

## ANNUAL RETENTION FEE

# GDC PLANS 64% ARF INCREASE FOR DENTISTS

The profession was astonished on 30 June 2014 when the General Dental Council (GDC) announced that it plans to increase the annual retention fee (ARF) for dentists from £576 to £945 in 2015: a 64% increase.

The GDC has launched a consultation on the level of the ARF for registrants, following an earlier consultation focused on the policy used when setting the ARF.

The Council says that it has considered the responses from the earlier consultation when establishing the proposed new fee. It says that it needs to increase the fee due to the 110% increase in the number of complaints made about GDC registrants since 2010, in order to pay the cost of fitness to practise hearings.

The British Dental Association (BDA) was quick to condemn the GDC's plans. It has called on the Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, to initiate an investigation into the competence of the GDC, following its poor performance appraisal by the Professional Standards Authority. Principal Executive Committee (PEC) Chair Dr Mick Armstrong said that the BDA is deeply concerned about the GDC's inefficiencies and poor management to date, and has questioned its credibility.

Dr Armstrong met with GDC leaders on 1 July to express the profession's alarm at the planned fee increase and told them it was wholly unacceptable and at odds with the actions of other regulators.

The BDA has launched a 'No to ARF rise' campaign and is encouraging all dentists to:

- Read Mick Armstrong's blog on BDA Connect
- Email/write to their MP
- Post the 'Dentists say no 64%

rise in the GDC's ARF' post-card directly to Jeremy Hunt (included with the *BDJ* as an insert on 11 July 2014)

- Fill out the BDA survey
- Sign the e-petition at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/66982>
- Use the hashtag #ARFhike on Twitter
- Lend your support to the BDA's Facebook page
- Share your views on the BDA Connect Forum page
- Read the GDC's consultation documents and respond directly.

All of the BDA's activities and links to their forums and surveys can be accessed via [www.bda.org](http://www.bda.org).

The BDA has also challenged the GDC to justify its inflammatory advertisement that featured in the *Daily Telegraph* on 5 July 2014. The full-page advertisement invited private dental patients to report to the profession's regulator if they are 'not completely happy' with their care.

The ARF for dental care professionals (DCPs) is also set to increase, from £120 – which has already been contested by DCP groups on account of their lower earnings – to £128 from 2015 (a 6.7% increase).

The consultation is open until 4 September 2014; further information can be found at [http://www.gdc-uk.org/GDCcalendar/Consultations/pages/Consultation-on-the-Annual-Retention-Fee-\(ARF\)-Level-for-2015.aspx](http://www.gdc-uk.org/GDCcalendar/Consultations/pages/Consultation-on-the-Annual-Retention-Fee-(ARF)-Level-for-2015.aspx).

The e-petition has already attracted over 13,200 signatures at the time of writing. Add yours at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/66982>.

Another petition placed on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) invites signatories to 'Disband the General Dental Council', and has attracted the support of 3,971 people.

## BDJ READERS RESPOND TO ARF HIKE

**Martin Parsons, Sheffield:**

This must be bad financial management on behalf of the GDC; feeling the need to increase fees to this level baffles me. I realise that at the moment this may be based on the cost of complaints for each of the groups; however, there are now DCPs with direct access and clinical roles who in my opinion should share that cost, as they currently have a much larger scope of practice.

Would it not be sensible for the GDC to consider having a sliding scale or (*pro rata*) for ARF based on income? Some GDPs may earn far more than a part-time clinical teacher doing one or two sessions per week in a dental hospital for example. For those dentists semi-retiring and/or wanting to go part-time supervising dental students or the odd sessional work, this may discourage them from doing so. Remember since 2008 dental nurses have had to be registered with the GDC, and pay the same fee as other DCPs, therefore income should have increased for the GDC since then. What's happening with the extra money?

In my opinion the GDC should base their ARF on 'risk' for dentists, for example a dentist not on the specialist register but who has a declared interest in 'implants' or 'endodontics' should pay more than those who only do general dentistry. It will be interesting to

## GDC PLANS TO TACKLE FTP PROBLEMS

The General Dental Council (GDC) says that it fully accepts the findings of the latest review of its performance,<sup>1</sup> published on 27 June 2014 by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA), and has put in place measures to tackle the problems identified.

The GDC is pleased that it has met all the Standards of Good Regulation for standards and guidance and education and training but recognises that it is not acceptable to have failed to meet six standards in fitness to practise (FtP) and two in registration.

Chief Executive and Registrar of the GDC, Evlynn Gilvarry said: 'We regard failure to meet the PSA's standards as entirely unacceptable and all our efforts are focused on tackling the problems. We have increased resources to deal with the continuing surge in caseload and made other key changes to improve the performance of our teams.'

GDC Chair Bill Moyes said: 'The number one priority of the new Council is to ensure our fitness to practise function has the resources it needs to deliver an efficient and effective complaints process. [...] We are pleased that we have been granted an S60 Order to enable the introduction of case examiners to bring us in line with other regulators.'

1. Professional Standards Authority. Performance Review 2013-2014. Available at: <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/library/document-detail?id=d716599e-2ce2-6f4b-9ceb-ff0000b2236b> (accessed 10 July 2014).