

21 February 2007

GDC responds to White Paper on Healthcare Regulation

The General Dental Council has welcomed today's publication of the Government's White Paper 'Trust, Assurance and Safety - The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century' which sets out plans for the future of healthcare regulation in the UK.

GDC President Hew Mathewson said:

"I am very pleased that the Government has given a clear indication about our future. The GDC has proved itself to be firmly at the forefront of professional regulation, making significant changes to improve patient protection. It is essential that we continue to do so.

"Inevitably, the focus of the national press has been on the implications of this White Paper for doctors and the NHS. But make no mistake, the Government's announcement affects all healthcare professionals across the UK, wherever they work.

"As far back as 2003 the GDC introduced an independent panel to adjudicate when a dental professional's suitability to work is in doubt, and in 2006 we introduced the civil standard of proof, in line with the majority of other regulators. This White Paper is an endorsement of the Council's direction of travel, particularly as the Government is now proposing this approach across the board, for the remaining healthcare regulators."

The Council will now need to consider the proposals in more detail, in particular:

- Looking at how a smaller Council can effectively regulate all groups of dental professionals across all four UK countries.
- Introducing an appointments system for all Council members.
- Continuing to work with the devolved administrations to ensure UK-wide standards.
- Working with everyone in dentistry to implement revalidation.

GDC President Hew Mathewson said:

"The current Council is due to step down in 2008 so one of our immediate priorities is to make sure there is a smooth transition to a new fully appointed Council."

Ends

For media enquiries, please contact Rachel Lea on 020 7009 2782.

Notes to Editors

1. 'Trust, Assurance and Safety, The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century' is available on the Department of Health [website](#).
2. Our response to the Department of Health consultation on healthcare professional regulation is available on our website at <http://www.gdc-uk.org/News+publications+and+events/Consultations/Our+responses+to+others/GDC+response+to+Department+of+Health+consultation.htm>.

Our response highlighted the significant changes we have already made to strengthen public protection. These include:

- applying the civil standard of proof for decision-making in inquiries into the fitness to practise of dental professionals;
- introducing an independent panel to make fitness to practise decisions;
- extending regulation to the whole dental team, including dental nurses and dental technicians; and
- putting in place compulsory continuing professional development requirements for dentists.

We have made strong progress on developing a system for the revalidation of all dental professionals. As a step towards this, we have already introduced core CPD subjects for dentists and we are currently consulting on plans to introduce compulsory continuing professional development for the rest of the dental team. We have recently consulted on changing the way Council members are selected and the make-up of the Council. The consultation document is available on our website at <http://www.gdc-uk.org/News+publications+and+events/Consultations/Closed+consultations/A+consultation+paper+with+proposals+for+a+new+constitution.htm>.