

Business plan 2017

The second year of *Patients, Professionals,
Partners, Performance:*

Our three-year roadmap for 2016-2019



Section one: introduction

Chair's foreword

The public rightly expects safe, effective dental care that is centred around the patient. We know that is what the overwhelming majority of the many dentists and dental care professionals working across the UK aspire to, and succeed in, delivering. They are committed and hard-working professionals in whom the public rightly places its trust.

The dental landscape is evolving. Changes in technology, alongside changes in society have given patients and the public new expectations and the means to give instant opinions about services. Patients have access to information about their health and are no longer as completely dependent on the expert practitioner.

As an organisation, we also need to better understand the challenges faced by the dental professionals we regulate. Dental professional regulation has not kept pace with the changing dental profession as well as the needs and expectations of patients and the public.

It is within that context the 2017 business plan is being published alongside *Shifting the balance: a better, fairer system of dental regulation* – which will be the starting point to address the more long-term, fundamental challenges within dental professional regulation; including the prevention of harm.

The business plan gives details of the work that we will do over the next year and beyond to meet the objectives set out in *Patients, Professionals, Partners, Performance*.

Dr William Moyes

Chair of the General Dental Council



Chief Executive's foreword

We have significantly improved our performance in the past year, but there is still more to do.

Over the last eighteen months, we have been steadily undertaking the preparatory work necessary to implement organisational change and improve our service – both to the patients we protect and the dental professions we regulate.

We have invested in strengthening our performance, which has involved developing new tools to help us manage our workload and associated costs. This will continue throughout 2017 to further enhance the systems and processes we currently have.

We now have a better understanding of the likely volume and the complexity of our caseload. This informs the improvement of our fitness to practice processes - but incremental improvements to our operational processes will only take us so far.

The 2017 business plan sets out the initiatives which, over the next twelve months and beyond, will change our regulatory model so that we can achieve our goal of becoming an effective and efficient regulator.

You can see more detail about our main projects in section four. Three key organisational priorities will underpin our activity over the next year:

- Continue to build an effective and efficient organisation
- Improve our overall performance
- Drive improvement in dental regulation

If we are successful in rebalancing our workload and focusing on the prevention of harm, as set out in *Shifting the balance*, there is likely to be less need to act after harm has occurred, resulting in a better, fairer and more effective system of dental professional regulation.

Ian Brack

Chief Executive of the General Dental Council

Section two: Overview of who we are and what we do

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the UK-wide statutory regulator of the 108,000 members of the dental team. 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.

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, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public;
- to promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated; and
- to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions.

We fulfil our purpose by using our statutory powers to:

- grant 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;
- assure the quality of dental pre-registration and training;
- 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 (FtP) process;
- protect the public from individuals carrying out dentistry while not registered; and
- require dental professionals to keep their skills up to date through our continuing professional development (CPD) requirements.

In addition, we provide the Dental Complaints Service which aims to support patients and dental professionals in using mediation to resolve complaints about private dental care.

In doing so we aim to demonstrate our values, which are:

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.

Section three: Review of 2016 objectives

A fuller review of our success in 2016 will be available in our 2016 Annual Report and Accounts when it is published later in the year. The table below outlines some of the high-level things we have achieved in the year.

2016 Objective	What did we do to achieve it
<p>Performance and meeting PSA standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the GDC's work in 2016 has been to improve our performance, with particular emphasis on how we manage our caseload and deploy our investigation and adjudication powers. • The 120% rise in complaints between 2010 and 2014 had a detrimental effect on our systems and processes and we did not plan for it nor respond to it well enough. • The GDC has been working hard to put this right through improved systems and processes. The work we started in 2015 will continue during 2017. • In the latest review in November 2016 by our oversight body the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) found the GDC met 21 out of the 24 PSA standards.
<p>More and better engagement with stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDC has focused its efforts on improving how we engage with all dental professionals, particularly improving face-to-face engagement. • This means listening to dentists, DCPs and partners, responding to feedback and being transparent by explaining our decision making. • If we are to fulfil our role of protecting patients, while being fair to registrants, we need to work more and better with not only the professionals that we regulate, but also the partners that work in related fields and patients too. To improve this, we have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – established the Dental Professional Forum, which aims to bring together stakeholders that work in dentistry, foster more collaboration and information sharing. – been speaking more regularly with dental professions, so we can hear directly from those we regulate. – along with the Care Quality Commission and NHS England, established the Regulation of Dental Service Programme Board to speak as one voice in dental regulation with our partners to share information and improve regulation. – been communicating the major Council decisions more quickly than ever before via a blog from the chair after each Council meeting. This is so we can reflect on the discussion and share the most important decisions of the Council. – established regular columns in trade titles Dentistry and The Probe, so we can proactively explain our decisions and performance improvement work to dental professionals and our partners.

2016 Objective	What did we do to achieve it
Introduction of Case Examiners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDC successfully introduced case examiners in November 2016. They carry out most of the decision making functions that were previously performed by the Investigating Committee. • This will improve the efficiency of the GDC's fitness to practise processes, benefiting patients and the dental team. • Other legislative changes, which came into effect in April, now enable the GDC to refer appropriate cases at any point in the fitness to practise process to an Interim Orders Committee. This means an appropriate decision can be made much quicker giving us greater flexibility and enable swifter action to protect the public if concerns arise 'mid-investigation'. • These changes allow the GDC to be more proactive in responding to concerns about patient safety.
NHS concerns in England and a consistent approach to escalating issues in Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients' concerns should always be responded to by the most appropriate body – and this is not always the GDC. • In 2016, we worked with the NHS in England to improve local resolution of complaints and ensure that the GDC only deals with the most serious of concerns, where an individuals' fitness to practise may be compromised. • In September we launched NHS concerns handling with NHS England. When a concern is sent to us which does not significantly impact on a dental professional's ability to practise dentistry, but falls into one or more of the referral criteria, there is an agreement that it will be referred to the NHS to resolve locally. • The GDC has worked with Chief Dental Officer and health boards in Scotland in order to ensure the approach to escalating issues is consistent across the country. There is a longer-term ambition to set-up something similar to NHS concerns in Wales and Northern Ireland.
Support during Fitness to Practise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDC is committed to being fair to those we register. One of the projects that has been implemented in 2016 has been the improved identification and signposting to additional support for those that are interacting with our fitness to practise processes. • The GDC has worked in partnership with the Samaritans to train staff involved in the fitness to practise process to ensure they have the skills to help recognise where an individual may need additional support. The GDC is aware that fitness to practise proceedings can be stressful and this training aims to ensure that people who are particularly vulnerable are identified as early as possible and support is clearly signposted to them. We are committed to working with other stakeholders, like the Local Dental Committees and the BDA Benevolent Fund to make sure appropriate support is available for practitioners involved in FtP cases, especially those who are unrepresented.

2016 Objective	What did we do to achieve it
Service improvements and major changes in Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The GDC has introduced online applications for dental professionals in order to improve the service for our applicants and making the process more cost effective.• The GDC has implemented the European Alert mechanism; EU directive 2005/36/EC. The benefit of this is that we will be informed by other EU members of dental professionals who may also be registered with another Member State and have had restrictions placed on their practise.• Following a consultation with dental professionals and patients, the GDC has removed all postal address details from the online register.• The GDC has taken the necessary steps to enforce the legal right from the Government and Department of Health review, to introduce mandatory declarations from applicants and existing dental professionals confirming they have or will have appropriate indemnity cover for their period of registration or they may be removed from the register.



Section four: 2017 priorities

The previous sections described our purpose and how we fulfil our regulatory role, as well as outlining some of our key achievements in 2016. We are working to understand and improve our effectiveness and demonstrate the value for money we provide so that we can become an efficient and high performing organisation.

We are confident that as we embed and build on our regulatory approach, this will help us to meet our purpose of making sure the safety and well-being of the public is protected and continue to improve our impact and effectiveness to make sure public confidence in dental regulation is maintained.

Our work this year is designed to continue to achieve the strategic aims in our roadmap 2016–19, and to make sure we continue to deliver a high-quality service across our range of core regulatory functions.

The business plan is the annual articulation of our roadmap: *Patients, Professionals, Partners, Performance* – the projects that will help us towards fulfilling our strategic objectives. The business plan is monitored by the Executive Management Team who report progress to the Council via the Finance and Performance Committee.

Professionals

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

Patients

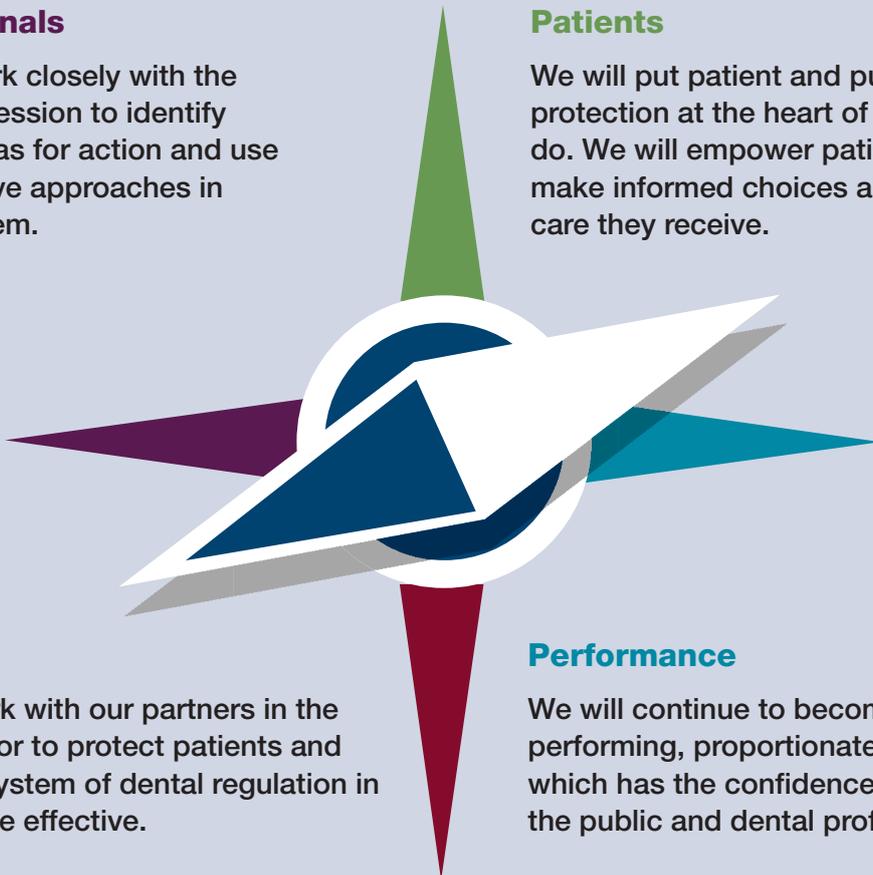
We will put patient and public protection at the heart of what we do. We will empower patients to make informed choices about the care they receive.

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 become a high performing, proportionate regulator which has the confidence of patients, the public and dental professionals.



Listed below are the 18 major initiatives we will undertake in 2017, under our three main objectives. All the activities below will help us to advance our strategic objectives. Everything we do is ultimately for patients; some things we do directly, others we do through the respective lenses of our partners and the profession. All is underpinned by performance, with patient safety as its heart.

The GDC has three major priorities for 2017.

Priority one:

Continue to build a cost effective and efficient organisation

Any successful organisation is underpinned by having a solid set of systems and processes in place. By taking advantage of technology and finding new and better ways of working, we want to further improve our efficiency by enhancing the systems and processes we currently have.

In 2017 we will:

- ✓ Develop and put in place an effective research and evidence strategy to inform and improve our educational policy, our quality assurance and training roles, and Fitness to Practice (FtP) function.
- ✓ Establish a single process for dealing with corporate complaints and ensure we are learning lessons via comprehensive reporting.
- ✓ Recruit and maintain a full Council with 12 members; 6 registrants and 6 lay by replacing several members when their terms expire on 1 October 2017.
- ✓ Develop and deliver core People and Talent Management strategies to recruit and retain staff.
- ✓ Develop and implement a long term 5-year strategy to plan the workforce, in line with the regulatory reform agenda.

- ✓ Publish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and action plan to monitor activities in this area.
- ✓ Set a target for organisational efficiency savings and run a programme to make those savings.

Priority two:

Improve our overall performance

We want to maintain the PSA standards we have achieved in 2016 and improve on them in 2017 by improving our overall organisational performance. In particular, this will involve consolidating improvements in Fitness to Practise (FtP) with a focus on reducing the length of time cases take to investigate and making the entire process more effective and proportionate.

In 2017 we will:

- ✓ Undertake a review of Registration team's systems and processes.
- ✓ Review the performance of the first wave of case examiners, and develop a business case for the next phase of Section 60 orders.
- ✓ Undertake activities with an aim to attain FtP PSA Standard 10 - "Information about FtP cases is securely retained".
- ✓ Improve the timeliness of cases which end up at the hearing stage by undertaking a thorough review of the entire FtP process.
- ✓ Improve customer service in FtP, targeting witness support services.

Priority three:

Drive improvement in dental regulation

Making sure that dental professional regulation is fit for the future is an essential component of our long-term stability. Running a major programme of engagement about the purpose and model of dental professional regulation will involve:

- Exploring how best to prevent harm from happening through education and embedding our Standards.
- If a complaint about dental care does occur, exploring which is the most appropriate body to assist with the resolution of this complaint.
- Making sure that the most serious sanctions – which only the GDC can deploy – are done so appropriately, efficiently and fairly, ensuring patient safety is prioritised.

In 2017 we will:

- ✓ Launch a major public consultation *Shifting the balance* on a package of reform measures of dental regulation, and have significant input to the Department of Health professional regulation reforms.
- ✓ Carry out a full review of the Dental Complaints Service.
- ✓ Further embed the Standards of the dental team by taking full account of patients' needs and to support dental professionals in delivering care and service that meets the standards.
- ✓ Prepare the ground for the full implementation of enhanced CPD in 2018, including preparing guidance, policy and clear communications for dental professionals, our partners and stakeholders.
- ✓ Develop and deliver an effective education and quality assurance (QA) policy to meaningfully support education and training.
- ✓ Embed a proactive and high quality communications and engagement function to effectively communicate with patients, the profession and partners.

Throughout 2017, we will also be running a suite of internal improvement projects alongside the key priorities listed above, targeting efficiency and cost savings. The internal improvement projects are operational level investments in future efficiencies and the outcomes are aimed at contributing to progress against our strategic performance objective of becoming a high performing and proportionate regulator.

These are summarised below:

- ✓ We will review our processes and systems and introduce a paperless office in Registration and benchmark our overall Registration performance externally. We will also improve reporting and call analytics in the Customer Advice and Information team.
- ✓ We will upgrade and improve our systems in Finance and IT, with a move to SharePoint 2016, Windows 10 and extend the coverage of Microsoft Dynamics to further parts of the business, including running a pilot in introducing the use of our core IT systems by the GDC's Associates.
- ✓ We will review the resilience of our Project Management Office and improve our business management across the organisation with an increasingly integrated approach to planning. We will further embed the developments made to our Risk Management policy and procedures, shift the focus of our compliance activity to the second line of defence and review our performance reporting and statistical modelling maturity.

Section five: Risk management, planning, performance reporting and the budget process

Risk management

The risk management function is a live, continual and embedded process that aims to capture, manage and monitor the risks and issues facing the GDC at both operational and strategic levels.

The risk management approach is linked to the GDC business planning process. All risks are aligned with an appropriate business objective; and are considered for their potential causes and consequences.

Furthermore, current and upcoming mitigations are established, with formal assurances used to determine their effectiveness – a process that aligns directly with the GDC business planning and performance reporting function. Reviewing the current and potential organisational risks is part of the business planning process, in assessing priorities for the upcoming year and where to allocate resources.

Performance reporting

Business planning can be defined as the process that allows the GDC's strategic vision, objectives and priorities to be translated into annual operational action plans.

The corporate business plan identifies what needs to happen in all directorates to achieve success, what resources will be required for delivery, the outputs and outcomes that are anticipated and any other contributory factors (eg actions by partner organisations, risks, resource assumptions etc.).

The GDC's business planning and reporting approach is integrated and collaborative. The plan is developed to an agreed rolling planning cycle and reviewed and approved annually by the Council. This allows for effective monitoring

and review of business plan and operational projects throughout the year. Each programme of work is planned using programme and project management best practice, tailored to ensure our resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Each item on the business plan is monitored monthly by our Executive Management Team and progress is reported to the Council and the Finance and Performance Committee on a quarterly basis. This is to give assurance that we are delivering the work said we would deliver. It also gives the opportunity to flag or escalate projects or programmes of work that require attention and support from the Executive Management Team which monitors the operational plan, whereas the Council or the Finance and Performance Committee monitor the high-level plan.

The 18 priority items have been highlighted in this plan because they are of the most relevance to our external stakeholders, partners, dental professionals and patients. We have also summarised the internal improvement projects we are doing to demonstrate how we are investing our resources to improve our performance. Further initiatives and activities are captured on the operational plan that is also monitored by the Executive Management Team.

Annual budget process

Each year the GDC runs a budget process that produces an annual budget, including using internal forecast and income models to ensure we cost what we plan to achieve each year and over the longer term. The budget is approved by the Council alongside the business plan. The budget is available on our website and is reported against every year in the Annual Reports and Accounts.

General Dental Council

37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ

Phone: 020 7167 6000
Fax: 020 7224 3294
Email: information@gdc-uk.org
Web: www.gdc-uk.org

