

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020

Contents

Foreword	1
About us	2
Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion	4
Our equality duties	5
Our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives	8
What will this strategy achieve?	11

Foreword

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the statutory regulator for the dental profession in the UK and we are constituted as a body under the Dentists Act 1984.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy outlines the principles for identifying and acting on the EDI issues that are relevant to our work. The strategy applies to our work as both a regulator and an employer.

We have developed our strategy to take account of current legislation. Our strategy is a firm statement of our intent in meeting our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives in delivery of our strategic and business plans, in our role as regulator, public service provider and employer and in accordance with our values. Our strategy demonstrates our commitment to developing our capabilities in this area so we can meet our legal responsibilities as a public body under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups;
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

We consulted on a draft strategy and invited our stakeholders to provide views on whether there were better ways of achieving our aims and priorities. We are pleased that this final version of the strategy is now being published, and look forward to working on its implementation over the course of the next three years.

Bill Moyes
Chair

Ian Brack
Chief Executive and Registrar

About us

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the UK wide statutory regulator of the 108,000 registrants. This includes approximately 41,000 dentists and 67,000 dental care professionals (DCPs) which includes dental nurses, clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental technicians, dental therapists, and orthodontic therapists.

The GDC is overseen by a Council of 12 members, six lay and six dental professionals.

Our purpose

We want patients and the public to be confident that the treatment they receive is provided by a dental professional who is properly trained and qualified and who meets our standards. Where there are concerns about the quality of care or treatment or the behaviour of a dental professional, we will investigate and take action if appropriate.

Our legislation

The Dentists act 1984 (which was amended in 2016) sets us the following objectives:

- To protect the public
- To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public
- To promote and maintain confidence in the dental profession
- To promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions.

We do this by ensuring that dental professionals meet our standards, which reflect patient expectations, and deliver safe and appropriate care to patients. We want patients and the public to be confident that the treatment that they receive is provided by a dental professional who is properly trained and qualified and who meets our standards. Where there are concerns about the quality of care or treatment or the behaviour of a registrant, we will investigate and take action if required.

Our legislation currently provides us with powers to:

- Grants registration only to those dental professionals who meet our requirements on education and training, health and good character. Only those who are registered with us can practise dentistry in the UK.
- Set standards for providers of dental education and training in the UK.
- Set standards of conduct, performance and ethics for the dental team.
- Investigate complaints against dental professionals and where appropriate take action through our Fitness to Practise process.
- Require dental professionals to keep their skills up to date through our continuing professional development requirements.

In addition, we provide the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) which resolves complaints between private patients and dental professionals.

Our values

We aim to demonstrate the following in all that we do:

- **Fairness:** we will treat everyone we deal with fairly
- **Transparency:** we are open about how we work and how we reach decisions
- **Responsiveness:** we can adapt to changing circumstances
- **Respect:** we treat dental professionals. Our partners, and our employees with respect

Our strategic aims

We aim to be a high performing and efficient regulator, ensuring the quality of dental care for patients through supporting dental professionals to deliver high standards of care and through providing better information to patients. We will also work with our partners to reform the overall system of dental regulation in the UK, and the dental complaints system, so that it works more effectively and efficiently, promoting local resolution of complaints where possible. We will base all of this on evidence and make the most of the data that we have available to us.

To achieve the above we have set our ambition in four key areas:

Patients: We will put patient and public protection at the heart of what we do. We will empower patients to make informed choices about the care they receive.

Professionals: We will work closely with the dental profession to identify priority areas for action and use collaborative approaches in tackling them.

Partners: We will work with our partners in the dental sector to protect patients and make the system of dental regulation in the UK more effective.

Performance: We will continue to strive to become a high performing, proportionate regulator which has the confidence of patients, the public and dental professionals.

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The General Dental Council (GDC) is committed to promoting equality; valuing diversity; being inclusive and meeting our equality duties.

The GDC aims to be an inclusive organisation, where equality, diversity and inclusion is encouraged, respected and built upon. Our approach to business is underpinned by a belief that all individuals should be treated fairly and have access to equal opportunities, regardless of their status. To attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best of people at all levels, we are committed to respecting and embracing talent and working to support a culture that is inclusive and reflective of our vision and values. We also encourage our registrants to value equality, celebrate diversity and promote inclusion in their relationships with their own employees and patients.

We believe that equality, diversity and inclusion are integral to our work as a regulator and an employer for several reasons:

- Our ability to protect patients and improve standards of dental practice is reliant on maintaining the trust and confidence of all our interest groups and stakeholders.
- We want to understand and take account of the needs and expectations of the diverse groups of patients, dentists, dental care practitioners and others affected by our work.
- We want to continue comply with equality legislation, and to be recognised as an organisation that aspires to high standards and good practice on the issues that arise from this.
- The UK's working population is diverse, and we want to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities in which we operate at all levels.

Promoting equality

We promote equality by removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people both within the GDC and externally amongst those organisations with whom we have formal relationships and our service users.

Valuing diversity

We accept each person as an individual. Our success and performance is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together, we will deliver the best possible solutions for our people, our registrants and patients.

Being inclusive

We create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with our vision and values. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our business.

Our equality duties

Legislative framework

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination based on access to goods and services as well as employment. The Act offers protection against discrimination to individuals possessing a minimum of one of the nine characteristics (see below) in employment and service delivery. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Race including ethnicity and national identity
- Sex
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief, including lack of belief
- Sexual orientation.

In addition to this, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Specific duties, set out in regulations to the Equality Act require us to:

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, annually. This information must be published in such a manner that it is accessible to the public, either in a separate document or within another published document.
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years. All such objectives must be specific and measurable.

What are the benefits of the equality duty?

The GDC believes that in addition to compliance with the general equality duty it also makes good business sense. An organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it carries out its core business more efficiently. A workforce that has a supportive working environment is more productive. The GDC believes that a diverse workforce draws on a broader range of talent and better represents the community that we serve. Compliance with the general equality duty should also result in better-informed decision-making and policy development.

Employment

The GDC recognises that its employees are our greatest resource and all our employment and recruitment policies will reflect our commitment to equality and best practice.

We work towards a representative workforce to fully utilise their skills and abilities and take positive action where appropriate to encourage underrepresented groups into our workforce.

No employees will be discriminated against in the areas of pay or conditions of service, access to training and development or promotion. We promote flexible working practices in recognition that many of our employees have caring responsibilities. For more detail please refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

All employees are required to conduct themselves in non-discriminatory ways towards colleagues and the public and to follow the principles of this strategy at all times. If they do not do so, formal disciplinary action may be taken against them.

Service delivery

We will ensure that all services provided by or on behalf of the council are made accessible where reasonable to all individuals and groups without discrimination.

We will ensure that our buildings are fully accessible and where this is not practical we will provide reasonable alternative methods of access so no one is discriminated against by physical barriers.

Equality monitoring

The GDC is required to undertake equality monitoring against the 'protected characteristics'. The Project Management Office (PMO) holds a vast range of registrant data and Fitness to Practise information which is updated regularly and available to staff for analysis purposes. The GDC's teams are encouraged to collect equality information directly from their stakeholders and to analyse this information in any reorganisation of service or policy development/review.

Monitoring the impact of decisions

Monitoring is a way of checking that no one is being treated unfairly in our employment practices and in our service delivery, to find out if our strategy is working, if any remedial action has been effective, or if additional action is required. The GDC suggests the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to help analyse the effect of its policies and practices on the protected groups.

Monitoring employees

Employees are asked to supply information about themselves so we can identify how representative our workforce is of the wider community. Staff training and promotion will be monitored to evaluate the effect of the strategy. Monitoring information will be used in a strictly confidential way.

Putting the policy into action

Putting the strategy into practice is the responsibility of all staff and members. Both employees and members must comply with both the spirit and wording of the strategy.

This strategy is to be regarded as part of every employee's terms and conditions of employment.

The GDC will communicate the strategy and related policies to all existing staff and people applying for jobs with the GDC for example through the information we send out to prospective employees and through the induction of new employees.

EDI pages will be maintained on the GDC's website and Intranet and contain relevant publications and reports promoting the work undertaken by the GDC and its partners.

Training

EDI training is provided for Council, Associates and staff to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under this strategy. In particular, all managers are trained on a regular basis in equalities matters concerning employment. Similarly, there is an expectation that all members will attend equality training.

EDI issues are an integral part of our training and development programmes, regardless of whether the GDC uses internal or external trainers.

In addition to the generic equality training, tailored equality training to reflect the needs of specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is a significant engagement with protected group(s).

The GDC makes a strong commitment to training and development for all staff. All staff will have equal access to training and development and we will take appropriate positive action for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives

We have developed the following six objectives in order that we are able to fulfil our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion. This is an ongoing programme of work which is embedded into our business planning processes.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion strategic objectives for 2017-2020 are to:

1. Protect patients through effective regulation.
2. Regulate the dental team fairly.
3. Be a fair and enabling employer, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all staff.
4. Establish a robust equality, diversity and inclusion base to inform strategy, policy and operations.
5. Engage the public and our stakeholders in the design and delivery of our policies and procedures.
6. Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion with governance and management processes.

Objective 1: Protect patients through effective regulation

- Obtain and analyse feedback from witnesses and complainants about their experience in fitness to practise procedures.
- Provide guidance and training for case managers and panellists on supporting vulnerable witnesses and complaints such as young people, disabled people and people whose first language is not English.
- Provide GDC communications in a range of accessible ways, including websites and social media.
- Reinforce the importance of registrants addressing EDI in the workplace through implementation of our standards.
- We help to provide effective regulation for patients with protected characteristics and a diverse range of needs and backgrounds.

Objective 2: Regulate the dental team fairly

- Use the review of fitness to practise procedures to highlight equality, diversity and inclusion, applying EIAs to the key processes and decision-making points.
- Obtain and analyse feedback from dental professionals about their experience in fitness to practise procedures.
- Registrants believe that we conduct our work fairly and we do not discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics.

Objective 3: Be a fair and enabling employer, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all staff

- Review and communicate all HR policies and processes to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Collect equality, diversity and inclusion data at recruitment and from our staff, associates and registrants to inform our work.
- Deliver a continuous programme of induction and training on equality, diversity and inclusion for all staff and associates.
- Ensure that the GDC's pay and benefits are compliant with legislation and reflect the diversity of the workforce.
- Ensure that staff have opportunities to participate in and contribute to the development and management of the organisation.
- Promote an inclusive workplace culture, that attracts and develops diverse individuals and in which the differences that all our people bring to the GDC are understood, valued and respected.
- Promote a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where individuals do not experience inappropriate and discriminatory behaviour.

Objective 4: Establish a robust equality, diversity and inclusion evidence base to inform strategy, policy and operations

- Develop an evidence base on equality, diversity and inclusion across registrants, those taking part in fitness to practise and Dental Complaints Service procedures, employees, patients and service users through effective development of the Business Information System and other programmes.
- Analyse profiles and demographics of new registrants and those in fitness to practise procedures to identify trends, inform future guidance and communicate messages to the profession.
- Understand the diversity of our registrants and the implications of this for our work as a regulator.

Objective 5: Engage the public and our stakeholders in the design and delivery of our policies and procedures

- Engage with people with lived experience and those with an understanding of the issues faced from people with protected characteristics or their representatives to measure our engagement with protected groups when developing new policies to inform our policy development and equality impact assessments.
- Identify opportunities to explore dental practice as it affects people with protected characteristics by obtaining feedback from representative groups on reviewing equality strategy.
- Our stakeholders consider that they have been engaged on our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Objective 6: Integrate equality, diversity and inclusion with governance and management processes

- Use EIAs in the development of our work and integrate them in the decision-making processes of the Council
- Report on progress of EDI strategy progress to the Executive Management Team and to the Council
- Transparent, documented evidence of GDC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

What will this strategy achieve?

This strategy reinforces our commitment and responsibility to our registrants, workforce and patients.

A key element of delivering against this strategy and realising the ambitions below will be to ensure the effective monitoring of our performance. The associated activities outlined in the above section will support the delivery of our objectives. The activities will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that equalities, diversity and inclusion practice is being embedded. This will also help inform service planning, identify gaps and agree future activities.

A fair regulator

- We will consider the impact of our work on the dentists, dental care practitioners, patients and the public who are protected by equality law.
- We will continue to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act.
- We will collect, analyse and share equality and diversity data on the people involved in our activities to identify any trends.
- We will get views from a range of people with protected characteristics to help us develop our policies and plans.
- We will use our influence and work with others to understand why some groups of dentists and DCP's have different outcomes in the activities that we regulate.

Confidence and trust

- For dentists, dental care practitioners, patients and others to be confident in our work as a regulator and employer, they need to believe that we will act in a fair way.
- We will set out how we will measure progress towards where we want to be as a result of our work on equality and diversity, and monitor our progress regularly.
- We will continue to involve a range of people who share protected characteristics in shaping our activities.
- We will raise professional standards in dental education and training.
- We will identify and reduce any risks that may arise from others delivering aspects of our regulatory functions

A fair employer

- We will treat everyone who works for us fairly with dignity and respect. We will ensure that our employment arrangements support our aspirations.
- We will work towards being a more diverse workforce at all levels of our organisation. We will consider what this means for developing our staff and their progression, and for how we promote ourselves as an employer.
- We will continue to collect equality and diversity data on our recruitment processes and on our workforce to inform our work and ensure transparency.