



Annual review

2010/11

Helping you put things right



Message from the Chair

The Dental Complaints Service is here to help when the relationship between a private dental patient and their dental team breaks down. Set up by the General Dental Council – the UK's dental regulator – we provide a free, impartial service for patients and professionals to help resolve complaints as quickly and satisfactorily as possible for both parties.

This year we've seen the number of complaints received increase by 24%, from 1,180 in 2009/10 to 1,559 in 2010/11; but we're proud that 67% of these complaints were resolved within a week. Most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably, and by working with patients and professionals we are usually able to help both parties find a way forward.

The number of panels held by our trained volunteers rose from 18 in 2009/10 to 23 in 2010/11. Panels can help both parties resolve their complaints as quickly as possible, and offer balanced, impartial advice to bring the complaint to a close and without the need for costly legal proceedings.

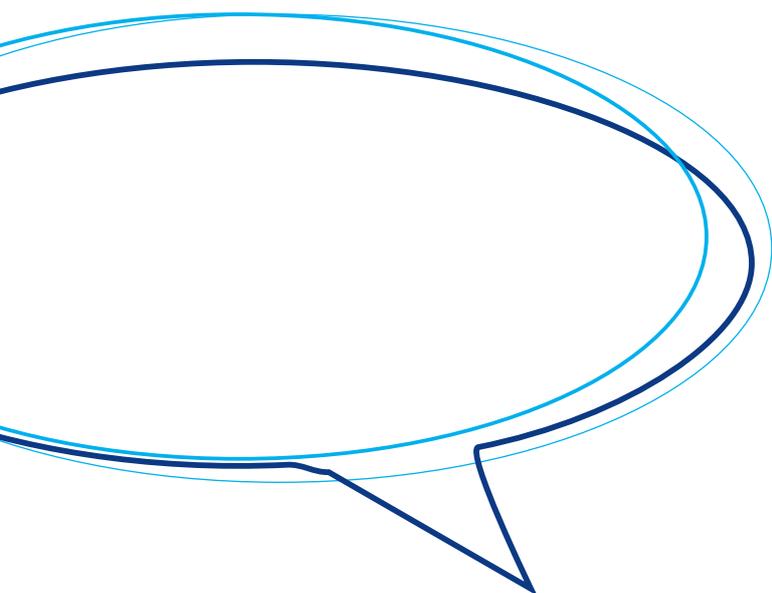
We are continuing to raise awareness of our role with the dental team and patients, to promote complaints handling best practice, help professionals understand how they can reduce the risk of complaints escalating and support effective communication between dental professionals and patients.

Over the coming months we will continue to work with professionals and reach out to the public so we can continue to provide one of the best complaints handling services in the United Kingdom.

Derek Prentice
Chair, Advisory Board

DCS advisory board members 2010

Derek Prentice, Chair and lay member of the General Dental Council
Tony Kilcoyne, Dentist member of the General Dental Council
Mabel Slater, Dental Care Professional member of the General Dental Council
Anne Marie Telford, Lay member of the General Dental Council
Grahame Owen, Lay member of the General Dental Council
Shelagh Farrell, Dentist from the Faculty of General Dental Practitioners
John Mooney, Dentist from the British Dental Association
Mike Drewry, Lay member from the Trading Standards Institute
Gary Waller, Lay member and consumer representative from Which?



“ My complaints officer struck the right balance between guiding me and letting me decide what to do. They spoke to me without being patronizing, and listened to my whole story patiently. ”

Patient

“ The advisor was objective, took his time to listen and was respectful. ”

Dentist

How we work

There are a number of ways we can help patients and professionals resolve their issues, from offering advice to panel meetings. By talking to patients and dental professionals we can find the most appropriate solution, without the need for costly legal proceedings.

How did patients hear about the service?

The total figure is higher than the total complaints logged as this also includes enquiries.



Referral source	Number of referrals	% of referrals
Telephone directories	719	39%
DCS website	554	30%
Other	247	14%
GDC	113	6%
Primary Care Trusts	88	5%
Dental practices	75	4%
Word of mouth	40	2%

Other includes signposting from various organisations



“ I felt the DCS offered a very personal service, with both parties contacted regularly to maintain progress in reaching an amicable solution. ”

Dentist

What did patients complain about?

The total is higher than the total complaints logged as more than one issue may be raised per complaint.



Issue	Number of complaints	% of complaints
General practice	804	44%
Cost	321	17%
Treatment plan	280	15%
Conduct	195	11%
Pain	188	10%
Access	46	3%

Non-clinical

(where there were ten or more complaints)

Failure of treatment	862
Uninformed	158
Pain: post-operative	121
Ignored	110
Unclear	108
Continuing care	104
Inappropriate treatment	93
Availability for treatment	92
General rudeness	70
Over charged	56
Inconsistent with treatment plan	55
Too expensive	55
Desired form of care not available on NHS	53
Pain ignored	42
Consent not given	42
Pain: operative	40
Refusal to treat	36
No treatment plan	28
Treatment plan not followed	27
Payment taken inappropriately	14
Health issues (DP)	12

Treatments

(where there were ten or more complaints)

Crown	239
Root canal	142
Bridge	126
Filling – amalgam	112
Implants	108
Filling – tooth coloured	106
Denture – partial	96
Denture – full set	91
Extraction	87
RBP/veneer	67
Brace	54
Scale and polish	44
Infection control	38
Invisalign	21
Tooth bleaching and whitening	18
X-ray	10

Case study

Advice and local resolution

A patient contacted us regarding a veneer which he felt was not fitted at the correct angle.

We encouraged the patient to speak to his dentist and talk to him about his concerns. The working relationship was such that the patient was comfortable to speak to the dentist directly. His dentist invited him to come back to the practice and have the veneer re-fitted free of charge. The patient agreed, and the matter was resolved, without the need for the DCS to contact the dental professional.

Case study

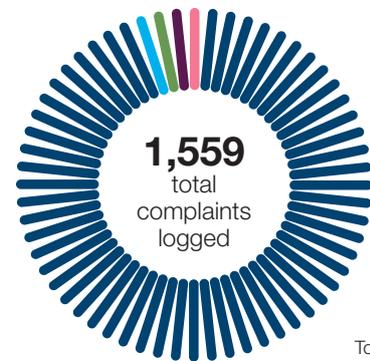
Facilitated resolution

A patient went to her dentist to have a bridge replaced. When the new bridge was fitted it was loose and kept falling out of her mouth. The patient returned to the practice to have the bridge adjusted. The patient and dental professional also exchanged emails in relation to the matter but the patient did not feel that the dental professional was taking her complaint seriously. The patient felt that the working relationship had broken down and was not prepared to return to the practice again. She asked for our help to resolve the matter.

We spoke to the dental professional, who agreed that there had been problems with the fit of the bridge and in order to bring the matter to a close agreed to provide the patient with a full refund of £800.

“ After trying unsuccessfully to resolve the problem on my own, with their help things were resolved very promptly. My complaints officer was very helpful, responsive, and professional. ”

Patient

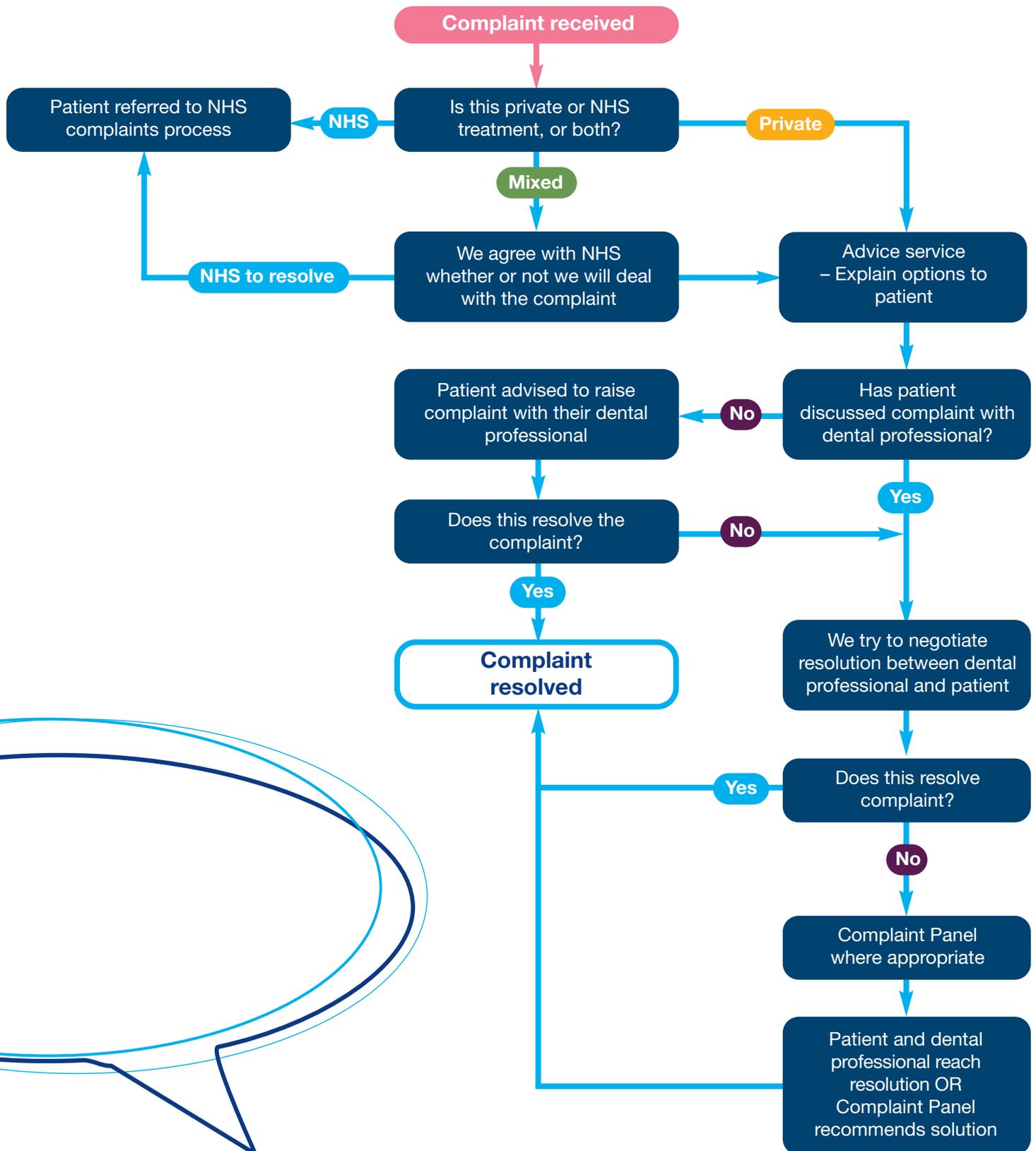
Who did patients complain about?

Total complaints
logged

	Dentists	1,519
	Dental technicians	17
	Hygienists	13
	Clinical dental technicians	8
	Dental nurses	2



Complaint resolution process – a patient’s perspective



Case study

Panel meeting

The patient had received treatment including dental implants, which were ill fitting and uncomfortable, and had paid £5000 for his treatment.

The patient had returned to the dental professional for further treatment, but had lost confidence and visited another dentist for a second opinion. This dentist had given him a detailed treatment plan for remedial work, which would cost £9,500.

The patient's original dentist was not prepared to pay the £9,500 requested, and therefore, a panel meeting was convened.

The outcome the patient was seeking was a full refund of the £5,000 he had paid so far, as well as a contribution of £4,500 towards the remedial treatment.

At the panel meeting, the patient stated his complaint and the dental professional had an opportunity to respond. Both parties were able to discuss the issues and the panel raised a number of questions to clarify certain points.

The dentist agreed that this had been a difficult case and commented on the challenges that he had faced, which had resulted in the patient's expectations not being met.

Outcomes of complaints panel meetings

More than one recommendation was made in certain circumstances



Recommendation	Number of times recommended
Refund	14
Recommendations for future practice	12
No complaint to answer	7
Patient/Professional own agreement	2

The patient and dental professional were unable to reach an agreement. Having heard both parties' views and seen the correspondence they had exchanged and the patient's dental notes, the panel recommended a full refund. A recommendation was also made that the dental professional provided a treatment plan for all patients in the future.



“ My overall experience was excellent. My complaints officer was very professional, and kept me informed of his progress, making my complaint stress-free. I only wish I'd got in touch sooner. ”

Patient

“ The complaints officer was excellent in dealing with the matter. They were extremely professional, efficient and handled the matter really well. I cannot thank you enough. ”

Dentist

If you have a complaint about any aspect of the private dental care you've received in the UK, get in touch.

Call us

on our local rate complaints hotline 08456 120 540

Email us

info@dentalcomplaints.org.uk

Visit us at our website

www.dentalcomplaints.org.uk

Dental Complaints Service

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We are committed to promoting and developing equal opportunities in all our work. We want to make sure that everyone can access our services.

If you would like a copy of this review in a different format (for example, large print or audio), please contact us.