

**General
Dental
Council**

GDC consultation response

**Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman
consultation:**

Complaint Standards Framework

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Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO)
Millbank Tower, London, UK

Response to the consultation on the Complaint Standards Framework

The GDC works on behalf of the public to regulate those providing oral healthcare, maintaining a framework of standards to support the delivery of high-quality care.

Our overarching purpose when exercising our functions (set out in the Dentists Act 1984 and updated by the Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015) is ‘the protection of the public’, which involves the pursuit of the following objectives:

1. To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of the public.
2. To promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated under this Act.
3. To promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions.

Our role in meeting these objectives is to regulate the 110,000 members of the dental team, which involves carrying out some specified mandatory functions. These are to:

1. Set standards for dental education.
2. Maintain a register of dentists and dental care professionals who meet the registration requirements.
3. Set and promote professional standards.
4. Investigate allegations of impaired fitness to practise.

We write to express our support for the Complaint Standards Framework.

We have welcomed the opportunity to be involved with the development of this framework as part of the working group of partner organisations from across the health and care sector. We also recognise the consultation the PHSO has done with the Profession Wide Complaints Handling Initiative, a forum which brings together organisations from across the dental sector, to promote best practice in complaints handling, and helping professionals and patients to get the most from feedback and complaints, for the benefit of all. The principles for good complaints handling developed by this group to support registrants are reflected in the final Complaint Standard Framework document.

In strategic aim two of our Corporate Strategy, we commit to working with the professions and our partners to ensure that patients and the public are able to raise concerns with the agency best placed to resolve them effectively and without unnecessary delay. The framework supports this aim by setting out best practice in complaints handling for the NHS, aiding in local resolution to ensure that complaints can be managed in the right place, with the right touch, at the right time. Whilst this framework is intended for those providing care within the NHS, we encourage our registrants working in private practice to look to this as an example of how they may effectively handle their complaints and feedback within their practice.

It is of course essential to our statutory function that the most serious cases are referred to the regulator, and we will continue to work with you to develop guidance to underpin this document, particularly to ensure that patients and complaints staff are clear which types of cases merit this type of action.

We also note the intention of the PHSO to capture and report on how organisations it monitors embed the Framework. We would urge care to be taken when setting these requirements, to ensure that the requirements are proportionate and do not place undue burden on registrants.

We look forward to further opportunities to engage with this work through our continued involvement with the working group.

Head of Right Touch Regulation
General Dental Council