

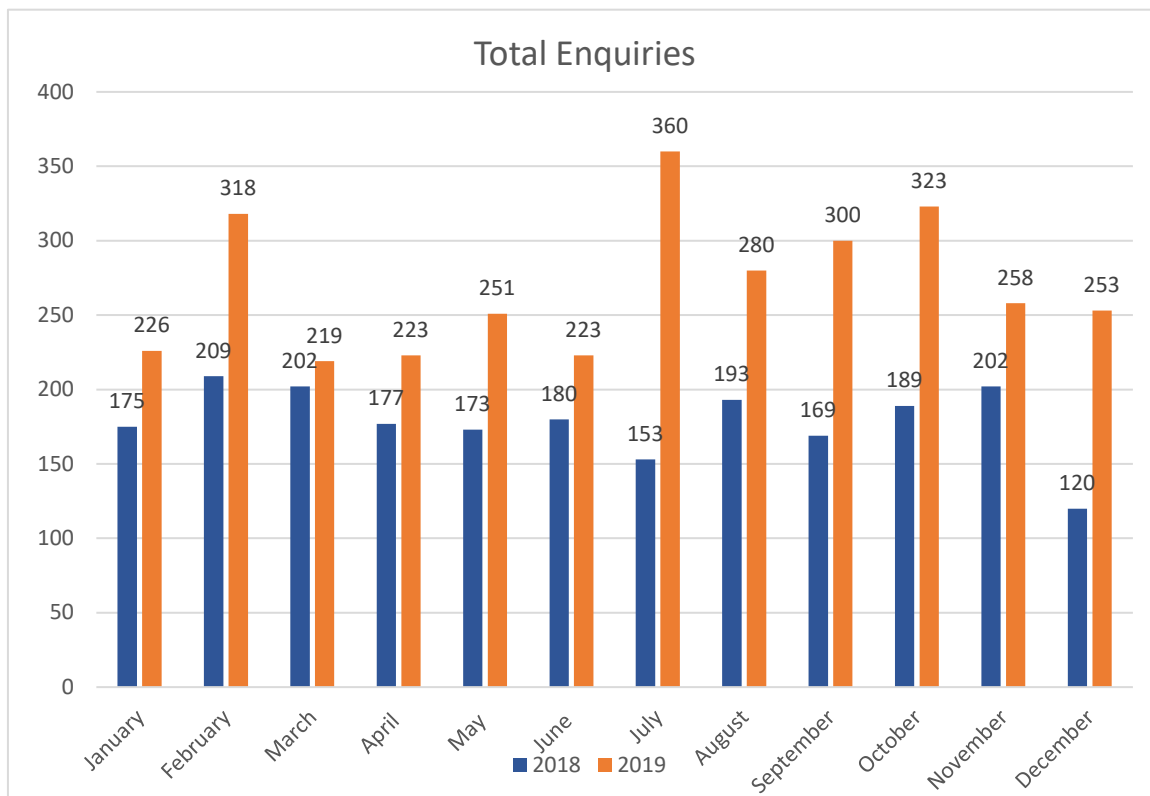
## Dental Complaints Service Performance 2019

<b>Executive Director</b>	Tom Scott, Executive Director, Fitness to Practise Transition
<b>Author(s)</b>	Michelle Williams, DCS Head of Operations
<b>Type of business</b>	For decision
<b>For Council only:</b>	Public session
<b>Issue</b>	<p>To provide an update on the performance of the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) in 2019.</p> <p>The Council are asked to approve a move from quarterly to annual reporting to Council on the performance of DCS, with exception reporting if any issues arise.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	None

### 1. Overview

- 1.1 DCS has enjoyed a successful year. The function has embedded improvements in operational performance including the re-calibration of referral criteria to FtP.
- 1.2 Whilst case numbers have reduced due to the reduction in FTP referrals made by DCS, overall enquiry numbers have significantly increased over the year. Despite this, the team have improved performance over the period.
- 1.3 In September 2019, DCS published its review of 2015-18. The intention is to publish annually, going forward. Alongside this, a detailed review of registrant feedback concluded that, whilst improvements can be made, each aspect of the service received a net positive rating.
- 1.4 The DCS Review project that is evaluating what potential roles the service provides within the context of the broader system-wide handling of complaints across the profession and the potential future scope and alternative delivery models of the service has progressed. During 2020 we will be evaluating alternative models of service.
- 1.5 As part of the wider Board Effectiveness work around the streamlining of reporting to the Council, it is proposed that, from 2020, reporting on DCS moves from quarterly to annual, with exception reporting if any issues arise.

1.6 Analysis of Performance



1.7 The most notable aspect of the year was the growth and sustained level of new enquiries within DCS. The team experienced a sustained 40% uplift relating to incoming contact volumes; despite this operational service levels were sustained. Whilst individual registrant issues are behind a measure of the uplift, the full reasons have not yet been diagnosed. We are exploring if any increase in the general profile of the service, or the willingness of registrants to recommend engaging the offering may be contributory factors. In addition, we will be undertaking an analysis of the GDC self-triage mechanism for Fitness to Practise data will take place which may help explain this increase.

1.8 During 2019 DCS received 3147 new enquiries. An analysis of the enquiries received this year is provided below:

Reason	Number:	Note:
Complaints requiring signposting to other organisations able to assist	2753	Overwhelmingly this is because the treatment provided included elements of or was entirely delivered as part of NHS provision – this is outside the remit of the DCS. (486 of these enquiries were in the scope of the DCS remit however the complaints were ultimately resolved without further involvement by DCS and pursued independently by the patient).

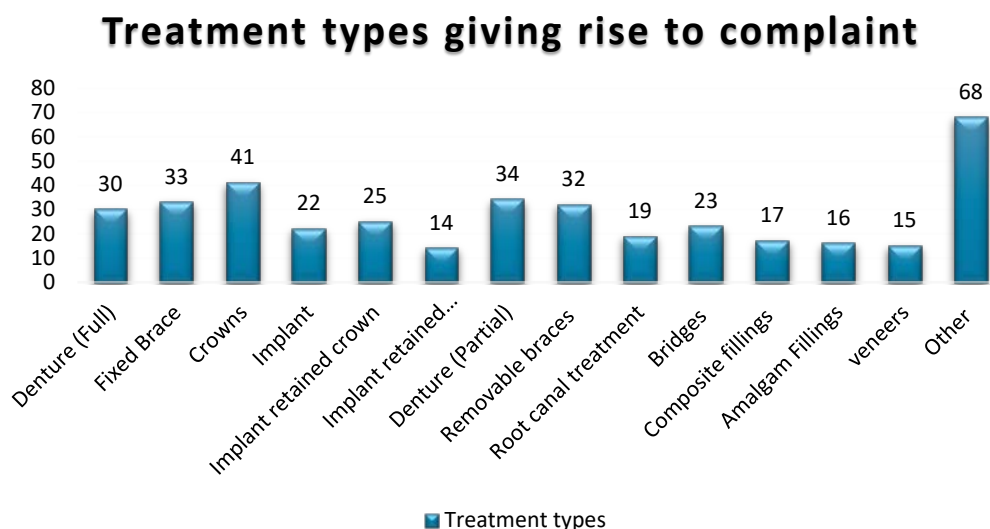
Cases raised	394	These complaints fell within the remit of the service. Of these 63% were resolved locally, the remainder requiring active involvement from the team to secure a resolution.
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**Complaint issues**

1.9 As in previous years, the dominant reason for complaints (79%) was a perceived failure of treatment.

**Treatment types**

1.10 Main treatment types relating to complaints raised:

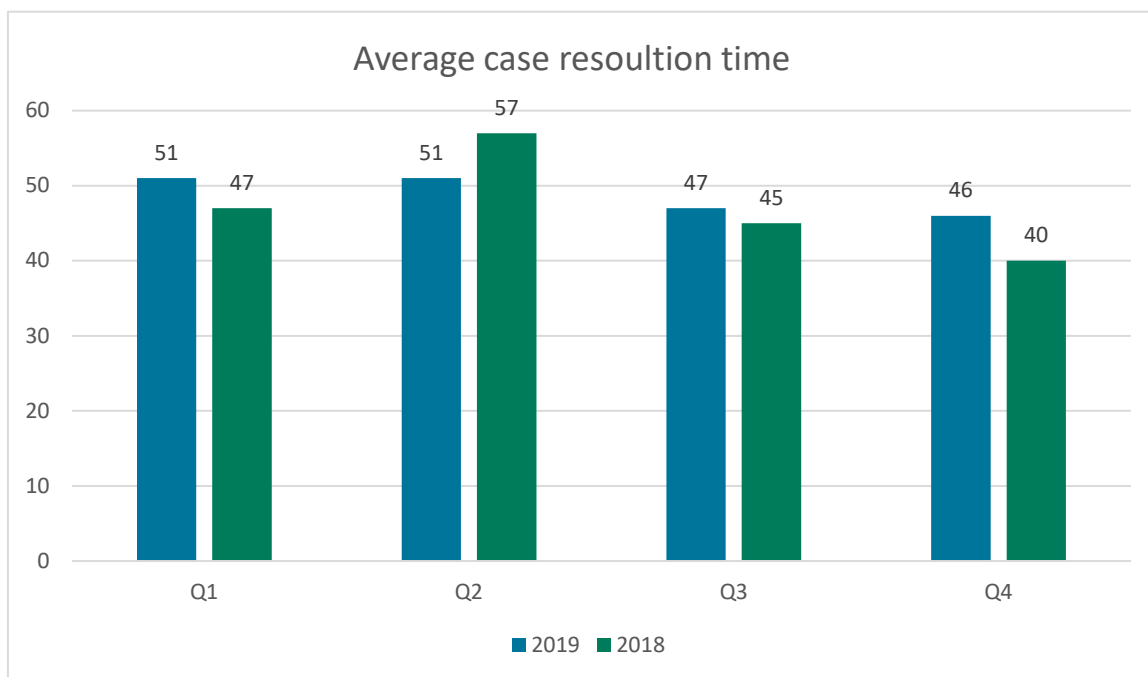
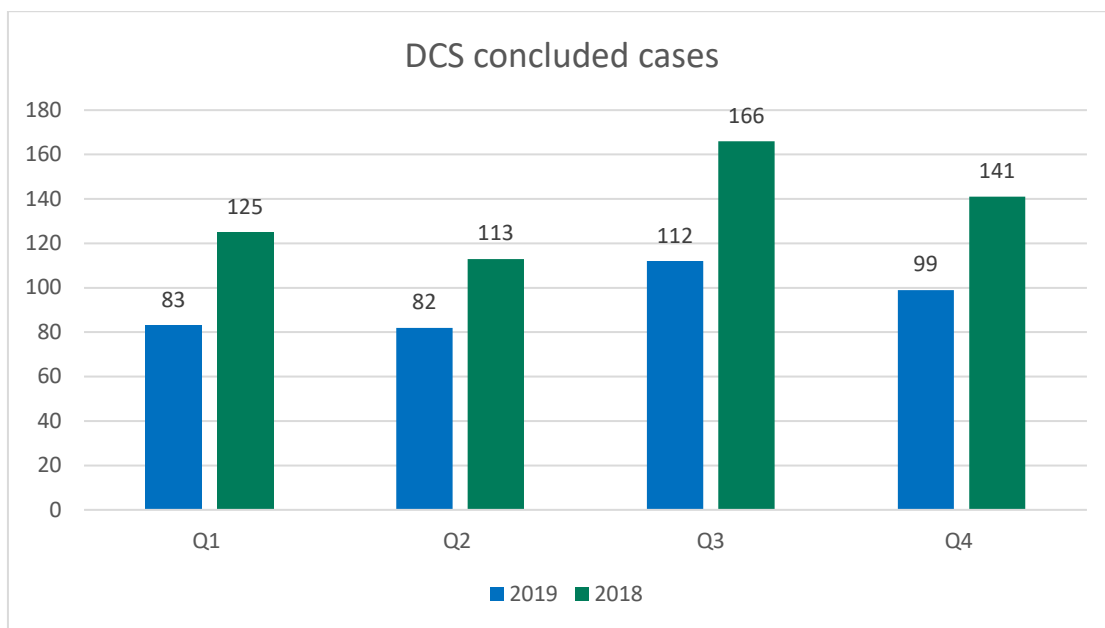


**Illegal Practice**

1.11 5 referrals were made from DCS to the In House Appeals and Criminal Enforcement (formerly Illegal Practice) team during 2019.

**1.12 Performance**

The number of cases concluded by DCS in 2019 are set out below. The average resolution time remained at 46 days at the end of Q4, with an average resolution time of 48 days in 2019. During 2019 DCS have been assisting with a single complex case arising at the end of Q3 involving multiple patients, where a discussion regarding liability between the current practice owner, the previous owner (following the practice going into administration), a registrant who has remained with the practice and the respective indemnity organisations. This has resulted in extended communications with patients seeking redress.



**2. FtP Referrals**

2.1 There were 46 FtP referrals made in 2019, 1.46% of the total enquiries received in 2019 (3147). Of these, 40 were subsequently moved forward to Casework Assessment for investigation with 6 closures. The number of referrals were impacted by 3 individual registrants where collectively, these referrals accounted for 26 cases.

**3. DCS Review 2015-18**

3.1 In September 2019, DCS published its review of the service which was well received by the dental profession for demonstrating the operational improvements that DCS has made to the service, as well as, the reduction in the number of referrals made to FtP.

#### **4. Service Work**

- 4.1 During 2019 the DCS completed an in-depth survey with the registrants that had been actively involved in the DCS resolution process. Each aspect of the service was positively received although a minority of respondents continue to hold the view that the service is acting more on behalf of the patient rather than being truly impartial.

#### **5. DCS Review Phase II**

- 5.1 This phase of the review aims to deliver a fit-for-purpose strategically aligned service set against the system wide complaints handling for patients and professionals, which plans to identify areas to enable patients to raise complaints about their dental treatment.
- 5.2 The first phase review identified alternative complaints resolution models. An assessment of these models will take place in 2020 to identify potential gaps that could be fulfilled by the service, as well as exploring different delivery models.

#### **6. Legal, policy and national considerations**

- 6.1 Council is asked to consider the regularity of the DCS report. It is recommended that the report be presented annually to Council, with exception reporting in the event of any performance issues. There are no legal implications. DCS will continue to provide updates in relation to the DCS Review Phase 2, as required.

#### **7. Monitoring and review**

- 7.1 DCS produce a monthly report to the Executive Director, Fitness to Practise Transition who will continue to monitor the performance of DCS to mitigate any risk. Whilst it maintains a discrete identity, the DCS is of course a part of the GDC the function remains answerable to the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.

#### **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 DCS remains committed to providing a valuable, cost-effective service to patients and registrants to facilitate complaint resolution on private treatment. We are looking forward to exploring how we might respond to an evolving market and our growing understanding of the complaint handling landscape within the sector, for the benefit of patients and registrants.

#### **Appendices**

- a. None

Michelle Williams, DCS Head of Operations  
mwilliams@dentalcomplaints.org.uk  
Tel: 020 8253 0811

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