of quality assurance of education providers with the aim of ensuring that new entrants to the profession are better equipped to operate safely in dental practice.

Strategy	Outcome
3.1 Ensure that new entrants to the profession are safe and competent to practise with reference to our education and professional standards	The education and professional standards ensure that dental graduates are ready to join the register and are safe and competent to practise
3.2 Inspect education and training institutions to provide assurance that they are delivering the education standards that will ensure dental graduates are fit to be registered	The education standards are fully implemented and adhered to by all education providers and we will only recognise those education institutions that achieve these standards as being sufficient
3.3 Evaluate the merit of introducing pre-registration training for all new dental graduates	All new dental graduates are safe and competent to practise
3.4 Develop quality assurance mechanisms for specialty training that leads to entry on the specialist lists	New quality assurance systems provide confidence in specialty training



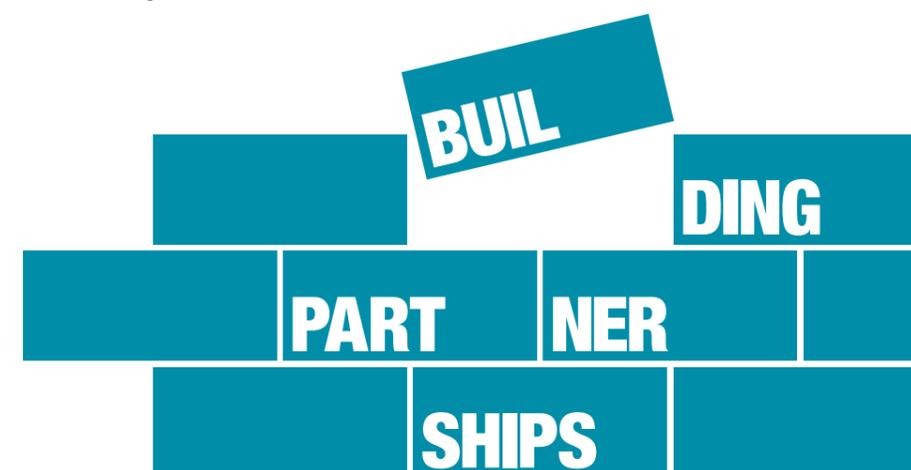
4.0

Build partnerships with other bodies and influence the regulation of dentistry to protect patients.

In a radically changing regulatory environment, it is essential that we strengthen our relationships with all the relevant bodies that affect the delivery of our statutory functions. We will engage more directly with elected representatives in all four countries in order to influence their understanding and perception of professional regulation in the dental sector.

We already have good relationships with partner bodies and other professional regulators and now intend to put those relationships on a strategic footing so that we can collectively develop the healthcare regulation sector, within which we all operate, for the benefit of patients and the public.

Strategy	Outcome
4.1 Engage with the Law Commissions and the Departments of Health to ensure effective change	Regulation of the dental sector ensures that patients are protected
4.2 Prepare for the implementation of agreed reforms that result from legislative change	We are prepared to implement the new legislation as soon as it is enacted
4.3 Respond to and influence European legislation that affects the regulation of dental professionals	European Union legislation reflects the requirements of patient protection, whilst allowing free movement of professionals
4.4 Develop effective relationships with patient organisations	Patient organisations recognise that we take their views into account
4.5 Develop and implement a strategy for the effective regulation of dental professionals in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland	Our policies and systems take into account the different legislation and delivery of dental services across the UK, whilst offering the same standard of patient protection
4.6 Build strategic partnerships with healthcare systems regulators and professional regulatory bodies that are in the interests of the public and patients	Healthcare regulation is more co-ordinated in the interests of the public and patients
4.7 Contribute our expertise, as necessary, to ensure that changes in the delivery of healthcare in the UK properly take account of the way that dental professionals are regulated	Any changes in healthcare delivery do not undermine our ability to deliver better patient protection

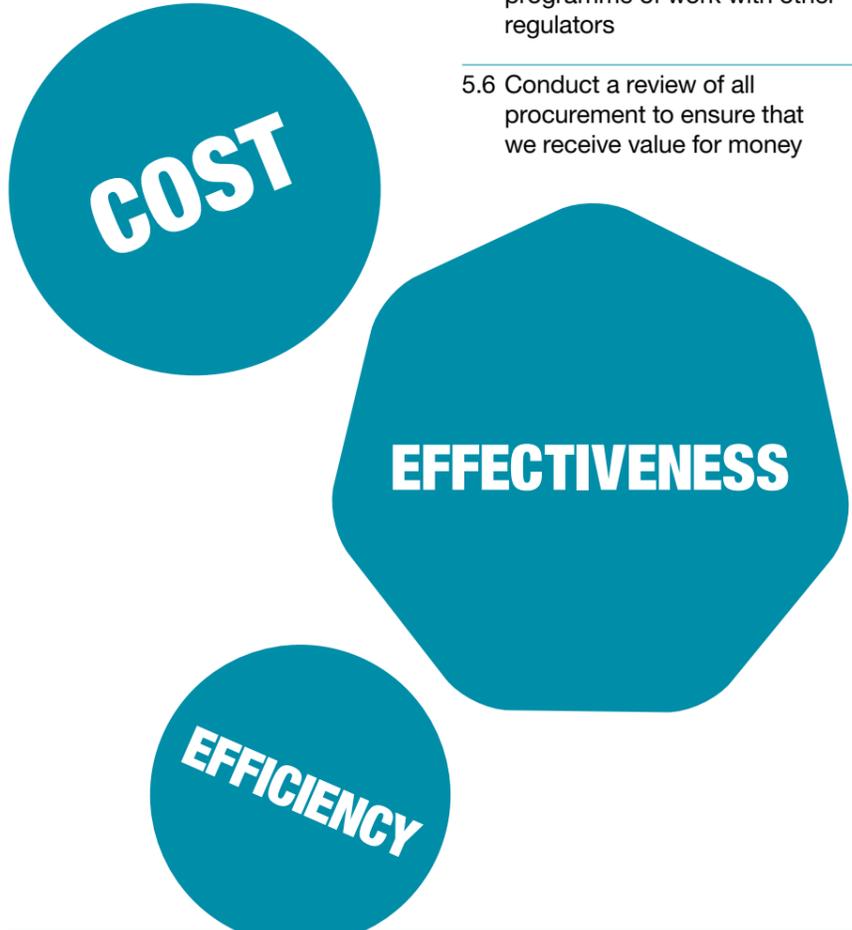


5.0

Deliver cost effective regulation, ensuring maximum efficiency without loss of patient protection.

We will continue to identify scope for cost efficiencies with a view to avoiding or minimising further increases to the annual retention fee. The reforms to our fitness to practise and registration functions are aimed at enhancing public protection and increasing our efficiency. We are also streamlining our governance structures with a view to improving the speed and quality of decision-making relating to our functions. We are reducing costs through the increased use of modern technology.

Strategy	Outcome
5.1 Set the annual retention fee at the rate required to deliver regulation of dental professionals	We will achieve a balanced budget over three years, without compromising patient protection
5.2 Reduce the costs of our fitness to practise processes through procedural change	Quicker disposal of fitness to practise cases with neither a loss of fairness to registrants nor an increase in the risks to patients' safety
5.3 Implement new governance structures effectively, including a reduction in the size of the Council	New structures, systems and processes are designed and implemented that facilitate the work of a smaller and more board-like Council, which will be carefully managed
5.4 Make increasing use of online services	Reduced costs and increased accessibility of our services to all stakeholders
5.5 Develop and deliver a collaborative programme of work with other regulators	Shared approaches result in more cost effective regulation
5.6 Conduct a review of all procurement to ensure that we receive value for money	Reduced costs through re-negotiation of contracts for services and products



6.0

Manage the GDC effectively and support its staff to achieve our objectives.

In this period of major structural and legislative reform, the organisation itself will need to respond and adapt in many ways; we will ensure that we do all that we can to manage organisational change and support our staff.

Strategy	Outcome
6.1 Enhance our engagement with staff in response to continuing feedback	Staff have appropriate mechanisms to participate in and contribute to the management of the organisation
6.2 Ensure our professional development programme equips staff to respond to the changing demands of the organisation	Staff are supported in their learning and development to meet their objectives
6.3 Review the recognition and reward strategy and make any necessary changes	Staff feel rewarded for the work that they do and staff retention is high
6.4 Use our resources in a way that supports sustainability and reflects environmental best practice	We measure up to best national standards
6.5 Continue to develop and implement our equality and diversity strategy and action plan	Equality and diversity considerations underpin all areas of our work and we are compliant with legislation
6.6 Redevelop the GDC's headquarter premises in London	We provide accommodation suitable for the delivery of our key functions, on time and within budget



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.

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**General
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protecting patients,
regulating the dental team