

NEWS

GDC proposals to allow more time to respond to allegations 'must be extended to non-clinical cases'

Dental Protection has welcomed proposed reforms that would allow dental professionals more time to provide information when facing a fitness to practice hearing relating to a clinical concern, but is calling for an extension to also apply to non-clinical cases.

Dental professionals are currently given 28 days to provide written observations to allegations given against them. Responding to allegations within 28 days can however be extremely challenging as this often does not provide sufficient time for the clinician,

or their representative, to fully consider the concerns and draft substantive observations, and there is often the need for an extension of time.

The General Dental Council (GDC) has consulted on changes to the timescales for the 'Rule 4 process'. The changes would allow for a further 14-day extension that the GDC say will usually be granted in cases involving clinical concerns. Dental Protection welcomes this proposal but argues it should also be applied to non-clinical cases.

In non-clinical cases dental professionals often need more time to respond to allegations, particularly where there is a health issue or serious allegations involving probity. Unlike others, Dental Protection supports members when they face allegations related to personal conduct and knows how challenging the regulatory process can be for dentists in this position.

Raj Rattan, Dental Director at Dental Protection said: 'We have been working with the GDC to introduce a range of reforms that will speed up the overall investigation process. The time between a dental professional first receiving a letter from the GDC and eventually being told the outcome is often unnecessarily long and stressful.

'There are however parts of the process which should not be rushed and where it is vital that the dentist and our dentolegal advisers and lawyers have enough time to gather vital evidence. We therefore strongly support the proposal that requests for 14-day extensions will usually be given.

'This proposal is a welcome first step by the GDC, but more clarity is needed on how cases not envisaged in this change will be dealt with. We would like the GDC to bring forward similar, published criteria, for the approach it will take when considering extensions to the Rule 4 process in non-clinical cases.

'The GDC must also make it abundantly clear, that the granting of an extension at the Rule 4 stage will not prevent a subsequent extension being granted later in the FtP process.'



© Eugenio Marongiu / Getty Images Plus

NEWS FROM THE BDA

Ideology can't trump evidence on public health, as Sugar Levy delivers

The BDA has insisted that ideological preferences must not stall essential progress on sugar reduction, as new evidence reveals the compulsory levy on fizzy drinks has made greater inroads to reduce sugar levels than voluntary initiatives.

The progress report on the sugar reduction programme between 2015 and 2018 reveals sugar levels in drinks covered by the levy reduced ten times faster than in foods such as biscuits, cakes, sweets and puddings subject to a voluntary 'challenge' to companies to reduce levels of sugar.

Voluntary measures secured reductions of just three per cent, against a 20% target over five years, with only breakfast cereals and yoghurts on track. Soft drinks meanwhile saw a 29% fall in sugar content, as businesses attempted to reduce their exposure to the Sugar Levy.

Similar concerns emerged over the government's reported attempts to distance itself from the recent Prevention Green Paper, which expressed support for tried and tested policies including supervised tooth brushing in schools, a ban on sales of energy drinks to under-16s, alongside expansion of the sugar levy.

Here has been
an advertisement.

SPRINGER NATURE