

Our standards and how they affect your care

Whether you're visiting for a routine check-up, a quick clean or for more complicated treatment, the dental professional treating you must meet our standards.

We, the General Dental Council, regulate dental professionals in the UK. Our job is to protect you.

We were set up by Parliament, but we are independent from the Government and the NHS. By law, private and NHS dental professionals must be registered with us to work in the UK.

We regulate all members of the dental team, including:

- dentists;
- dental nurses;
- dental hygienists;
- clinical dental technicians;
- dental technicians;
- dental therapists; and
- orthodontic therapists.

Dental professionals on our register must meet our high standards, and we take action when they don't. Our 'Standards for dental

professionals' is a code of conduct which dental professionals registered with us agree to keep to. These standards explain what we expect and are broken down into the following six areas.

- 1 Patient consent
- 2 Patient confidentiality
- 3 Dental team working
- 4 Management responsibility
- 5 Complaints handling
- 6 Raising concerns

The following pages briefly explain these areas, so you can find out how our standards help protect you.

We also have a 'Scope of Practice' which explains what each member of your dental team can do.

You can read more information about our standards on our website.

Standards for dental professionals

Our information is based on six important principles, which are:

- 1 putting your interests first and protecting you;
- 2 respecting your dignity and the choices you make;
- 3 keeping your information confidential;
- 4 working with members of the dental team and other health-care professionals to make sure we put you first;
- 5 making sure dental professionals have the knowledge and skills they need to do their job; and
- 6 being trustworthy.

These principles influence all of our work and the continuing education a dental professional must go through. Each member of the dental team is responsible for applying these principles to their

everyday work. We ask professionals to use their own judgement and be prepared to explain their actions if we ask them to.

We do not provide clinical guidelines, but we ask professionals to be familiar with relevant guidelines provided by other organisations.

You can read or listen to our 'Standards for dental professionals' on our website.



Putting your interests first and protecting you

Your dental professional should put your interests before their own interests, or the interests of their colleagues, an organisation or a business.

If a dental professional cannot provide the type of care you need, they should refer you to someone else for a second opinion or advice, especially if you ask them to do this.

You should be able to see your patient records (including your medical history) when you ask to, and if you make a complaint, your dental professional should give you an appropriate response. If you do not receive the treatment you expect to or if something goes wrong, you have the right to complain. Your dental practice should have a complaints procedure you can follow, and you should be able to claim any compensation you may be entitled to.

Dental professionals are responsible for making sure you're not put at risk because of their or their colleague's health, behaviour or professional performance, or something in their clinic. They must also follow appropriate procedures for child protection.

No-one in your dental team should ever ask you for or accept any payment, gift or hospitality, or make or accept any referral, which may affect their professional judgement.

They shouldn't make any misleading claims about the treatment you receive or the skills and qualifications that they have.

You can hear or read more about the 'Principles of complaints handling' on our website.

You can also read or download the 'Principles of raising concerns'.

Respecting your dignity and the choices you make

Your dental professional should be polite and treat you with respect. They should also encourage you to take responsibility for making decisions about your body and treatment. They should not do anything for you without getting your permission.

Your dental professional should always be fair with you and keep to the law. They must also promote equal opportunities and maintain appropriate boundaries.

Whoever treats you should listen to you and explain any information you need so you can make your own decisions about your treatment.

For more information, see 'Principles of patient consent'.

Keeping your information confidential

Your dental professional must keep your information confidential and only use it for the purposes you gave it to them for.

A dental professional may be able to make your information public without getting your permission, but only if this is in your or the public's interest.

For more information, see 'Principles of patient confidentiality'.



Working with members of the dental team and other health-care professionals to make sure we put you first

As well as treating you with respect and in line with the law, dental professionals should work with each other and respect each other's role in your care.

They should share their knowledge and skills with other members of their team, but put your interests first.

For more information, see 'Principles of dental team working' and 'Management responsibility'.

Making sure dental professionals have the knowledge and skills they need to do their job

Registering with us after training or qualifying is only the first step of a dental professional's career. We ask them to develop and update their knowledge and skills throughout their working life.

We encourage professionals on our registers to know and understand their limits as well as their strengths, and to find out about current best practice, laws and regulations and follow them. This makes sure that the professionals treating you provide a good standard of care based on up-to-date and reliable information.

Each member of the team must work within their knowledge and professional and physical ability.

To find out what tasks each kind of professional can do, see 'Scope of practice'.

Be trustworthy

Above all, we ask professionals to always be honest and fair.

Outside of work, we ask people to maintain appropriate standards of personal behaviour so that you have confidence in them and the profession.



We want to make sure that everyone can use our services.

If you would like a copy of this information in another language or format for example, in large print or on audio CD or podcast, please contact us.

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To check that your dental professional is registered, visit www.gdc-uk.org.