



Answering
tomorrow's
challenges
today

Research into the impact of COVID-19 on GDC's Registrants

Work Package 3: Online Focus Groups

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Focus Group Design

Recruitment and composition

We aim to conduct six focus groups in total, using purposive sampling to ensure that group participants reflect a range of roles and experiences. We have included a question in the survey which asks respondents to provide contact details if they are willing to take part in a focus group. Once we have survey responses, we will contact participants to invite them to take part, offering various dates and times. We will also include an information sheet and consent form which they will be required to sign.

The six focus groups will be based on the following:

Role	Sub-group	Number of focus groups
Dentists	Mixed group of principals / business owners (includes majority NHS, majority private and mixed)	1
	Private/majority private (associates)	1
	NHS/majority NHS (associates)	1
DCPs	Hygienists, therapists and ortho therapists – mixed group	1
	Nurses – mixed	1
	Dental Technicians and Clinical Dental Technicians	1

Within these groupings, we will seek to ensure a spread of participants across different countries, EDI characteristics and place of work. We will aim to split dentist focus groups into NHS/majority NHS practitioners (75%+), private practitioners/majority private (75%+), and mixed – this will avoid potential conflicts and enable us to focus on the specific needs of each sector. Final group compositions may change depending on participant availability.

Format

As detailed in our proposal, focus groups will last approximately 40 minutes and we will invite eight to ten potential participants. We anticipate that this will result in around five to eight actual participants – should initial groups suggest that more invites are required we will flex our approach for subsequent groups.

We will use Microsoft Teams to host the focus groups. Microsoft Teams has in-built recording functionality, which we will use to record each focus group session to aid with note-taking, transcription, and analysis. Focus groups will be moderated by a researcher from Ecorys, based on the topic guide outlined below.

Dates

The survey went live on 22nd September, and we will start contacting respondents who agreed to be contacted for the focus group on 30th September. This should ensure that there is a sufficiently large sample of respondents who have agreed to the focus group.

We will confirm focus group times and participants w/c 5th October and will conduct focus groups w/c 12th and 19th October.

Topic guide content

We have designed a single topic guide for dentists and DCPs. Having a single topic guide will help ensure comparability across focus groups and reduce the need for GDC and Ecorys to check and reconcile different documents. Since the focus groups are relatively short in length and the survey already collects a large amount of information, we have designed these topic guides to focus on key issues which are harder to quantify in a survey.

The topic guide is structured around the core GDC remit and is organised into three sections:

- ▶ protect, promote, and maintain the **health, safety, and wellbeing of the public**
- ▶ promote and maintain **public confidence** in regulated dental professions
- ▶ promote and maintain **proper professional standards and conduct**.

Topic guide

INTERVIEWER NOTE

Please ensure the following:

- You have attended the briefing
- You are fully aware of all GDPR and ethics requirements, including who to contact should there be any safeguarding issues raised
- You have read in full supporting documents (proposal, survey)
- You are fully up-to-speed on specific challenges and potential solutions or mechanisms that we may want to focus on

The focus should be on providing as much specific depth and detail on challenges and solutions as possible rather than loosely covering a broad number and simply reiterating what is already known from the survey responses. Depth, not breadth, is key. In particular, feel free to constructively challenge responses so that we are getting the detail required.

Focus group participants	
Participant IDs	
Researcher conducting interview	
Date of interview	
Post focus group commentary	

Introductions (5 mins)

Slide 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. My name is [insert name] and I am a [insert role] at Ecorys based in [insert geography].

As you may know, Ecorys (an independent research organisation) is undertaking research for the GDC to understand the scale and shape of the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on dental professionals and practices. We will use what you tell us today to provide information to the GDC to inform and help formulate their future regulatory response.

As part of the study, we have already completed a national survey of dental professionals which you have all responded to. This series of focus groups aim to build on what we have learned from the survey to focus specifically on the issues relate to the GDC's remit, and how they can best support the sector

ole in relation to **protecting public health, safety, and well-being, maintaining public confidence, and promoting professional standards and conduct.**

Slide 2

This session will be recorded. This would be for my own use only to help me make accurate notes. The recordings will not be passed to the GDC and will be destroyed at the end of the study in 2022. If you do not consent to being recorded, you are free to leave now or at any point. If you chose to leave, we will not include your responses in the analysis.

One final thing, we want you to feel that you can be honest and we therefore ask that you do not discuss the content of the focus group with others, to respect the confidentiality of those in the room.

Can I check as well before we start if you have any questions relating to the Information Sheet provided earlier? **ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS**

I am going to start the recording now.

“For the purposes of the video do you consent to being recorded for my note taking purposes only. Please raise your hand if you object.”

*** START RECORDING *** If somebody objects, then state that they are free to leave and we will follow up with them by email.

CONTINUE WITH Focus GROUP IF CONSENT GRANTED. IF NOT, DO NOT START RECORDING.

NOTE: Explain functionality of the room.

- Because this is a focus group, it may work better if you **do not mute yourself** unless there is a specific reason (e.g. dog barking, doorbell etc)
- To avoid talking over each other, please raise your hand [like this] if you want to come into the conversation.
- There may well be times when I ask certain questions that may seem completely obvious or where I may take a “devil’s advocate” role – this will be just so I can make sure that I’m not making any wrong assumptions.
- So that we all know each other, can you tell me your first name, the region in which you practice and your role? Everyone in this group has been invited because they are [insert role]

Protecting patient health, safety and wellbeing (10 mins)

INTERVIEWER NOTE

Ensure that participants are given the opportunity to feed in their own views. However, refer to initial survey results as provided to ensure that the main challenges identified in the survey are covered and explored as required. We should be looking to get granular detail on the key challenges – why exactly are they a challenge, how do people experience this in real-life, what are the longer-term implications etc.

1. Thinking about the GDC’s core remit for **protecting patient safety, in the context of COVID-19** what do you consider have been, or still are the most important challenges for you as a dental professional and for the organisation you work in?

Prompt: *Protecting yourself, protecting your patients, protecting your staff, applying and adhering to regulations and guidelines.*

Interviewer Note Facilitate open discussion and after c. three minutes, summarise the three/four main challenges raised, check for agreement/divergence and probe

2. In our discussion, [**challenge 1**] was identified as a particular issue in relation to patient safety. Can I now ask to what extent have you or the organisations you work in been able to address this challenge? How have you achieved this?

*Prompt: **Formal:** advice, guidance, information, processes, protocols. **Informal:** ways of working, culture*

Interviewer Note: Repeat structure to cover the three of four main challenges identified.

3. You also talked about [**challenge 2**] as a particular issue in relation to patient safety. Can I now ask to what extent have you or the organisation you work been able to address this challenge? How have you achieved this?
4. In relation to **protecting patient health, safety and wellbeing** are there any specific issues that you not yet been able to resolve? What are the implications of this?

Prompts: *Staffing issues, equipment supply issues, capacity issues*

5. Have there been any **surprising or unexpected behaviours exhibited** by dental professionals during the pandemic in relation to protecting patient health, safety and well-being.

Prompts: *treatment of employees, innovation in remote dental care or oral public health,*

6. What **support is required from GDC or others** to help address any outstanding challenges related to protecting patient safety?

Maintaining public confidence (10 mins)

INTERVIEWER NOTE

Ensure that participants are given the opportunity to feed in their own views. However, refer to initial survey results as provided to ensure that the main challenges identified in the survey are covered and explored as required. We should be looking to get granular detail on the key challenges – why exactly are they a challenge, how do people experience this in real-life, what are the longer-term implications etc.

7. Thinking about the GDC's core remit for **maintaining public confidence** what do you consider are the most important challenges for you as a dental professional and for the organisation you work in?

Prompt: *communication of restrictions on treatments, prioritisation of patients, access to care, social distancing requirements, increasing patient charges (private), transparency about treatment costs*

Interviewer Note Facilitate open discussion and after c. three minutes, summarise the three/ main challenges raised, check for agreement/divergence and probe

8. In our discussion, [**challenge 1**] was identified as a particular issue in relation to **maintaining public confidence**. Can I now ask to what extent have you or the organisation you work been able to address this challenge? How have you achieved this?

Prompt: **Formal:** advice, guidance, information, processes, protocols. **Informal:** ways of working, culture

Interviewer Note: Repeat structure to cover the three of four main challenges identified.

9. You also talked about [**challenge 2**] as a particular issue in relation to **maintaining public confidence**. Can I now ask to what extent have you or the organisation you work been able to address this challenge? How have you achieved this?

10. In relation to **maintaining public confidence**, are there any specific issues that you not yet been able to resolve? What are the implications of this?

Prompts: availability of care, adherence to guidelines, availability of treatments

11. Have there been any **surprising or unexpected behaviours exhibited** by dental professionals during the pandemic in relation to maintaining public confidence.

Prompts: how patients are prioritised, innovation in remote dental care or oral public health, volunteering in the wider NHS etc.

12. What **support is required from GDC or others** to help address any outstanding challenges related to **maintaining public confidence**?

Promoting professional standards and conduct (10 mins)

INTERVIEWER NOTE

The previous section may or may not have identified specific challenges that GDC (and other organisations) can assist with by providing support. Given GDC's remit and roll, this section aims to get specific feedback on GDC involvement to date, in relation to its remit to protect public safety and maintain public confidence. This section can also explore recommendations for the wider sector, although these should not be prompted.

13. Given GDC's remit of promoting and maintaining professional standards and behaviour, what is your perception of **how the GDC has approach this aspect of its remit during the pandemic**? What have they done that has worked/not worked and why?

Prompts: Registration, education and training, supporting access to guidance and information, ensuring practitioners are working safely?

14. In terms of promoting and maintaining professional standards and behaviour, what should the GDC **continue to do in the next six to twelve months** to help support the industry through the pandemic? What could/should be done, if anything, to sustain these over time?

Prompts: For instance, CPD, learning outcomes for students, training. Probe to ensure is clear what concrete difference they think specific actions would have.

15. How could other organisations involved in dentistry help to support recovery in the next six to twelve months to help support the industry through the pandemic? And what should they start to do during the same time period?

Probe to ensure is clear what concrete difference they think specific actions would have.

▷ What realistic concrete steps should they take?

▷ What could/should be done, if anything, to sustain these over time?

Final observations (5 mins)

16. Ask participants if they have any final comments or observations that they would like to share
17. Reiterate around confidentiality and contact details for any further questions
18. Outline final steps for research
19. Thank participants for attending the focus group