

8 June 2010

## Fitness to Practise recruitment site goes live

A special website aimed at recruiting 50 new Fitness to Practise (FtP) panel members to the General Dental Council (GDC) has now gone live, 8 June 2010. Dental professionals are being encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to play a key role in the GDC's work in protecting patients. The website address is <http://www.gdcpanellists.com>

Dental professionals have to be registered with the GDC in order to work legally in the UK. The GDC has the power to take action by either removing or restricting their registration if they fall short of the high standards expected. The panel members will sit in public hearings and consider cases where a registrant's fitness to practise may be impaired due to their health, conduct or performance, as well as applications for restoration to the registers and appeals against registration decisions.

Chair of the GDC, Alison Lockyer says:

"This is an opportunity to make a real difference. We welcome applicants from all walks of life. We'll provide induction and regular training for successful candidates. So please take a moment to consider whether you – or someone you know – could be the sort of person we're looking for. We know that dental care professionals traditionally haven't put themselves forward for these roles and we're trying to reverse that trend in particular. The competencies required may look daunting, but including simple examples from your daily life at home, at work or any voluntary or community groups in your application is often enough to demonstrate that you meet them. I also hope that people will be encouraged by reading about the experiences of our current FtP panel members."

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- **Working within a legislative framework**

The ability to work within a framework of rules and to understand complex legal and procedural issues;

Respect for the confidential and sensitive nature of information received in evidence;

- **Analytical and decision-making skills**

The ability to assimilate written and oral evidence and information in a fair and balanced way; and arrive at objective and reasoned decisions;

- **Collaborative and professional communication skills**

The ability to generate the trust and confidence of all parties, and to communicate clearly orally and in writing;

- **Integrity and valuing diversity**

The ability to behave in a fair, balanced and non-discriminatory manner;

- **Team work**

The ability to listen attentively to others and have regard for the views of others;

The ability to behave corporately when a decision has been made.

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## What do current panel members say about the role?

**Keddie Kelsall – dental nurse, dental therapist and dental hygienist:** “It gives me the opportunity to continually learn and face new challenges. I take it very seriously and see it as a very responsible position which I am lucky to have.”

**Tony Mellow – dentist:** “I am a passionate believer in self-regulation because I feel that, as dental professionals, we can and should be able to set the appropriate standards for the good of our profession and also for the protection of the public.”

**Mary Clark Glass CBE – lay member:** “It is a privilege, as a lay person, to take part in the regulation of a profession such as the dental professional. The role allows all of us, lay and dental, to bring to the role experience and knowledge gained in many different walks of life.”

**Maja Thompson – dental technician:** “Being a panel member adds to a career and it opens up your horizons as you are in cooperation with some very interesting people faced with challenging choices.”

**Stewart Goulding – lay member:** “You do not have to have been in a profession. Life skills are equally important. The ability to interpret evidence and remain objective, along with the ability to communicate effectively with others, are important skills.”

**Caroline Clitter – dental therapist and dental hygienist:** “Without exception colleagues have been very supportive. They regard it as valuable work to keep the profession self-regulated.”

**Shiv Pabary – dentist:** “The panel is independent and is not part of the GDC as such as it is independently appointed; this is a crucial separation of power and is integral to the working of the fitness to practise panel which is primarily the protection of the public.”

**Sandra Neil – dentist:** “It is a very rewarding experience working with people from all branches of the profession and with lay people with a wide variety of experience. Everyone brings their own knowledge and experience to the panel and collectively this gives great balance and objectivity.”

**Ruth Lovering – dental therapist and dental hygienist:** “I have been a member for nearly 3 years and I wanted to become a member as I felt I wanted to further my career and I thought it was important to have DCP representation on the panel.”

**Roland Kitchen – dentist:** “If you do have to affect a professional’s career you are not doing so to punish the professional but because you must protect the public. That is the ultimate goal of regulation.”

**Robin Heron – lay member:** “For lay members the work is varied, interesting and intellectually and mentally demanding. If you like having to sort out key issues from a mass of direct and indirect material, and having to take account of the views of others, in order to reach reasoned decisions, you will enjoy being a member of the panel.”

**John Makin – dentist:** “The process is public in order that ‘justice is seen to be done’. We no longer live in a paternalistic ‘doctor knows best society’ where the public accept blindly that just because we are a profession we will do the right thing.”

**Jason Stokes – dentist:** “My colleagues have always recognised the importance of this responsibility – and have assisted me in working on the Fitness to Practice Panel.”

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**Julie Macfarlane – dentist:** “My colleagues have been very supportive of my decision to work on the fitness to practise panel. The whole practice has benefited from the information I have been able to feed back.”

**Rosemary Melling – lay member:** “Because our different perspectives go to make a balanced decision more likely. As lay members, we lack the professional knowledge to judge the seriousness of technical errors; the professionals may not always understand the patients’ point of view.”

## **Ends**

For media enquiries, please contact Moira Alderson on 020 7009 2756 or [malderson@gdc-uk.org](mailto:malderson@gdc-uk.org)

## **Notes to editors:**

- The Fitness to Practise Committee is currently made up of 75 panel members: 38 dentists, 22 lay people and 15 dental care professionals (DCPs). They are paid £353 a day and are reimbursed their expenses. It is a part time role, with members sitting for around 20 days a year and members are allocated to a particular hearing well in advance.
- Panels sit on the following kinds of Committees: Interim Orders Committee, Professional Conduct Committee, Professional Performance Committee, Health Committee and Registration Appeals Committee.
- Panels hear evidence and make findings of fact. If any allegations are proved, the Committee then decides whether the registrant is unfit to practise and what action they should take. The Committee can take a number of steps. The most serious is to take the dental professional's name off the Register. This means they are ‘struck off’ and cannot practise. A dental professional has the right of appeal.