

# A guide for dental professionals and their representatives involved in a hearing

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# Information for dental professionals and their representatives

## Guidance and independent advice

The Dental Professionals Hearings Service (Hearings Service) administers and facilitates hearings to determine the fitness to practise of dental professionals. All hearings are held before a statutory committees made up of three independent panellists, including a dental professional.

Those who have a case referred to the hearing service may want to seek advice from their indemnity provider, defence organisation, or a legal professional.

Our guidance for dental professionals is for those subject to a substantive fitness to practise initial or review hearing. Separate guidance for registrants has been produced for [Interim Orders Committee hearings](#)

You can find additional independent sources of advice and support on our [support page for dental professionals](#).

If you need any support to help you take part in your hearing, please email [support@dentalhearings.org](mailto:support@dentalhearings.org) or call 020 7167 6068 / 020 7167 6080

## Legislative framework

All references to the Act and Rules are:

- [The Dentist Act 1984](#) (as amended)
- [The General Dental Council \(Fitness to Practise\) Rule of Council 2006](#) (and the GDC (Fitness to Practise) (Amendment) rules Order of Council 2016)

The information we provide does not constitute legal advice, and we cannot provide legal advice or tell you how to respond to the case against you.

## Committees and our role

Your case may be referred to us during or following an investigation into your fitness to practise by the General Dental Council (GDC). Our role is to facilitate the hearing of your case.

Your case could be heard by one of a number of statutory committees. The committee that hears your case will be determined by the GDC's Case Examiners. You can find out more about each committee and their roles on the [Types of hearings](#) page.

Our [Overview of Practice Committee decision-making process](#) will provide you with an overview of what will happen when your case is referred to the Hearing Service. It may assist you when preparing for your hearing.

## Representation and legal advice

Throughout the GDC investigation and your hearing, you have the right to:

- be legally represented
- represent yourself
- be represented by a member of an organisation of which you're a member
- be represented by a friend or family member, whether legally qualified or not.

If you're attending the hearing and aren't legally represented, you'll have the opportunity to meet the committee's independent legal adviser and the GDC's representative before the hearing starts.

The independent legal adviser's role is to assist the committee and advise them on any questions of law that arise throughout the hearing. The independent legal adviser cannot provide you, or any other parties to proceedings, with any legal advice. The legal adviser can explain the process and answer any questions you may have.

Find out more about other forms of support and assistance.

## Location and format of your hearing

Hearings are held at our hearing centre in London or remotely using MS Teams. How your hearing will take place will be decided on as part of our pre-hearing case management process which may involve telephone conferences when we speak to you and the GDC's legal team representative about your hearing requirements and dates.

Most of our hearings are held in public.

You can attend a hearing at any time if you think it would be helpful to see the room and observe before your case is heard. [Please submit a request to attend a public hearing](#) on our website.

You can find directions to our building and information about nearby train stations and bus stops on our [Contact Us](#) page.

## **Arriving for your hearing**

Our hearing centre is open from 8:30am to 6:00pm.

Hearings normally take place from 9:30am until 5:00pm. We schedule a lunch break and shorter breaks throughout the hearing. The dates for your hearing will be confirmed in the Notice of Hearing.

Please report to the reception desk when you arrive, and a member of our team will show you where to wait with your legal representative (if you have one).

Try to arrive at least 30 minutes before your hearing is due to start. Arriving early allows time for you to familiarise yourself with the environment and gather your thoughts.

We do not hold hearings at weekends.

## **Hearing preparation for dental professionals**

### **Start your preparation early**

Start preparing for your hearing as soon as the GDC has disclosed its case to you. It will help you meet the deadlines set out in the hearing management directions, including when you need to disclose your evidence.

### **Hearing management procedure: dates and requirements**

Details about our hearing management procedure will be sent to you when your case has been referred for a hearing. The first step is to set the hearing dates. We will work with the parties involved to ensure cases are listed expeditiously.

Your preparation can begin following the setting of 'standard directions'. These are instructions given to both parties so they can start preparing their evidence.

In some cases a pre-hearing conference call may take place. It's important for both parties to follow these directions, as failure to comply may have an adverse impact on your hearing. Taking part means we're aware of your views and requirements in advance of your hearing.

Examples of things that may be covered in the call:

- the number of witnesses you wish to call to give evidence
- an interpreter to assist you if English is not your first language
- any support you need to help you take part in your hearing.

If you're asked to participate in a pre-hearing conference call:

- Consider making notes of points you want to raise and any questions you have for the case management officer.
- Have somewhere quiet to join the call where you'll not be interrupted and can speak freely, as it can take up to 30 minutes.

If you do not take part:

- the scheduling of your hearing date may be delayed
- your request for certain evidence to be included may be refused.

If you choose not to participate, we will continue without you. You'll be kept informed of any developments and sent copies of listing instructions and hearing management directions.

The pre-hearing conference call cannot be used to consider the merits of your case or the reliability of any evidence. These are matters to be considered, addressed or decided upon at your hearing by the Committee.

## **Disclosure of notice of hearing and hearing bundle**

You will be sent a 'notice of hearing' setting out the allegations.

The GDC will disclose all of the documents it intends to rely on in support of its case. This is called a 'hearing bundle'.

You may also be sent another set of documents referred to as 'unused material'. This is information the GDC has gathered, but does not intend to use at the hearing as evidence.

The hearing bundle normally includes witness statements. It will set out which witnesses the GDC intends to rely on and when it plans to call them. If a witness is unable to attend in person, it will include how they will give their evidence e.g. online conferencing (subject to committee approval) (see below).

After reviewing both bundles, you should inform your GDC contact as soon as possible if you:

- want any documents in the unused material bundle included in the hearing bundle, explaining why they will assist you in the presentation of your case
- want to object to any documents being included in the hearing bundle, explaining why you object
- want to question any of the GDC's witnesses
- want to agree with the evidence of any of the GDC's witnesses and not ask them any questions
- disagree with the GDC's proposals about the way in which any of the witnesses will give their evidence, explaining why you disagree
- have any questions about the documents provided e.g. if you think something is missing.

Once the case has been disclosed, you have around three months to gather and disclose to the GDC the evidence you intend to rely on at your hearing.

## **Deciding on whether to attend your hearing**

We encourage all dental professionals to attend their fitness to practise hearing so that you have an opportunity to present your side of the story and answer any questions in person.

By attending you'll be able to:

- Make an oral opening submission. Make your arguments by speaking in person to the committee. If you're represented, they'll do this for you.
- Call witnesses to give evidence and question them.
- Give evidence under oath if you want to.
- Make an oral closing submission. Summarise your point of view on the evidence and documents that have been presented at the hearing

Please refer to our [guide for witnesses](#) if you intend to give evidence or call witnesses during your hearing.

If you do not plan to attend your hearing, you can send your written submissions and any other information you want the committee to consider. You must send your information to the GDC's legal team by the deadline given. Not meeting deadlines set out in hearing management direction can have implications for whether your hearing can proceed as planned.

While you're entitled to send information to the GDC's legal team, it does not necessarily mean that it will be considered by the committee. Some general legal rules need to be considered before such information can be placed before a committee. Your point of contact in the GDC's legal team will discuss this with you if it applies in your case.

Please get in touch with your case management officer at the Dental Professionals Hearings Service as soon as you can to discuss any difficulties you're having with complying with directions or deadlines.

## **Deciding how to respond to the allegations**

Carefully consider the allegations you're facing and the evidence that has been disclosed to you when preparing for your hearing.

It is important to decide whether you admit or dispute the allegation.

## **Making admissions before the hearing**

An admission is when you agree with some, or all of the alleged facts set out in the notice of hearing.

Once you are clear about the allegations being charged, you can make an admission before the hearing starts by telling your contact in the GDC's legal team that you wish to do so.

Making admissions before the hearing may mean:

- The length of the hearing is reduced.
- Witnesses are not required to give evidence at stage one of the hearing process (when the facts alleged need to be presented and proved).

On the day of your hearing, before it starts, the independent legal adviser may explain the admissions process with you. They will do this in the presence of the GDC's case presenter. The committee chair will then ask you at the start of the hearing if you want to make any admissions. You might be asked to repeat an admission already made to the GDC's legal team.

The committee will confirm whether the admissions are accepted.

You can find out more in the [Guidance on admissions made at the preliminary stage of a fitness to practise hearing](#).

## **Deciding what to prepare**

Carefully consider the allegations and the evidence that has been disclosed and make a note of any information you may want to present to the committee. Start gathering the information and evidence you need.

Consider taking the following steps:

- Reviewing and noting the hearings bundle (see below).
- Preparing your own witness statement.
- Preparing witness statements from individuals who were present at the time the events occurred.
- Submitting other documents, which may include letters, emails, telephone notes, clinical records, and photographs. You can also submit recorded material, such as audio and video clips etc.

You should make a note of anything you want to address or challenge at the hearing from the information contained in the GDC's hearing bundle e.g. you dispute a witness' account of events and want to question them. Please remember to tell the GDC's legal team if you want one of their witnesses to attend so you can ask them questions.

## **Preparing witness statements**

We have provided further information on preparing witness statements for yourself or any of your witnesses. You'll find this information on the pages on preparing and [questioning witnesses](#).



## **Making submissions**

You should ensure that written or oral submissions you plan to make are clear and can be understood by the committee. You might find the following tips helpful when preparing your submissions.

When making written submissions:

- Typed written submissions are preferable to handwritten ones.
- You have the correct permissions or redactions (see below).
- Organise your points in a logical order.
- Use headings to signpost each point you are making.
- Use a clear and large font like Arial 12pt.
- Use bullets or numbered points to make your arguments clear.

When making oral submissions:

- Check your statements are clear and easy to follow by practising what you want to say by saying it out loud to a friend or a family member.
- Break down the points you want to make to present your arguments in manageable chunks e.g. address each head of charge separately.
- Refer to the evidence that supports your position e.g. the page number in the hearing bundle. Doing this ensures the committee are reading the information you want to draw to their attention to when making your point.
- Use your own words, as it's always easier.
- Be as concise as possible, using short sentences and staying focused.

## **Using documents from third parties and data protection**

If you intend to submit documents from any third party (i.e. those not directly involved in the proceedings) as part of your defence, you'll need to make sure they have:

- been made aware of the reasons you want to present the information as part of your defence
- given their permission.

You may also need to remove (i.e. redact or blank out) any names or details of people (e.g. patients) who have not given permission for their details to be included. The party relying on a document is responsible for making sure personal data is removed.

Please make sure the documents you disclose comply with your responsibilities under data protection legislation. If unsure, seek legal advice before you submit any information.

## **Do not disclose legally privileged information**

You do not have to disclose any correspondence, advice or recorded discussions between yourself and your legal representative. This is 'legally privileged' information, it is confidential and does not need to be disclosed.

## **Case presentation guide for dental professionals**

### **Make sure you have everything you need to hand**

If your hearing is being held remotely, please make sure you:

- Take part in the pre-hearing Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) test call with the Hearings Support Officer to check that you can join without issues and the technology is working correctly.
- Let the Hearings Service staff or the committee chair know immediately if you're having technical difficulties e.g. loss of video or sound, so the hearing can be paused, and issues resolved.
- Have found a quiet and private place to take part in your hearing so you're not disturbed, and others can't hear the proceedings.
- Have all the documents relating to your case with you for easy reference e.g. the notice of hearing and the hearing bundle.
- Have stationery and spare pens with you e.g. a note pad, pens and highlighters so you can make notes or highlight specific parts in the documents to remind yourself of any issues you want to address.
- Have some water to hand.

If you're attending your hearing in person, please make sure you:

- bring all the documents relating to your case with you so you can refer to them during the hearing e.g. the notice of hearing and hearing bundle.
- bring any medication you need to take during the day. Raise your voice so everyone in the room can hear you clearly. The microphone on the table in front of you is there to record what you're saying, not to amplify your voice.

### **Who will be at the hearing?**

The committee hearing your case will be made up of independent panellists (normally three) including up to two dental professionals. The GDC case presenter, legal adviser and support staff from the Hearings Service will also attend.

## Presenting your case at the hearing

When presenting your case to the committee you should:

- Speak slowly and clearly so notes can be taken about what you're saying. Some people take notes to assist them in their role or so they can refer back to what you've said and ask questions.
- Pause when you've finished your sentence to give the committee and the GDC's case presenter time to finish making their notes - a good indicator for when to start speaking again is when the chair's pen stops moving.
- Avoid interrupting the GDC's case presenter and wait for your turn to speak. If you need to raise something urgently, please do so politely and respectfully. You might want to raise your hand, and then address the chair when the GDC's case presenter finishes their sentence, explaining the reason for your interruption.
- Listen carefully to questions asked by the committee or the GDC's case presenter, and do your best to answer them as clearly as possible.
- Try to stay calm and avoid using strong or emotive language. If you think you need a break, please ask and the chair will confirm if this is possible.

## Preparing and questioning witnesses

### Calling your own witnesses

You can call witnesses as part of your defence, provide testimonials (i.e. references) from a dental professional, healthcare professional or patients relevant to the proceedings, or call character witnesses to give evidence in person. We do not provide for any travel or accommodation costs.

If you wish to call your own witnesses, you should:

- Ensure each witness produces a signed and dated witness statement ahead of the hearing.
- Provide your witness statements to the GDC within the timescale outlined in the 'Standard directions'.

The GDC legal team will tell you:

- If they need any of your witnesses to attend to answer questions.
- About when the witnesses are likely to be required to attend.
- How to make alternative arrangements if they can't attend in person.

You need to ask your witnesses to attend the hearing.

If any of your witnesses are unwilling to attend, or are willing but are concerned about their employer, you can apply to the committee for a witness summons to be issued - ordering them to attend the hearing.

If you need a summons, raise it with hearings case management officer as early as possible, who will explain how to make this application.

## **Witness statements**

When preparing witness statements for yourself, or any of your witnesses please remember that:

- It should 'tell their story' setting out the necessary information in their own words, in the order the events occurred, or by using headings to separate out different issues.
- It is a statement of fact, not opinion.
- It should deal with all factual issues in the case.
- It should be signed and dated by the witness.
- It can be helpful to divide the statement into numbered paragraphs.
- It may be necessary to attach supporting documents (called 'exhibits') as it forms part of the witness' evidence e.g. copy of an email.
- It must end with a statement confirming the information in the statement is true e.g. 'I believe that the facts stated in this witness.

## **Expert witnesses**

You or the GDC may obtain a report from an expert witness to give an opinion on issues relevant to your case, for example:

- a clinician in a case about inadequate care
- relevant consultant in a health related case.

The expert will provide a report and comment on whether your actions met the expected standards. An expert witness may be required to attend a hearing to answer any questions that you, the GDC or the committee may have.

You might disagree with the expert's opinion and consider instructing your own expert, but this is not compulsory. If you do instruct an expert:

- It must be someone with demonstrable and relevant qualifications who has expertise in the area under consideration.
- You will have to pay for their services.

The expert witness' role is solely to assist the committee in understanding the issues in the case. They take a neutral role and do not champion the case on behalf of the party instructing them.

## **Preparing questions for GDC witnesses**

You'll normally be given an opportunity to question witnesses called by the GDC. This is called cross-examination. You will not be allowed to cross-examine the GDC's witness if:

- you're representing yourself
- the complaint is of a sexual nature against you, and
- the witness is the alleged victim.

In these circumstances the Hearings Service will arrange for a legal representative to ask questions of the witness on your behalf.

When preparing your questions, please consider the following:

- Write down the questions you want to ask the witness when you review their witness statement and the hearing bundle. Add to this list while you're listening to the witness' responses at the hearing.
- Ask your questions in a logical order e.g. chronological, or the order the issues have been set out in the notice of hearing.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Think about whether to ask closed (answered yes or no) or open questions (require elaboration).
- Ask about inconsistencies e.g. if a witness has said something different to what was in their witness statement.
- Don't argue or become confrontational. Questioning witnesses in that manner will be stopped.

## **Answering questions at your hearing**

If you give evidence at your hearing, you may be questioned by the Committee or the GDC's case presenter. Please familiarise yourself with your witness statement and any other documents submitted.

## **Preparing questions for your own witnesses**

A witness statement sets out a witnesses' recollection of the events. Some statements have documents attached as exhibits. The written witness statement will normally stand as a witness' main evidence, which is referred to as 'evidence-in-chief'. This means there is normally no need for you to ask your own witnesses questions.

Your witnesses may be asked questions by the GDC and the committee.

# Dental professional hearings

## Stage one of a hearing - factual inquiry

During stage one, the factual allegations (the charge) listed in the notice of hearing will be considered by the committee.

The burden is on the GDC to prove the factual allegations against you on the balance of probabilities (the civil standard of proof). The GDC has to present evidence to satisfy the committee that it was 'more likely than not' that an alleged matter or event occurred. You do not have to prove anything.

Mentions of 'you' include your legal representative if you have one.

## Preliminary applications and admissions

Both parties (the GDC and you or your representative) can make any preliminary applications or raise any preliminary matters of law which need to be addressed before the hearing begin.

Examples of preliminary matters include:

- a request to make an amendment to the wording of a charge
- a request to conduct part or all the hearing in private
- to discuss the admissibility of evidence.

## Reading of the factual allegations and admissions

The chair of the committee will ask both parties whether the charge:

- should be read out (read aloud by the committee secretary) or
- can be incorporated into the record of proceedings (not read out, but automatically entered into the record as if it were).

You will then be asked whether you admit any of the factual allegations.

## Presentation of the GDC's case

The GDC's case presenter will open the case for the GDC by:

- outlining the background circumstances to the factual allegations
- telling the committee about the evidence the GDC will be relying on to prove the allegations that remain, after any admissions you have made have been accepted by the committee.

The GDC case presenter will then present its evidence in support. This may involve calling witnesses to give oral evidence (under oath), including any expert witnesses, and presenting any documentary evidence.

If witnesses are called, the GDC's case presenter will ask them questions. This is called 'examination-in-chief'. After a witness' examination-in-chief, you may cross-examine the witness. The GDC may then re-examine the witness, asking further questions, but only on matters that have arisen during the cross-examination of that witness.

The committee may also have questions for witnesses called by the GDC.

When all of the evidence has been presented, the GDC's case presenter will close the GDC's case.

## **Submission of no case to answer**

At this stage you can make a submission of 'no case to answer', sometimes referred to as a 'half-time submission'. At the start of your case you can make a submission on whether sufficient evidence has been presented by the GDC to prove the factual allegations. If you make a submission of no case to answer, the GDC's case presenter will be given an opportunity to respond.

After the committee hears from both parties and receives legal advice from the independent legal adviser, parties and any members of the public will be asked to leave the hearing room so the committee can deliberate and reach a decision on your submission of no case to answer.

A successful submission of no case to answer would mean some, or all the factual allegations 'fall away' i.e. no longer form part of the GDC's case against you. If all of the factual allegations fall away the hearing will not proceed.

If you don't make a submission of no case to answer, or your submission is unsuccessful you can proceed to present your evidence in your case.

## **Presenting your case**

You can open your case when the GDC's case has been closed.

You can give oral evidence to the Committee (under oath) as part of your case:

- if represented, your representative will ask you questions about the factual allegations in dispute i.e. examination-in-chief
- if not represented, you'll be asked by the chair of the committee what it is you want to say about the factual allegations.
- the GDC's case presenter will be able to cross-examine you.
- the committee may also ask you questions.

You can present documentary evidence and call other witnesses to give oral evidence (under oath), including any expert witnesses as part of your case

If witnesses are called as part of your case, you can ask them questions (examination-in-chief) but this may not always be necessary as your witness' main

evidence should be contained in their witness statement. The GDC's case presenter will also be able to cross-examine any witness you call, and the committee may also have some questions.

## **Closing submissions**

Once all the evidence has been presented, both parties will be given the opportunity to make closing submissions.

Closing submissions are an opportunity for both parties to summarise their cases based on the oral and documentary evidence they've presented. It is normally done verbally but closing submissions, or a summary of the submissions, can be given to the committee in writing.

## **Legal advice and the committee's deliberations**

After any closing submissions, the independent legal adviser will advise the committee on any considerations pertinent to their decision making.

Parties, and any members of the public, will then be asked to leave the hearing room. The committee remains to make its 'findings of fact'.

## **The committee's findings of fact**

The committee's 'findings of fact' is to decide whether, on the balance of probabilities, each of the factual allegations are proved.

When the committee has made its findings of fact, parties and any members of the public are invited back into the hearing room. The chair of the committee will then announce each outcome.

You'll be provided with a written copy of the committee's determination on the facts, including its reasons for each outcome. If some or all of the factual allegations are found proved, the hearing will move to stage two.



## **Stage two of a hearing - current impairment and sanction**

The committee will take several decisions at stage two:

- Whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct, or deficient professional performance, or you have an adverse health condition
- If these are found proved, is your fitness to practise currently (at the time of the hearing) impaired due to the factual allegations found proved at stage one.
- If your fitness to practise is impaired, should any sanction be imposed on your registration.

Parties cannot challenge the factual allegations that have been found proved at this stage. Any evidence called, or submissions made, must relate to the issues of impairment and sanction only.

Your fitness to practise can be found to be impaired on one or more of the following grounds:

- Misconduct.
- Deficient professional performance.
- Adverse physical or mental health.
- Conviction or caution for a criminal offence.
- A determination by another regulatory body in or outside of the UK.

The grounds on which the GDC alleges that your fitness to practise is impaired will be specified in the notice of hearing.

When deciding on impairment and sanction (if relevant) the committee will:

- exercise its independent and professional judgment, and
- apply relevant legal principles and guidance, as advised by the independent legal adviser.

There is no standard or burden of proof at stage two.

Stage two can take several days to complete, depending upon the nature of the case and the complexities involved.

Mentions of 'you' include your legal representative if you have one.

## **Fitness to practise history and evidence**

The GDC's case presenter will inform the committee if you have an adverse fitness to practise history i.e. any case resulting in case examiners issuing a letter of advice or higher decision.

The GDC will present the evidence that it wishes to rely on relating to:

- the current impairment of your fitness to practise, and/or
- the sanction the GDC believes should be applied to your registration.

This can involve presenting documentary evidence or calling witnesses to give oral evidence (under oath), including any expert witnesses.

Any witnesses called by the GDC will answer questions from the GDC case presenter (examination-in-chief) and can be cross-examined by you. The Committee may also have questions.

At the conclusion of any evidence presented by the GDC, you can present any evidence you want to rely on to support your final submissions on current impairment of your fitness to practise and/or any sanction suggested.

On impairment of fitness to practise, the Committee are considering:

- public protection, and
- public interest.

With reference to public protection the committee will consider:

- the dental professional's insight
- whether there is a risk of repetition, and
- has any remediation been carried

With reference to public interest the committee needs to ensure that confidence can be maintained in the dental professional and the GDC as a regulator.

You may wish to present evidence to the committee about:

- the steps you have taken to address the factors listed above
- any remorse you may feel about what has happened
- any mitigating circumstances you think are relevant.

If you have evidence from testimonial witnesses, this information will be considered by the committee at this stage. If you intend to submit testimonial evidence, please ensure the person providing this information has been made aware of the reasons why the testimony is required, and that the information they provide will be used at your hearing.

You can give further oral evidence to the committee (under oath) at this stage in the same manner as outlined at stage one e.g. to explain and demonstrate why you think your fitness to practise is not currently impaired.

You can present any relevant documentary evidence and call other witnesses to give oral evidence (under oath), including expert witnesses. Any witnesses you call can answer questions from you (examination-in-chief) and can be cross-examined by the GDC's case presenter. The committee may also have questions for witnesses.

If there is no evidence to be presented at stage two, parties can move straight to making submissions to the committee on impairment and sanction.

## **Submissions on impairment and sanction**

Both parties will have the opportunity to make submissions in relation to impairment and sanction.

The GDC's case presenter will explain why the GDC considers your fitness to practise to be currently impaired. They may also make submissions about what sanction the GDC considers appropriate.

You will then be able to address the committee on impairment and sanction. You may want to explain:

- why you consider your fitness to practise is not impaired
- highlight any mitigating factors in your case
- make a suggestion of what sanction you consider to be appropriate and proportionate if your fitness to practise is found to be impaired.

When considering your submissions at stage two, you (or your representative) may find it helpful to look at the GDC guidance for the [Practice Committees including Indicative Sanctions Guidance](#).

## **Legal advice and the committee's deliberations**

After submissions on current impairment and sanction have been made, the independent legal adviser will give legal advice to the Committee

Parties and any members of the public will then be asked to leave the hearing room. The Committee will remain to reach its determination on both current impairment and if relevant, any sanction.

Depending upon the nature of the case and the complexities involved, this part of the process may take several days to complete.

## **The Committee's determination**

When the Committee has made its determination, parties and any members of the public are invited back into the hearing room. The chair of the committee will then announce the Committee's decision.

You'll be provided with a written copy of the committee's determination, which will include its reasons for the outcome. This will be the outcome in your case.

## **Immediate orders**

Any sanction imposed by the committee cannot take effect for 28 days after notice of the decision is serviced on you, or if an appeal is lodged until the appeal has been dealt with by the court.

If the committee imposes a sanction of conditions, suspension or erasure, there will be a further short process for the committee to decide whether it is necessary to take immediate action to restrict your registration during the 28-day appeal period. If this applies, the committee will invite the GDC's case presenter and you to make submissions on this point. The GDC will make their submission first and you will then be given the opportunity to respond.

Any members of the public will be asked to leave the hearing room while the committee reaches its determination. The committee may decide to impose an immediate order on your registration, if your behaviour poses a risk to patients, or to maintain and protect public confidence in the profession.

## **Hearing outcomes and appeals for dental professionals**

### **Notification of the hearing outcome**

You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your hearing.

### **Appeals against the committee's decision**

If the committee makes a decision that restricts your right to practise, you can [appeal against the decision](#) if you think it was wrong or the sanction was unfair.

You have 28 days from the date on the outcome letter to appeal.

### **Applying to rejoin the GDC register**

If your sanction is erasure, you can apply to GDC to [rejoin the register](#) after a period of no less than five years.

If you apply to rejoin the register, the GDC will ask us to schedule a hearing before the Professional Conduct Committee who will consider your application.

# Useful contacts for advice and support

## Legal advice and support

**Advocate** – Advocate is the operating name of the Bar Pro Bono Unit. The Bar Pro Bono Unit (BPBU) is the Bar's national charity. They match applicants with deserving cases with barristers who are willing to provide their services for free. They only assist those who are unable to obtain legal aid and cannot afford to pay. Advocate is an application based service which members of the public can access via referral from advice agencies, law centres, or their local MP. Advocate ensures that in each case, the barrister providing assistance is of the same expertise and experience as would be expected in a paying case. They are the sole pro bono charity to provide legal assistance in all areas of law, across all levels from tribunal through to the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court. Support from the Unit is not guaranteed but they will do their best to assist where possible.

You can contact Advocate by:

Telephone: 0207 092 3960

Email: [enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@weareadvocate.org.uk)

Website: [weareadvocate.org.uk](http://weareadvocate.org.uk)

**Citizens advice** – Citizens Advice provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

They can provide advice on a range of topics including benefits, work, debt and money, consumer rights, family and housing, law and the courts, immigration and health matters. They value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination. You can contact Citizens Advice by visiting one of their local branches in 3,500 locations or by:

Web chat: [Citizens Advice web chat service](#)

Telephone: England – 0800 144 8848 and Wales – 03444 772 020

Relay UK - if you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: 18001 then 0800 144 8884

Website: [citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)

Contact information for Northern Ireland: [citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/)

Contact information for Scotland: [cas.org.uk/about-us/contact-cas](http://cas.org.uk/about-us/contact-cas)

**Fitness to Practice Clinic** – Legal Advice Centre (qmul.ac.uk) – The Queen Mary (University of London) Legal Advice Centre FtP Support Services provides free

practical support and advice to nurses, midwives and nursing associates under investigation by the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) and the GDC.

They are a student led service that provides assistance to those who do not have Union representation and cannot afford private legal support. The students are supervised and assisted by lawyers with fitness to practice experience.

You can contact the Legal Advice Centre by:

Telephone: 020 7882 3931

Email: [legal-advice-centre@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:legal-advice-centre@qmul.ac.uk)

Website: [lac.qmul.ac.uk](http://lac.qmul.ac.uk)

**Advicenow** – A charity dedicated to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge confidence and skills they need to secure access to justice

You can contact by:

Website: [Advicenow](http://Advicenow)

**Royal Courts of Justice Citizens Advice Service** – Free legal advice for people with a court case in the civil and family courts in England and Wales.

You can contact the Royal Courts of Justice Citizens Advice Service by using the following methods, depending upon the nature of the case:

Civil matters by telephone: 0203 475 4373 between the hours of 2pm -4pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Family matters by email: [familytriage@rcjadvic.org.uk](mailto:familytriage@rcjadvic.org.uk).

Domestic Abuse by telephone: 0203 745 7707 or email us [flows@rcjadvic.org.uk](mailto:flows@rcjadvic.org.uk).

Website: [Homepage | RCJ advice](http://Homepage | RCJ advice)

**Support through Court** – A charity with provides emotional and practical support to individuals going through court proceedings.

You can contact Support Through Court by searching the link for the correct telephone number for your area [Support Through Court](http://Support Through Court)

Website: [Support Through Court](http://Support Through Court)

**The Law Centres Network** – How to find your local law centre. Law centre advisers are skilled to give advice to help solve a range of legal issues. The service they provide is free.

You can locate your Law Centre by looking at their website [I am looking for advice \(lawcentres.org.uk\)](http://I am looking for advice (lawcentres.org.uk))

**The Law Society** – The Law Society find a solicitor is run by the Law Society. It's a free service for anyone looking for information about organisations or people providing legal services in England and Wales that are regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).

You can find out more about find a Solicitor by looking at the Law Societies website. Website: [Find a Solicitor - The Law Society](#)

## Financial advice and support

**BDA Benevolent Fund** – The BDA Benevolent Fund is an independent charity for dentists – both past and present – to ensure that dentists do not go unsupported in times of need or crisis.

Every year they help people who are in serious financial need as a result of illness, accident, unemployment or other adversity. They provide grants, interest-free loans and occasionally financial support with career transition. Each case is dealt with on an individual basis and the assistance they provide is tailored to each person's needs.

For further information, or to discuss an application in confidence, you can contact the BDA Benevolent Fund by:  
Telephone: 020 7486 4994

Email: [info@bdabenevolentfund.org.uk](mailto:info@bdabenevolentfund.org.uk) Website: [bdabenevolentfund.org.uk](http://bdabenevolentfund.org.uk)

**Turn2us** – Turn2us is a national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially.

You can contact Turn2us by:

Telephone: 0808 802 2000, 9.00 am - 5.00 pm Mondays-Fridays. All calls are free from a UK landline and from most mobiles. If you are calling from a mobile, please check with your network provider.

Contact form: [our contact form](#)

In writing: Turn2us, Hythe House, 200 Shepherds Bush Road, London W6 7NL.

A [Text Relay service](#) is available for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Website Link [Fighting UK Poverty - Turn2us](#)

**Gingerbread (single parents)** – Gingerbread is a leading national charity working with single parent families. It provides expert advice, practical support and campaigns for single mums and dads.

You can contact Gingerbread by Telephone: 0808 802 0925 Website: [Home - Gingerbread](#)

## Health and wellbeing advice and support

**Alcoholic anonymous** – Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

You can contact AA by  
Telephone: 0800 9177 650  
Phone number for Ireland: 0035318420700  
Email: [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org)  
Website: [alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**The Balint Society** – The Balint Society helps all health and social care professionals gain a better understanding of the emotional content of their relationship with patients or clients.

You can contact the Balint Society by visiting their website  
Website: [The Balint Society](http://The Balint Society)

**British doctors and dentist group** – The British Doctors and Dentists Group (BDDG) is a mutual / self-help group of doctors and dentists who are recovering from chemical addiction – alcohol and / or drugs (prescription and non-prescription). There are around 800 members in the United Kingdom meeting in 18 active groups – most groups meet monthly for mutual support, to discuss alcohol and drug related problems affecting us personally and professionally, to maintain our own sobriety and to offer help to the still suffering doctor and dentist, and to their families.

You can contact BDDG by:  
Email: [bddg@btinternet.com](mailto:bddg@btinternet.com)

Website: [bddg.org](http://bddg.org)

**Confidential** - Confidential provides emotional first aid for dentists in distress.  
**You can contact Confidential by :**

Telephone: 0333 987 5158  
Website: [Confidential | Emotional First Aid for Dentists \(confidential-helpline.org\)](http://Confidential | Emotional First Aid for Dentists (confidential-helpline.org))

**Carers UK** – As the UK's only national membership charity for carers, Carers UK is both a supportive community and a movement for change. For the past 50 years they have been driven by carers raising their voices together to call for change and seek recognition and support.

Looking after someone can be a rewarding experience but it can also be lonely and bewildering. At these times, you need people around you who really understand caring. They can help by sharing experiences and offering support. Guided by a Board of Trustees that is primarily made up of carers, they are rooted in the real experiences of their members and they are here to make life better for carers.



You can contact Carers UK by:  
UK Telephone: 020 7378 4999  
Wales Telephone: 029 2081 1370  
Scotland Telephone: 0141 445 3070  
NI Telephone: 028 9043 9843  
Email: [info@carersuk.org](mailto:info@carersuk.org)  
Website: [carersuk.org](http://carersuk.org)

**Dentists' Health Support Programme (DHSP)** – DHSP provides dentists, dental care professionals and students with free advice and support on alcohol, drugs, eating disorders and other health issues. They offer students and dental professionals who are in difficulty an opportunity to remedy their problems.

If you are concerned about yourself or a colleague, you can contact DHSP by:  
Telephone: 020 7224 4671  
Email: [dentistsprogramme@gmail.com](mailto:dentistsprogramme@gmail.com)  
Website: [dentistshealthsupporttrust.org](http://dentistshealthsupporttrust.org)

**Dental Mentors UK** – Dental Mentors UK (DMUK) provides support for all dental professionals who mentor and/or provide Development Advisers support in the UK to dental registrants, including those who are subject to GDC fitness to practice investigation. DMUK maintain online directories for dental team members looking to find their perfect mentor or development adviser. Members of DMUK charge fees for the support they provide, occasionally pro bono support is available.

You can contact Dental Mentors UK by  
Telephone +44(0)7500017845 or +44(0)7814830080  
Email [info@dentalmentorsuk.com](mailto:info@dentalmentorsuk.com)  
Send a message [Contact Us - Dental Mentors UK](#)  
[LinkedIn Dental Mentors UK | LinkedIn](#)  
[Website About Dental Dentors - Dental Mentors UK](#)

**Dyspraxia UK** – Dyspraxia UK is a specialist Occupational Therapy service focused on supporting people with symptoms of Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), which is commonly known as Dyspraxia. DCD affects between 6 and 10% of the UK population, around two to three people out of a class of 30. Our team can provide an up-to-date motor skills assessment and provide support in improving manual dexterity and precision.

You can contact Dyspraxia UK by:  
Telephone: 01223 967 897 (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)  
Email: [enquiries@dyspraxiauk.com](mailto:enquiries@dyspraxiauk.com)  
Website: [dyspraxiauk.com](http://dyspraxiauk.com)

**Mind** – When you're experiencing a mental health problem, supportive and reliable information can change your life. That's what we do. We empower people to understand their condition and the choices available to them through:

- Our Infoline which offers callers confidential help for the price of a local call
- Our Legal Line which provides information on mental health related law to the public, service users, family members/carers, mental health professionals and mental health advocates
- o Our award-winning publications and website, now certified by the Information Standard.

You can contact Mind by:

Telephone: 0300 123 3393. Our lines are open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

Text: 86463

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

Mental Health Services NHS – You can find out how to access NHS mental health services and where to get urgent help.

If you or someone else is in danger, call [999](tel:999) or go to A&E now

If you need help urgently for your mental health, but it's not an emergency, [get help from NHS 111 online](#) or call [111](tel:111)

You can find more information about the NHS Mental Health services by looking at their website.

Website: [Mental health services - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Narcotics Anonymous** – Narcotics Anonymous (NA) is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs has become a major problem. They are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. It is a programme of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using.

They are not affiliated with any other organisations, have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. They are not connected with any political, religious or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time.

You can contact NA by:

Telephone: 0300 999 1212

Website: [ukna.org](http://ukna.org)

**Practitioner Advice and Support Scheme (PASS)** – The concept of PASS has been in existence for the past two decades and was introduced to help those dentists who for one reason or another were in need of additional support. It was first designed for those dentists in difficulty to be supported or mentored by experienced colleagues within the same region where they worked and its intention has remained broadly the same.

In most situations it is coordinated and facilitated by Local Dental Committees (LDC) and over the past few years PASS has become an important additional tool in the efforts to address the burgeoning number of complaints or performance issues that colleagues are facing.

Dentists in need of support may self-refer to the PASS coordinator or more commonly be referred to the scheme by the NHS England Area Team Performance Advisory Group. When a colleague has entered the process they are initially assessed and then passed to a member of the PASS team for the most appropriate support. This may simply be signposting but might involve a series of one to one mentoring meetings or perhaps onward referral to Health Education England or medical support.

Funding streams will vary from one scheme to another but there may well be an initial contribution towards the costs from the LDC with further costs being met by the mentee.

The ambition of a PASS is to be able to rehabilitate the dentist in difficulty such that they can continue in practice with their confidence restored and able to further contribute in an effective way within the profession.

Find your Local Dental Committee: Call 020 7935 0875 or email: [advice.enquiries@bda.org](mailto:advice.enquiries@bda.org).

**Rethink Mental Illness** – A charity which provides support to those who experience mental illness and those who care for them.

You can contact Rethink Mental Illness by  
Freephone: 0808 801 0525  
Website: **We are Rethink Mental Illness**

**Sane** – A national out of hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support and guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.

You can contact Sane by

Telephone: 07984 967 708. If you call this number, you will be asked to leave your first name and a contact number, and Sane will call you back as soon as practicable.

Website: [SANEline services - SANE](#)

**Samaritans** – You can talk to Samaritans at any time about anything that is troubling you. Anything that is disclosed to Samaritans is completely confidential.

They can help you explore your options, understand your problems better, or just be there to listen.

Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You can contact Samaritans by:

Telephone: 116 123 (this number is free to call)

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Write to: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA

Visit your local Samaritans branch. Find your [local branch here](#) and for more information visit [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**Shout** – If you are struggling to cope and need to talk, you can talk to a Shout volunteer day or night.

You can contact Shout by:

Website: [Get help - free, 24/7, confidential mental health text support service | Shout 85258 \(giveusashout.org\)](#)

**Shout 85258** – is a free, confidential, anonymous text support service. You can text from wherever you are in the UK.

Link [Get help - free, 24/7, confidential mental health text support service | Shout 85258 \(giveusashout.org\)](#)

**Wellbeing Support for the Dental Team** – Back in February 2020 stakeholders from dentistry and beyond came together to discuss the well-being of dentists and their teams.

Following this a small group of dedicated colleagues have been collaborating to bring together well-being resources available to the dental team into a single signposting document.

It outlines how to assess your own mental health and wellbeing and provides resources for self-care, including the range of organisations available to support you. For further information, and to download the guide please visit the Wellbeing Support for the Dental Team website:

[supportfordentalteams.org](http://supportfordentalteams.org)

**Young Minds** - A charity which provides support to young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

You can contact Young Minds by:

Website [YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)

## Digital Support

**AbilityNet** – AbilityNet supports anyone living with any disability or impairment to use technology to achieve their goals at home or work and in education.

Link [My Computer My Way adds accessibility to your site | AbilityNet](#)

[How to Contact Us | AbilityNet](#)