

General  
Dental  
Council

protecting patients,  
regulating the dental team

# Smile

Your dental team have check ups too



**Whether you're visiting for a routine check up, a quick clean or for more involved treatment, the dental professional treating you (and their services) must meet standards set by the General Dental Council.**

**This leaflet explains:**

- the role of the General Dental Council;
- knowing what to expect at your visit; and
- what to do if you are unhappy with your experience.

# The role of the General Dental Council

The General Dental Council is the UK's dental regulator. Our role is to protect dental patients. We were set up by Parliament but are independent of the Government and the NHS. 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.



Dental professionals on our register must meet our high standards. Dental professionals must:

- make a commitment to patient confidentiality and 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 practice; and
- invest in teamworking and good management.

We make sure that dental professionals continue to put your interests first throughout their careers by insisting on proof of continuing professional development. We take action when our standards aren't being met.

## Why is the General Dental Council relevant to me?

When you make an appointment you expect high standards of care, but if your expectations aren't met or if something goes wrong with your treatment, help is available.

You can check that a dental professional is registered with us by visiting our website or calling us. If you have concerns that lead you to believe that a dental professional should not be treating patients at all, you should get in touch.

We can also help you find an appropriate organisation if you are looking for compensation or trying to settle a complaint.

Visit: [www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)

Phone: 0845 222 4141

Email: [information@gdc-uk.org](mailto:information@gdc-uk.org)



# What should I expect at my visit?

Research suggests that most people have a positive experience of dental care, but it can be hard to know if your treatment was of the best standard because it is difficult to compare your own experience with someone else's.

## You should know the following things.

- Before a dental professional carries out any work, they should check your mouth and then give you a treatment plan and an estimate of how much any work will cost.
- As part of your first consultation you should be asked for a full medical history. You will be asked about your general health and whether or not you smoke.
- If you are having what is called a 'dental appliance' fitted (e.g. a crown), you can ask for a statement of manufacture. This shows details of the device, who it was made and prescribed by, confirmation that it was made just for you and that it meets legal standards.
- If the dentist claims to be a specialist in a particular area of work, for example in orthodontics or restorative dentistry, you can check to see if this is noted on our register.
- If you miss an appointment and are an NHS patient in England or Wales, you will not be charged, but if you are a private patient or an NHS patient in Scotland or Northern Ireland the practice may charge you – but they must have warned you beforehand that they do so.

## What questions could I ask?

Don't be afraid to ask simple questions during your appointment if treatment is to be carried out immediately or do some extra research if there is time before your procedure. Talk to other patients who have received the same treatment or visit another dentist for a second opinion until you feel confident enough to go ahead with treatment.

**How much will my treatment cost?**

**When do I have to pay?**

**Who will be carrying out the procedure?**

**How many times have they carried out this procedure?**

**What happens if I am unhappy with the results?**

**Who pays for any work that is done to correct any problems?**

**If there are complications and I need more treatment, will there be extra costs?**

**What kind of insurance do you have?**

**Is the work guaranteed for a certain length of time?**

**Who can I contact for advice after treatment?**

## Emergency treatment

If you are registered as an NHS patient, you are entitled to emergency treatment within 24 hours and your surgery will be able to provide this. Private dentists have a duty to provide similar cover.

If you don't have a regular dentist you can contact one of the following national organisations for help.

NHS Direct (England and Wales)  
Phone: **0845 46 47**

NHS 24 (Scotland)  
Phone: **08454 24 24 24**

Health & Social Care  
Business Services Organisation  
(Northern Ireland)  
Phone: **028 9032 4431**

## Costs

The cost of dental treatment depends on several factors such as how complicated your treatment is, whether any laboratory work is involved, and where you live. It's a good idea to ask your dentist about costs and what the arrangements are for payment before your treatment begins.

NHS dentists should give you a written estimate for any extensive course of treatment, and should also give you a written estimate for other work if you ask for one. Private dentists also have to make their charges clear.



## **NHS treatment**

NHS dental treatment costs are set each year by UK departments of health and you will pay the same amount, whichever dental practice you choose. The cost of visiting an NHS practice for occasional treatment is exactly the same as treatment for registered patients. Information on NHS dental charges is available from the dentist or by calling NHS Direct (or your national equivalent if you live in Scotland or Northern Ireland) – they will be able to give you examples of what you might pay for courses of treatment.

Visit the NHS websites and search for 'dental costs' for more information on charges.

NHS England  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

NHS Scotland  
[www.show.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Wales  
[www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)

NHS Northern Ireland  
[www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net)

## **Private care**

Dental fees in the private sector can vary widely. There are no official guidelines for what a private dentist can charge. You should check how much your treatment will cost before and during your appointment and agree the fee with your dentist.



## What should I do if I am unhappy with my experience?

If you are unhappy with your experience for any reason, your dental practice will have their own query or complaints procedure and most issues can usually be dealt with in this way. Speak to them first to see if you can settle the problem.

If you are still unhappy, further help is available.

## Who can I contact if I have a problem with private dental care?

**Dental Complaints Service (DCS)**  
This is an expert, free service that can help you if you have a complaint about private dental care. They are independent, fair and funded by us.  
[www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk](http://www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk)  
Phone: 08456 120 540

Also, Citizens Advice provides free, independent, confidential and fair advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. They have local offices (citizens advice bureaux) across the UK that may be able to help you.  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)



## Who can I contact if I have a problem with NHS dental care?

**England: Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS)**  
PALS teams in NHS Trusts provide support for patients and their carers in solving problems and give advice about making complaints.  
[www.pals.nhs.uk](http://www.pals.nhs.uk)

**Independent Complaints Advocacy Services (ICAS)**  
ICAS supports patients and their carers who want to make a complaint about their NHS treatment or care. Search for 'ICAS' at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

**Wales: Community Health Councils (CHCs)**  
Your local CHC can provide you with free confidential help.  
Phone: 0845 644 7814

**Scotland: Independent Advice and Support Service (IASS)**  
IASS is part of the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau Service and can provide help or support in making a complaint in Scotland.  
[www.cas.org.uk/healthcomplaints.aspx](http://www.cas.org.uk/healthcomplaints.aspx)

## How can the GDC help?

We are here to protect dental patients. If you are concerned that the treatment you have received is below standard you can get in touch.

We take action ourselves when a dental professional's ability, behaviour or health means it is not suitable for them to continue working as a dental professional. If the situation is serious enough, we can limit or remove the dental professional's right to work in the UK.

Anyone can report a concern to us, but we only deal with certain types of complaints. Before getting in touch, read our leaflet 'How to report a dental professional to us' which explains what you can report to us and the types of concerns we handle. The leaflet is available on [www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org) or by calling 0845 222 4141.

We'll direct you to organisations that can help you get compensation or a solution to your problem if needed.

Check your dental professional is registered:  
**[www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)**

We want to make sure all of our services are accessible to everyone.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in a different format (for example, in large print or audio) or in a language other than English, please contact us.

**GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL**

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