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.

Our services are free – 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 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 drink or drugs; and
- Fraud or theft.

How do I report a concern to you?

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

Alternatively you can send us an email to fitnesstopractise@gdc-uk.org. If contacting us by email please include the following information:

- Your name, address and contact details
- The full name and address of the dental professional
- The dental professional's registration number (you can find this from our website or call us)
- An explanation of what happened and the date it happened
- Your view on what the dental professional has done wrong or in what way is not fit to practise
- Any other relevant information, such as treatment plans and letters from the dental practice

You can also contact us using the form at the back of this guide. The form helps us to get as much relevant information as possible. You can email the form to fitnesstopractise@gdc-uk.org or send it by post it to:

Fitness to Practise Team General Dental Council 37 Wimpole Street London W1G 8DQ

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.

If we decide to take your complaint forward, we will give you the name and contact details of the member of our staff who will deal with your case. This person is known as your caseworker. They will tell you about the procedure for considering your concern, let you know the timescales involved and update you on any decisions made at each stage.

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 the Investigating Committee, a decision will usually be made within six months 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 Investigating Committee.

We will ask the dental professional for a written response to your complaint. We will send this to you for your comments.

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 Investigating Committee looks at all the information provided to decide whether the matter needs to be considered at a public hearing.

The dental professional will be asked to send us a written response to your complaint. We will send this to you for your comments.

You and the dental professional do not attend the Investigating Committee's meeting.

The matter does need to be considered at a public hearing

The Investigating Committee refers the matter to a Practice Committee.

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

The Committee will either:

- take no further action;
- give the dental professional advice or a warning; 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 are not sure if we can help, please contact our customer service team as follows.

Write to:
Customer Advice and Information Team
General Dental Council
37 Wimpole Street

London W1G 8DQ

Phone: 020 7167 6000

Email: information@gdc-uk.org

If you want to report a dental professional, please do so on our website or by filling in the form at the back of this guide and sending it to:

Fitness to Practise Team General Dental Council 37 Wimpole Street London W1G 8DQ

Email: fitnesstopractise@gdc-uk.org

Reporting a dental professional

General Dental Council

protecting patients, regulating the dental team

We are here to protect dental patients. If you are concerned that the treatment you have received is below the expected standard you can use this form to report the matter to us. Anyone can report a concern to us, but we only deal with certain types of complaints. Before getting in touch, please read 'How to report a dental professional to us' which explains what you can report to us and the types of concerns we can handle.

Part 1	About you – the person filling in this form						
Title	First name	Last name					
Address							
		Postcode					
Email address							
Contact phone number							
Are you making the complaint for yourself or on behalf of someone else?							
Self		Go to part 2					
Someone els	е □	Fill in the rest of this part with their (the patient's) details					
Title	First name	Last name					
Address							
		Postcode					
Email addres	ss						
Contact phon	o numbor						



Your relationship to them	
Why aren't they making the complaint themselves?	
Part 2 About the dental professional	
Their name	
Their address	
Postcode	
Their registration number (if you know it)	

Part 3 **About the complaint** What happened and when? (Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.) What, in your view, has the dental professional done wrong? (Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

	has been taken so a separate sheet if n		
Part 4	Signatures		
Your signatu	re	 	
Date		 	
Please send	this form to:		
Fitness to Pra General Den 37 Wimpole S London	tal Council		