

References

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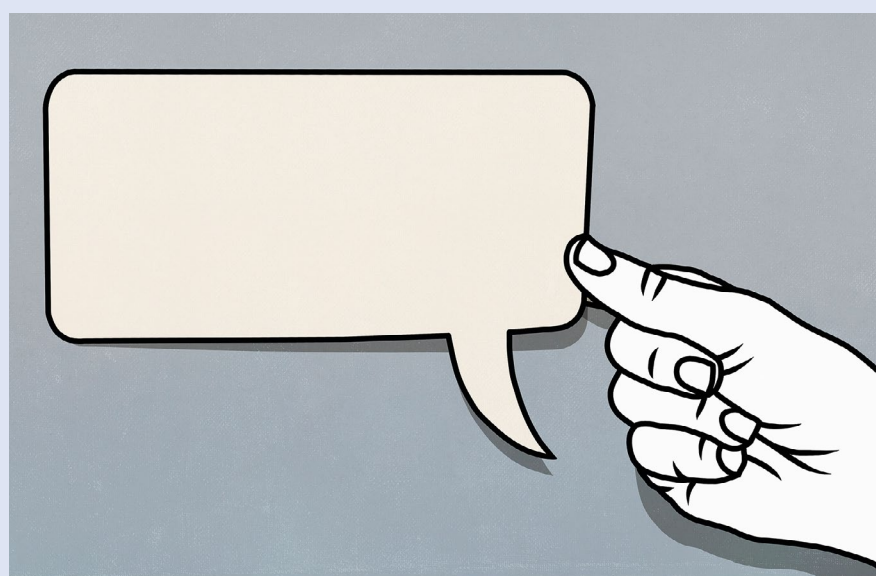
GDC opens consultation on corporate strategy

On 4 July, the General Dental Council (GDC) opened a consultation on its plans for the next three years. The regulator is seeking views on its proposed strategy which focuses on ways both to prevent patient harm and to be proportionate when handling the concerns it receives, progressing its ambition to shift the balance from enforcement to prevention.

The strategy includes plans to embed new principles of professionalism, providing the dental team the space needed to make informed judgements relevant to the situations faced in practice. There are also ongoing plans to focus investigations on the most serious concerns, such as those that raise issues of public safety or confidence.

The quality of the regulation the GDC can provide is closely linked to the quality of legislation it works under. This legislation has not been fundamentally updated for four decades and its weaknesses are becoming increasingly apparent while the timetable for reform gets less and less certain. The regulator says it will continue to press government for the reform it needs to become more agile and efficient – and be ready to respond should it arrive in the next three years – but it will also continue to focus on its core functions, and make improvements wherever it can, should reform not materialise.

This is a consultation on the regulator's plans and what those plans will cost to deliver. That does have an impact on the Annual Retention Fee (ARF) which the GDC expects will increase from the levels set in 2019 to around £730 (+7%) for dentists and around £120 (+5%) for dental care professionals (DCPs).



A spokesperson for the General Dental Council said: 'This is a consultation on our strategic plans for the next three years and we look forward to hearing the views of everyone who holds an interest in our work, which of course includes dental professionals. Our target is to maintain a free reserve level equivalent to four and a half months of operating costs, and we believe the approach we've set out will maintain that level. If we are to continue ensuring patient safety and promoting the confidence that the public rightly have in dental professionals, the GDC must be financially sustainable and we are not immune to the inflation which is affecting everyone.'

In response to the GDC's plans to increase the ARF, the British Dental Association (BDA) said that such a move will undermine progress in rebuilding trust

and confidence in the regulator among the dental profession. It stressed that this will place needless financial burdens on dental team members.

Shareena Ilyas, Chair of the BDA Ethics, Education and Dental Team Working Group said: 'Any hike in the ARF is impossible to justify while the GDC is sitting on vast reserves. The costs of providing care are spiralling, while the real incomes for all team members have collapsed. Further fee increases will only undermine any gains when it comes to restoring this profession's confidence in its regulator.'

The full plans are available on the GDC's website and the deadline to respond to the consultation is midnight, 6 September 2022: <https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/what-we-do/consultations-and-responses/corporate-strategy-2023---2025>.