

How to report a dental professional to us

**This leaflet explains what to do if you're unhappy
with the way a dental professional has treated you**

Our role

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

We regulate all dental professionals: clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental nurses, dental technicians, dental therapists, dentists, and orthodontic therapists.

Professionals on our register must meet our high standards. They are expected to:

- Make a commitment to patient confidentiality;
- Make sure patients give their consent to all treatment;
- Give patients ways to raise concerns or make a complaint;
- Make arrangements so that patients can claim any compensation they may be entitled to;
- Take part in ongoing education and training;
- Make decisions that are in the best interests of patients;
- Tell us about any health issues which could affect their work; and
- Work effectively as a team.

We take action when our standards aren't being met.

What can I do if I'm concerned that a dental professional is not fit to do their work?

We will investigate any concerns that a dental professional is falling short of our standards and may not be fit to work as a dental professional. If the situation is serious enough, we can restrict or take away their right to work in the UK.

Our procedures are designed to protect patients and be fair to the people involved. Rules and guidance set out how we deal with concerns about a dental professional's fitness to practise (that is, whether they are fit to work in their role as a dental professional). You can find the rules and guidance on our website at www.gdc-uk.org.

We pay all the costs of the investigation.

What kinds of concerns can't you look at?

Before you contact us, you should know that there are some things we can't look at. For instance, we won't be able to help if you want compensation.

If you are seeking compensation, you will need to get legal advice. We are unable to provide financial redress to patients so, if you feel that your dental professional was negligent and wish to claim compensation, we would suggest that you seek independent legal advice on whether to bring a negligence claim as compensation can only be awarded by the courts.

If the treatment was provided privately, you may wish to contact the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) for advice. The DCS helps to resolve complaints about private dental treatment and may be able to arrange an explanation or apology, a full or partial refund of fees, remedial treatment from your dental professional, or a contribution towards remedial treatment so that the work can be completed by another dental professional. The DCS cannot award compensation.

You can phone the DCS on 020 8253 0800 or send an email to info@dentalcomplaints.org.uk.

If the treatment was provided by the NHS, you should contact the NHS for guidance on their complaints procedure.

You can get a list of other advice and support organisations from our website: www.gdc-uk.org.

If you have a problem with a dental professional but are not sure who can help, please contact our Customer Advice & Information Team:

Email: information@gdc-uk.org

Phone: 020 7167 6000

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



What can I do if my concern isn't a serious concern about a Dental professional's fitness to work?

Your dental practice will have its own complaints procedure that can deal with most issues. If you don't think the matter is serious enough to mean that the professional is not fit to work in their role, going through that complaints procedure may be the best way to solve the problem, so speak to them about the matter first.

What should I report to you?

If you think somebody may not be fit to do their work because of something they have done, their professional skills or their health, you should report this to us.

Examples of things you might report to us include the following:

- Very poor treatment;
- Failure to get a patient's consent (permission) for treatment;
- Not having professional indemnity insurance;
- Cross-infection issues (for example, using dirty equipment);
- Sexual assault or abuse;
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs; and/or
- Fraud or theft.

How do I report a concern to you?

You can report a concern on our website: www.gdc-uk.org

Consent

In order to investigate your complaint against the dental professional, we will need to disclose details of your complaint to the dental professional concerned and their employer(s). **To do this we will write to you requesting your written consent.**

If you have asked a representative to act on your behalf in relation to your complaint, we will need your consent to share the information we obtain with your representative. **To do this we will write to you requesting your written consent.**

What happens next?

As soon as we have enough information, we will look into your concern and consider whether we need to carry out an investigation.

The stages of the procedure are shown on the following page. However, you should bear in mind that the Interim Orders Committee can restrict or suspend a dental professional's right to practise at any stage.

How long will this take?

A decision will be made about whether the case should be closed, or if it should be referred to Case Examiners, usually within 18 weeks from the date the original complaint was received.

Stage 1

We will consider your complaint and decide whether we can deal with your concern.

At this stage we may ask for extra information to help us to assess your complaint.

We can deal with your concern

We will ask you for consent for us to go ahead and to show your complaint to the dental professional. Your complaint will be referred to a Caseworker to consider your concerns.

We can't deal with your concern

We will tell you why we can't help. We may also give you advice and details of other organisations that may be able to help you.

Stage 2

Your Caseworker considers your complaint and decides whether we should proceed to the next stage.

We should proceed

When your Caseworker has all the necessary information, they will refer the matter to the Case Examiners.

We will ask the dental professional for a written response to your complaint.

We can't help

Your caseworker will advise why we can't help and may provide you with information about other organisations that can help.

Stage 3

The Case Examiners look at all the information provided to decide whether the matter needs to be considered at a public hearing.

The bundle of documents considered by the Case Examiners will include a written response to your complaint from the dental professional and your comments.

The matter does need to be considered at a public hearing

Case Examiners refer the matter to a Practice Committee.

The matter does not need to be considered at a public hearing

The Case Examiners will either:

- take no further action;
- give the dental professional advice or a warning;
- ask the dental professional to agree a series of undertakings on their registration; or
- adjourn the case while we gather more information.

Stage 4

The Practice Committee holds a public hearing to decide whether we need to take action against the dental professional. You may have to attend the hearing to give evidence. If this is the case, we will give you further information on the process.

The Practice Committee decides we need to take action

We can:

- strike them off our register so that they cannot work as a dental professional at all;
- suspend them for a set period of time;
- set conditions which restrict their work; or
- give them a reprimand (formal statement of our disapproval).

The Practice Committee decides not take action

We will write to you with this decision.

If you want to report a dental professional, please do so on our website [here](#).