

Standards for the Dental Team
www.gdc-uk.org

Standards

**General
Dental
Council**

protecting patients,
regulating the dental team

This document sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics that govern you as a dental professional. It specifies the principles, standards and guidance which apply to all members of the dental team. It also sets out what patients can expect from their dental professionals.

Principles

The core ethical principles of practice

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Patient expectations

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What registrants must do to ensure patient expectations are met

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Guidance

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**There are nine principles registered dental professionals must keep to at all times.
As a GDC registrant you must:**

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- 1** Put patients' interests first

 - 2** Communicate effectively with patients

 - 3** Obtain valid consent

 - 4** Maintain and protect patients' information

 - 5** Have a clear and effective complaints procedure

 - 6** Work with colleagues in a way that is in patients' best interests

 - 7** Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills

 - 8** Raise concerns if patients are at risk

 - 9** Make sure your personal behaviour maintains patients' confidence in you and the dental profession

Standards for the Dental Team applies to:

- Dentists
- Dental Nurses
- Dental Hygienists
- Dental Therapists
- Orthodontic Therapists
- Dental Technicians
- Clinical Dental Technicians

The principles are all equally important and are not listed in order of priority. They are supplemented by additional guidance documents which can be found on our website at www.gdc-uk.org and which you must also follow.

You have an individual responsibility to behave professionally and follow these principles at all times.

The **standards** set out what you must do. If you do not meet these standards, you may be removed from our register and not be able to work as a dental professional.

The **guidance** is there to help you to meet the standards. You are expected to follow the guidance, to use your professional judgment, demonstrate insight at all times and be able to justify any decision that is not in line with the guidance. Serious or persistent failure to follow the guidance could see you removed from our register and not able to work as a dental professional.

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Throughout this document:

- **'must'** is used where the duty is compulsory;
- **'should'** is used where the duty would not apply in all situations and where there are exceptional circumstances outside your control that could affect whether, or how, you can comply with the guidance. Should is also used when we are providing an explanation of how you will meet the overriding duty.

If we receive information which brings your fitness to practise into question, such as a complaint or a conviction, we will refer to the standards and the guidance to judge whether you are fit to practise as a dental professional.

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Principle One

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Put patients'
interests first

Patient expectations

Patients expect:

- To be listened to and have their preferences and concerns taken into account.
- To be treated as individuals and have their cultures and values respected.
- That all members of the dental team will be honest and act with integrity.
- That all aspects of their health and well-being will be considered and they will receive dental care that is appropriate for them.
- To be treated in a clean and safe environment.
- That reasonable adjustments will be made for any disabilities.
- That their interests will be put before financial gain and business need.
- Redress if they suffer harm during dental treatment.
- That their dental pain and anxiety will be managed appropriately.

Standards

You must:

- 1.1 Listen to your patients.
- 1.2 Treat every patient with dignity and respect at all times.
- 1.3 Be honest and act with integrity.
- 1.4 Take a holistic and preventative approach to patient care which is appropriate to the individual patient.
- 1.5 Treat patients in a hygienic and safe environment.
- 1.6 Treat patients fairly, as individuals and without discrimination.
- 1.7 Put patients' interests before your own or those of any colleague, business or organisation.
- 1.8 Have appropriate arrangements in place for patients to seek compensation if they suffer harm.
- 1.9 Find out about laws and regulations that affect your work and follow them.

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Guidance

Standard 1.1

You must listen to your patients

- 1.1.1 You must discuss treatment options with patients and listen carefully to what they say. Give them the opportunity to have a discussion and to ask questions.

Standard 1.2

You must treat every patient with dignity and respect at all times

- 1.2.1 You should be aware of how your tone of voice and body language might be perceived.
- 1.2.2 You should take patients' preferences into account and be sensitive to their individual needs and values.
- 1.2.3 You must treat patients with kindness and compassion.
- 1.2.4 You should manage patients' dental pain and anxiety appropriately.

Standard 1.3

You must be honest and act with integrity

- 1.3.1 You must justify the trust that patients, the public and your colleagues place in you by always acting honestly and fairly in your dealings with them. This applies to any business or education activities in which you are involved as well as to your professional dealings.
- 1.3.2 You must make sure you do not bring the profession into disrepute.
- 1.3.3 You must make sure that any advertising, promotional material or other information that you produce is accurate and not misleading, and complies with the GDC's guidance on ethical advertising.

Standard 1.4

You must take a holistic and preventative approach to patient care which is appropriate to the individual patient

- 1.4.1 A holistic approach means you must take account of patients' overall health, their psychological and social needs, their long term oral health needs and their desired outcomes.
- 1.4.2 You must provide patients with treatment that is in their best interests, providing appropriate oral health advice and following clinical guidelines relevant to their situation. You may need to balance their oral health needs with their desired outcomes.

If their desired outcome is not achievable or is not in the best interests of their oral health, you must explain the risks, benefits and likely outcomes to help them to make a decision.

Standard 1.5

You must treat patients in a hygienic and safe environment

- 1.5.1 You must find out about the laws and regulations which apply to your clinical practice, your premises and your obligations as an employer and you must follow them at all times. This will include (but is not limited to) legislation relating to:
- the disposal of clinical and other hazardous waste
 - radiography
 - health and safety
 - decontamination
 - medical devices.

(Further information on laws and regulations can be found on our website. Your professional association or defence organisation can also help you to find out which laws and regulations apply to your work.)

Guidance

1.5.2 You must make sure that you have all necessary vaccinations and follow guidance relating to blood-borne viruses.

1.5.3 You must follow the guidance on medical emergencies and training updates issued by the Resuscitation Council (UK).

1.5.4 You must record all patient safety incidents and report them promptly to the appropriate national body.

Standard 1.6

You must treat patients fairly, as individuals and without discrimination

1.6.1 You must not discriminate against patients on the grounds of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

You must also ensure that you do not discriminate against patients or groups of patients for any other reasons such as nationality, special needs, health, lifestyle or any other consideration.

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- 1.6.2 You must be aware of and adhere to all your responsibilities as set out in relevant equalities legislation.
- 1.6.3 You must consider patients' disabilities and make reasonable adjustments to allow them to receive care which meets their needs. If you cannot make reasonable adjustments to treat a patient safely, you should consider referring them to a colleague.
- 1.6.4 You must not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious or moral beliefs) to patients in any way that exploits their vulnerability or could cause them distress.
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Standard 1.7

You must put patients' interests before your own or those of any colleague, business or organisation

- 1.7.1 You must always put your patients' interests before any financial, personal or other gain.
- 1.7.2 If you work in a practice that provides both NHS (or equivalent health service) and private treatment (a mixed practice), you must make clear to your patients which treatments can be provided under the NHS (or equivalent health service) and which can only be provided on a private basis.
- 1.7.3 You must not mislead patients into believing that treatments which are available on the NHS (or equivalent health service) can only be provided privately. If you work in a purely private practice, you should make sure that patients know this before they attend for treatment.

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Standard 6.2

You must be appropriately supported when treating patients

- 6.2.1 You must not provide treatment if you feel that the circumstances make it unsafe for patients.
- 6.2.2 You should work with another appropriately trained member of the dental team at all times when treating patients in a dental setting.

The only circumstances in which this does not apply are when:

- treating patients in an out of hours emergency;
- providing treatment as part of a public health programme; or
- there are exceptional circumstances.

‘Exceptional circumstances’ are unavoidable circumstances which are not routine and could not have been foreseen. Absences due to leave or training are not exceptional circumstances.

- 6.2.3 If there are exceptional circumstances which mean you cannot work with an appropriately trained member of the dental team when treating a patient in a dental setting, you must assess the possible risk to the patient of continuing treatment.
- 6.2.4 If you are providing treatment in a hospital setting you should be supported by a GDC registrant or a registrant of another healthcare regulator.
- 6.2.5 If you are providing treatment in a care or domiciliary setting you should be supported by a GDC registrant or an appropriately trained care professional.

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Guidance

- 6.2.6 Medical emergencies can happen at any time. You must make sure that there is at least one other person available within the working environment to deal with medical emergencies when you are treating patients. In exceptional circumstances the second person could be a receptionist or a person accompanying the patient.

Standard 6.3

You must delegate and refer appropriately and effectively

- 6.3.1 You can delegate the responsibility for a task but not the accountability. This means that, although you can ask someone to carry out a task for you, you could still be held accountable if something goes wrong.

You should only delegate or refer to another member of the team if you are confident that they have been trained and are both competent and indemnified to do what you are asking. For more information, see the 'Scope of Practice' document.

- 6.3.2 If you delegate a task to another member of the team who does not feel that they are trained or competent to carry it out, you must not take advantage of your position by pressurising them into accepting the task.
- 6.3.3 You should refer patients on if the treatment required is outside your scope of practice or competence. You should be clear about the procedure for doing this.
- 6.3.4 If you ask a colleague to provide treatment, a dental appliance, or clinical advice for a patient, you should make your request clear and give your colleague all the information they need.

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- 6.3.5 If you need to refer a patient to someone else for treatment, you must explain the referral process to the patient and make sure that it is recorded in their notes.

Standard 6.4

You must only accept a referral or delegation if you are trained and competent to carry out the treatment and you believe that what you are being asked to do is appropriate for the patient

- 6.4.1 If a colleague asks you to provide treatment, a dental appliance, or clinical advice for a patient, you must ensure that you are clear about what you are being asked to do and that you have the knowledge and skills to do it.
- 6.4.2 If you do not think that what you have been asked to do is appropriate, you should discuss this with the colleague who asked you to do it.

You should only go ahead if you are satisfied that what you have been asked to do is appropriate. If you are not sure, you should seek advice from your professional association or defence organisation.

Standard 6.5

You must communicate clearly and effectively with other team members and colleagues in the interests of patients

- 6.5.1 You should document any discussions you have with colleagues about a patient's treatment, including any decisions you have reached or changed, in that patient's notes.

Guidance

Standard 6.6

You must demonstrate effective management and leadership skills if you manage a team

- 6.6.1 You should make sure that all team members, including those not registered with the GDC, have:
- a proper induction when they first join the team;
 - performance management, including regular appraisals;
 - opportunities to learn and develop;
 - a hygienic and safe working environment;
 - a work environment that is not discriminatory;
 - opportunities to provide feedback; and
 - a way to raise concerns.
- 6.6.2 You should make sure that relevant team members are appropriately registered with the GDC or another healthcare regulator, appropriately in-training to be registered with the GDC or another healthcare regulator and that those who are registered with the GDC are also indemnified.
- 6.6.3 You should encourage all team members, including those not registered with the GDC, to follow the guidance in this document, as well as following it yourself.
- 6.6.4 You should make sure that you communicate regularly with all members of the team and that all members of the team are involved and included as appropriate.
- 6.6.5 You must encourage, support and facilitate the continuing professional development (CPD) of your dental team.
- 6.6.6 Medical emergencies can happen at any time in a dental practice. You must make sure that:

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- there are arrangements for at least two people to be available within the working environment to deal with medical emergencies when treatment is planned to take place;
 - all members of staff, including those not registered with the GDC, know their role if there is a medical emergency; and
 - all members of staff who might be involved in dealing with a medical emergency are trained and prepared to do so at any time, and practise together regularly in a simulated emergency so they know exactly what to do.

6.6.7 You should ensure your team has:

- good leadership;
- clear, shared aims; and
- an understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

6.6.8 You should ensure that all the members of your team understand their roles and responsibilities, including what decisions and actions have, and have not, been delegated to them.

6.6.9 You should discuss all new policies and procedures with your colleagues so that everybody understands them and make sure that all team members are aware of their responsibility to comply with them.

6.6.10 You should display information about the members of your team (including their registration number where appropriate), in an area where it can be easily seen by patients.

6.6.11 You should display the following information in an area where it can be easily seen by patients:

- the fact that you are regulated by the GDC; and
- the nine principles contained in this document.

