

GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

Introduction

Our equality and diversity strategy applies to our work both as a regulator and employer. Through understanding the diversity of individuals and by embedding equality and diversity into our work we will improve our effectiveness as a regulator and provide an inclusive and supportive environment for our staff.

When we talk about equality we mean equality of opportunity, treating people fairly and challenging discrimination. By diversity we mean understanding and recognising the differences between people and valuing the opportunities that this can bring to the GDC.

Overview of the legal framework for equality and how it applies to the GDC

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act which aims to simplify and strengthen the law. The Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics' These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Act provides protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment (including third party harassment) and victimisation in, among other things services and public functions, premises, and education.

In addition, organisations like the GDC must meet the 'public sector equality duty' requirements set out in the Act, which requires the GDC to:

- take an active and vigorous approach to promoting equality;
- treat people differently where this is necessary to treat them fairly; and
- take positive action (as distinct from positively discriminating, which remains illegal) to ensure that people from protected groups are involved in the governance and other statutory activities of the Council.

This general duty is also underpinned by specific duties to:-

- Publish information to show compliance with the equality duty
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

Our equality and diversity strategy has been developed to ensure that we are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The GDC takes an inclusive view of equality and this strategy, therefore, promotes equality for all the protected groups. We report progress on the strategy to the GDC Council on an annual basis against a more detailed Action Plan. These reports are public documents and are available on our website.

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Our equality and diversity strategic objectives for 2014-15 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 and diversity evidence 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 and diversity with governance and management processes

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Objective 1

Protect patients through effective regulation.

- 1.1 Obtain and analyse feedback from witnesses and complainants about their experience in fitness to practise procedures.
- 1.2 Provide guidance and training for case managers and panellists on supporting vulnerable witnesses and complainants such as young people, disabled people and people whose first language is not English.
- 1.3 Provide all GDC and DCS communications in a range of accessible formats, including websites and social media.
- 1.4 Re-inforce importance of registrants addressing E&D in the workplace through implementation of our standards.

Desired outcome

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

- 2.1 Use the review of fitness to practise procedures to highlight equality and diversity, applying EIAs to the key processes and decision-making points.
- 2.2 Obtain and analyse feedback from dental professionals about their experience in fitness to practise procedures.

Desired outcome

Registrants believe that we conduct our work fairly.

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Objective 3

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

- 3.1 Review and communicate all HR policies and processes to promote equality and diversity and ensure compliance with the Equality Act.
- 3.2 Collect equality and diversity data at recruitment and from our staff and associates to inform our work.
- 3.3 Deliver a continuous programme of induction and training on equality and diversity for all staff and associates.
- 3.4 Ensure that the GDC's pay and benefits are compliant with legislation and reflect the diversity of the workforce.
- 3.5 Ensure that staff have opportunities to participate in and contribute to the development and management of the organisation.

Desired outcome

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 and valued.

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 and diversity evidence base to inform strategy, policy and operations

- 4.1 Develop an evidence base on equality and diversity 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.
- 4.2 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.

Desired outcome

We understand the diversity of our registrants and the implications of this for our work as a regulator.

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Objective 5

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

- 5.1 Use currently available tools to measure our engagement with protected groups when developing new policies to inform our policy development and equality impact assessments.
- 5.2 Identify opportunities to explore dental practice as it affects people with protected characteristics by obtaining feedback from representative groups on reviewing equality strategy.

Desired Outcome

Our stakeholders consider that they have been effectively consulted on our approach to equality and diversity.

Objective 6

Integrate equality and diversity with governance and management processes

- 6.1 Use EIAs in the development of our work and integrate them in the decision-making processes of the new Council.
- 6.2 Report on progress of Equality and Diversity Strategy progress to the Executive Management Team and to the Council

Desired outcome

Transparent, documented evidence of GDC's commitment to equality, diversity and public duty.