

**Press release**

**24 January 2005**

**Complaints: your hidden profit opportunity**

Have you ever wondered how to turn a complaint into something positive?

The General Dental Council is inviting delegates of this year's BDA conference to attend its fringe meeting on complaints handling. Derek Prentice, lay member of the GDC will talk on the subject of complaints, exploring a hidden opportunity to increase the financial performance of the dental practice and improve patient satisfaction. Topics covered will include;

*The Importance of Complaint Handling*

How and why complaints and loyalty are linked  
Complaints as opportunities

*Complaints - the tip of the Iceberg*

Recognising hidden complaint issues  
Examining what happens when complaints are handled well, and when they are handled poorly

*"World Class" Complaint Handling*

Identifying complaint handling best practice  
Discovering organisational characteristics

*Following through on complaints*

What to do after the complaint  
Real-life practical applications

*The Financial Impact*

Lifetime value of a customer  
Total impact of the customer's voice on your business

The session is taking place on Friday 20 May 2005 at 3.45pm in Alsh Room 1.

The GDC are running the session as a forerunner to the launch of the *Private Patient Complaints Scheme* and asking dental practices to look closely at their in-house complaint schemes.

Derek Prentice said,

*"In many businesses effective complaint handling is seen as a way of generating new and protecting existing business. Customers who have their concerns dealt with appropriately can become strong advocates for the business, whilst customers who have a difficult experience with their complaint can often seek to take their complaint to a high authority outside of the business with all the stress and expense that involves.*

*Delays in complaint handling can make the complaint more difficult to resolve: delays increase frustration - they are often interpreted by the patient as evidence that their complaint is not being taken seriously. However, a well-handled complaint can improve the patient relationship and even become a marketing tool for the practice".*

**Ends**

For further information, please contact Saima Waheed on 020 7887 3855

## Notes to Editors:

### 1. Biography of Derek Prentice, GDC lay member

Derek Prentice has held a variety of management positions over the years, including Assistant Director with the Consumers' Association, President of the Bureau of European Consumer Unions, Chief Executive of the Association of London Authorities and Managing Director of The Customer First Consultancy Limited.

Derek has been a London Borough Councillor, a member of the Governing Body of St Thomas' Medical School, a member of the Governing Body of King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry and a member of a number of health authorities mainly linked to King's College Hospital and St Thomas' Hospital. Derek is currently a trustee of King's College NHS Trust Charitable Trust.

Derek Prentice is Chair of the Private Patients Complaints Working Group which is overseeing the launch of the GDC's Private Patients Complaints Scheme.

2. Currently the General Dental Council only has powers to deal with those complaints about private dental treatment which raise a question about a professional's continuing registration. The new Private Patients Complaints Scheme plans to bring in a complaints resolution service for private customer complaints. The scheme will be separate from the GDC's Fitness to Practice Procedures. A key feature of the scheme will be a telephone service providing information, and helping patients and dental professionals resolve complaints.
3. The new scheme is dependent on new legislation which was consulted on in autumn 2004. The General Dental Council are currently waiting for the Order to be laid.