

Helping you put things right



How can we help?

A message from the Chair

The vast majority of dental professionals are conscientious and competent, but even in the best practices there may be cause for disagreement between patients and their dental team.

Where relationships have broken down a patient receiving private dental care can get in touch with the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) for advice and support.

Set up by the General Dental Council – the UK’s dental regulator – the DCS is a free, impartial service which negotiates between patients and professionals to help resolve complaints as quickly and satisfactorily as possible for both parties.

Over 9,000 calls were received in 2009/10 which brings the total received to 43,000 in the lifetime of the organisation. Of the 1,184 calls that were logged as formal complaints, some 800 were resolved within a week which is something that we are very proud of.

Where people struggle to find a way forward, a panel from our pool of 160 trained volunteers brings them together locally to resolve the situation. The number of panels increased from 9 in 2008/09 to 18 this year demonstrating our value to professionals, who appreciate our cost effective and reputation enhancing solutions, and patients, who trust us to give them a voice.

Nine out of 10 patients and professionals thought the quality of the service provided by our advisers was ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

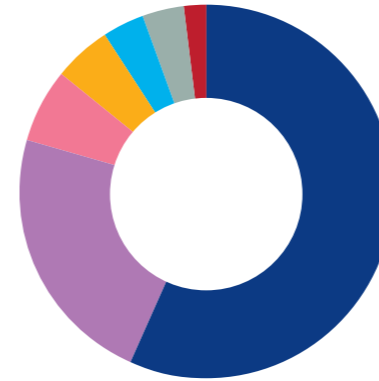
We’ll learn from the results and feedback of 2009/10 so that we can continue to support patients, their representatives, professionals and associations and provide the best possible outcomes for all.

Derek Prentice
Chair, Advisory Board

Facts and figures

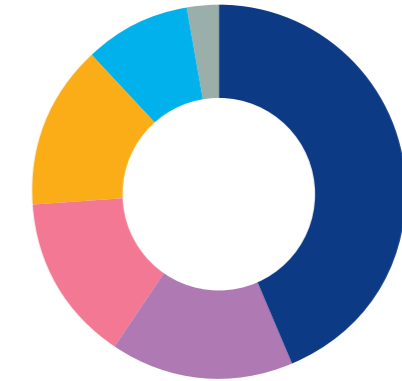
2009/10 at a glance

How did patients hear about the service?



	Number of referrals
Telephone directories	1,019
DCS website	408
Other	113
GDC	90
PCT/NHS	64
Dental practices	62
Word of mouth	34

Overview: What did patients complain about?



Issue	Number of complaints
General practice	611
Cost	219
Pain	201
Treatment plan	197
Conduct	130
Access	35

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

Who did patients complain about?

1,180 Total complaints logged

1 Dental therapist

1 Dental nurse

8 Orthodontic therapists

10 Hygienists

10 Clinical dental technicians

14 Dental technicians

1,136 Dentists

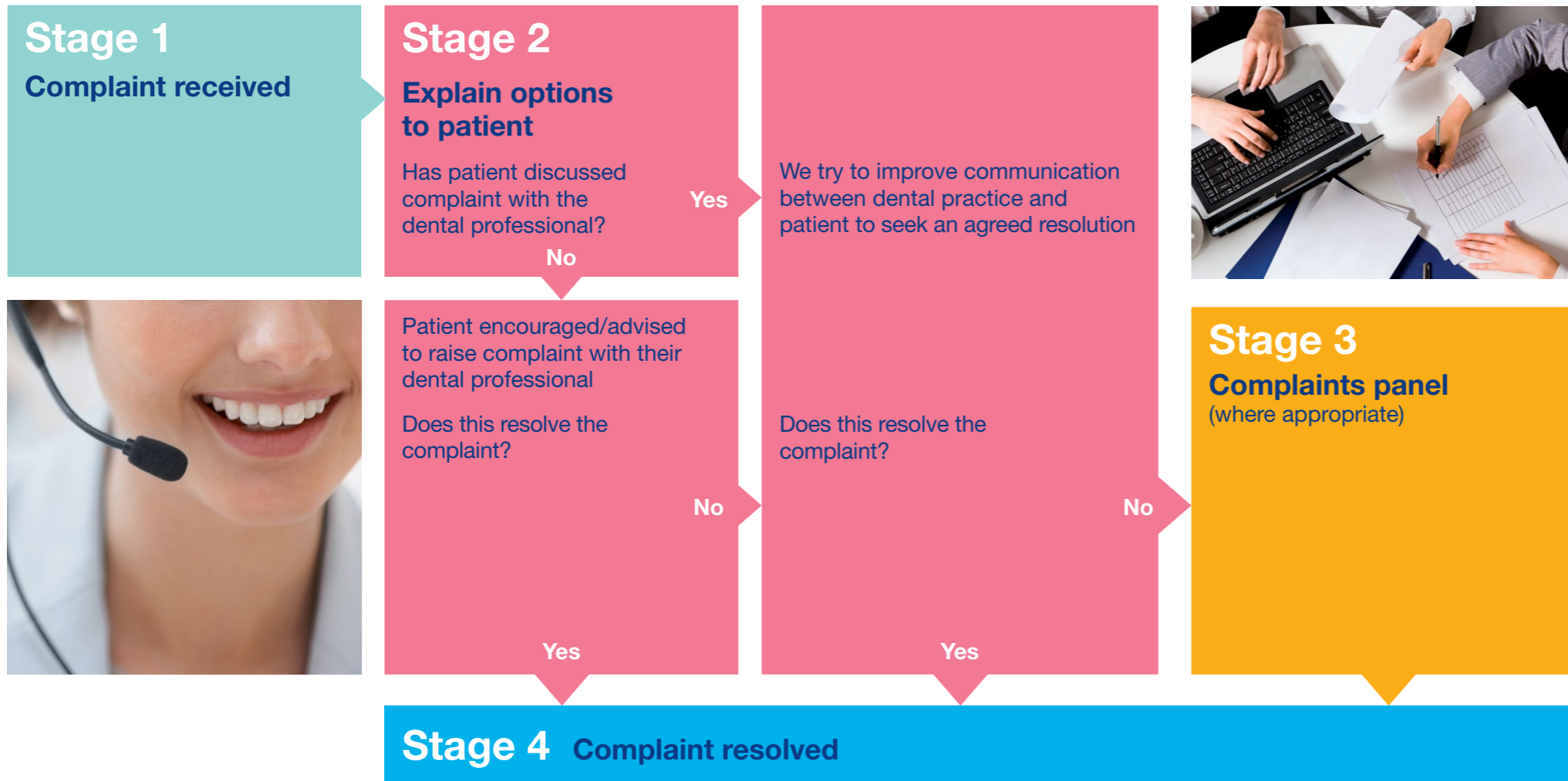
“My Complaints Officer was great. She listened to my problem, found out exactly what I wanted and guided me through how to settle the issue.”

Erica Peterman, patient

“We always encourage patients and professionals to work things out together, but we’re ready with suggestions to help both parties come to a satisfactory conclusion.”

Jane Kavanagh, Complaints Officer

Complaint resolution process



“The DCS understood what I and the patient needed and I was happy with the result.”

Effrosyni Giofku, dentist

“The Complaints Officer was excellent and I was more than pleased with the outcome.”

Dennis Symes, patient

“Panels give the patient and professional the time they need to work on a decision which suits them both. It’s an unbiased forum where neither party is at a disadvantage. We listen, respond and guide people to a resolution.”

Jessica Bullen, dental nurse, dentist and DCS panel member

Stage 1 What complaints can we look at?

When patients or professionals call us we first make sure the issue they’re concerned about is something we can help with.

Some examples include:

- Receiving the wrong or poor treatment
- Communication problems
- Unclear pricing
- Not putting things right when something has gone wrong

We always encourage patients to get in touch with their dental practice and make use of the complaints policy there as a first port of call.

Stage 2 The options

If it hasn’t been possible for the patient and professional to resolve the complaint at a local level, the DCS steps in to help. Written complaints are acknowledged within two days, although action is usually taken within 24 hours. If a phone number hasn’t been provided, we write to the patient asking them to contact us to confirm the full details of the complaint and also what result they would like to see.

We may be able to achieve a satisfactory result by discussing the matter with the patient and dental professional involved. If this is not possible, we may need to invite the patient and the dental professional to a complaints panel.

Stage 3 Complaints panels

Complaints panels are made up of trained, independent volunteers. Each panel has three members: two members of the public and one dental professional.

They invite both parties to a meeting to discuss the issues, consider and resolve the situation. Complaints panels are held as locally as possible and have the following benefits:

- Consensual – both parties agree voluntarily to be involved
- Neutral – the panel is open minded and seeks a resolution to suit both parties

Stage 4 Resolutions

We don’t just recommend refunds for patients as the only solution to a concern.

Our panels recommended one apology in 2009/10, two contributions towards remedial treatment and 11 recommendations for future practice (i.e. improve record keeping, provide treatment plans). 14 refunds were also issued. On two occasions the panel endorsed an agreement that had been reached by the patient and dental professional. More than one recommendation was made in certain cases.

What did patients complain about?

Non-clinical (where there were more than 10 complaints)

Complaint	Number of complaints
Failure of treatment	399
Treatment	269
Ignored	79
General rudeness	72
Pain: post-operative	65
Inappropriate treatment	63
Pain ignored	52
Availability for treatment	52
Uninformed	50
Overcharged	46
Continuing care	40
Consent not given	29
Too expensive	29
Unclear	28
Pain: operative	27
Refusal to treat	26
Desired form of care not available on NHS	14
Payment taken inappropriately	14
Patient not informed of treatment	13
Inconsistent with treatment plan	12
Treatment plan not followed	12

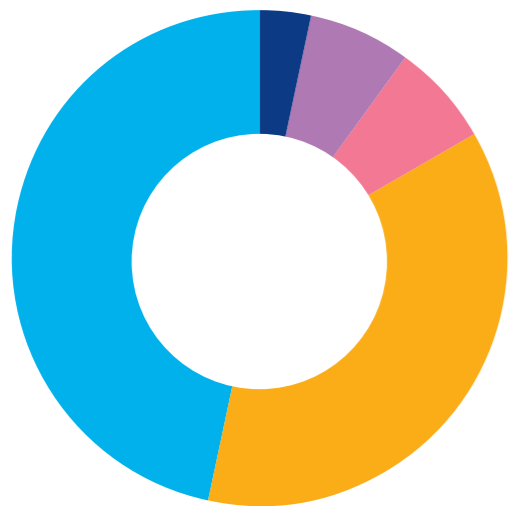
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Treatments (where there were more than 10 complaints)

Complaint	Number of complaints
Crown	196
Bridge	116
Root Canal	116
Denture – full set	96
Denture – partial	93
Filling – amalgam	86
Filling – tooth coloured	79
Extraction	76
Implants	70
Brace	42
RBP/Veneer	39
Tooth bleaching and whitening	23
Invisalign	20
X-ray	12

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

Outcomes of complaints panel meetings



Recommendation	Number of complaints
Apology	1
Contribution towards remedial treatment	2
Patient/Professional own agreement	2
Recommendations for future practice	11
Refund	14

More than one recommendation was made in certain cases

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board meets four times a year. They discuss operational progress, customer service and communications as well as how the service is achieving business and financial plans.

2006 – February 2010

Derek Prentice
Chair and Lay Member

Shelagh Farrell
Dentist

Mabel Slater
Dental Care Professional

Meredyth Bell
Dentist

John Mooney
Dentist

Gary Waller
Lay Member

Mike Drewry
Lay Member

David Murphy
Lay Member

From March 2010

Derek Prentice
Chair and Lay Member

Tony Kilcoyne
Dentist

Mabel Slater
Dental Care Professional

Mike Drewry
Lay Member

John Mooney
Dentist

Anne Marie Telford
Lay Member

Shelagh Farrell
Dentist

Grahame Owen
Lay Member

Gary Waller
Lay Member

The Dental Complaints Service exists to help private dental patients and dental professionals in the UK resolve complaints about private dental services. The organisation is an independent service funded by the General Dental Council.

Our aim is to resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, transparently and quickly by working with the patient and dental professional involved.

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
The Lansdowne Building
2 Lansdowne Road
Croydon CR9 2ER**

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.