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## Dental Complaints Service

*“Settling complaints fairly, efficiently and quickly.”*

*Survey of Dental Professional Users*

**June 2019**





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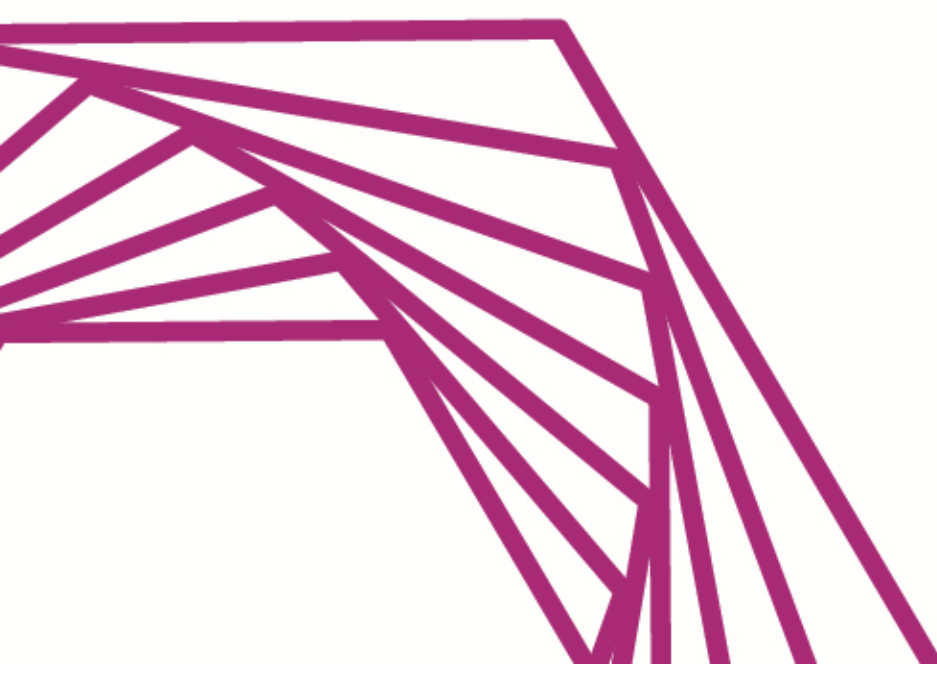
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## Introduction

### Aims and Objectives.

The survey brief issued by the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) summarised its purpose as follows:

“The DCS will be reviewing all cases from January 2017 to June 2018 at the facilitated resolution stage in its process and contacting the dental professionals who have used the service. We are seeking the views of the professionals to understand how helpful the service was and how they feel it can be improved.”

(This period was subsequently revised to be from October 2017 to February 2019.)

The specific aims and objectives were:

#### Aims

- To explore the perceptions of dental professionals who have experience of the DCS resolutions process who have contacted DCS within a 12 to 18-month period.

#### Objectives (research questions)

- What do dental professionals think about each aspect of the way DCS handled their complaint?
- To what extent do professionals think there is room for DCS to improve various parts of the process?
- What do professionals think about the role of their defence union during the process?
- What do professionals think about the fairness of their outcome?
- What difference if any has the process made to professionals' knowledge of and views towards DCS?
- How, if at all, and in what way has the outcome of the respondent's complaint influenced their responses to this research and their views of DCS?

### The remit and operations of the Dental Complaints Service.

The DCS provides a free and impartial mechanism for resolving patient complaints about private dental care that are not serious enough to raise questions about a professional's fitness to practise.

The service was launched following an Office of Fair Trading report published in 2002 which highlighted that, in contrast to the NHS, the only recourse for private patients who were unhappy with their treatment was to seek legal advice, which could be a costly and lengthy process. The DCS was set up in May 2006 to assist patients and dental professionals to resolve complaints about private dental treatment. The GDC currently funds the service and its staff are formally employed by the GDC.

The service is nevertheless run 'at arm's length' from the GDC, although the DCS is accountable to the GDC and provides regular updates on its performance. In 2017 the GDC published Shifting the balance, which includes a commitment to review the DCS. This includes a review of the relationship

between the DCS and GDC and proposals to widen the scope of DCS to cover patients treated under private dental plans as well as making operational improvements to the DCS's processes.

The DCS can look into private complaints that are raised with the service within 12 months of the treatment taking place or within 12 months of the patient becoming aware that they have something to complain about, and can assist in seeking:

- An explanation and/or apology for what has happened.
- A full or partial refund of fees in relation to the failed treatment.
- Remedial treatment from the dental professional, if both the dental professional and patient are in agreement.
- A contribution towards remedial treatment so that the work can be completed by another dental professional at the same practice or at an alternative practice.

The DCS cannot assist with:

- NHS treatment.
- Staff matters - such as recruitment, pay and discipline.
- Commercial or contractual issues.
- Compensation.
- Clinical advice.
- Fitness to Practise issues.
- Complaints more than 12 months old.

The DCS operates a 3-step process. In Step 1 the patient is advised to contact their dental professional to give them the opportunity to resolve matters. If they are not satisfied with the response from the dental professional and are unable to resolve the matter, the case will progress to Step 2 where a DCS complaints officer will work with the patient and the dental professional to try to reach a resolution. A complaint will only progress to Step 3 if a resolution cannot be reached. If both the patient and the dental professional are in agreement, the DCS will arrange a panel meeting; this is the final stage of the complaints process. The panel consists of two lay members and a dental professional. They will hear both sides of the complaint and work towards facilitating an amicable resolution between the patient and the dental professional. If an agreement cannot be reached, the panel will make a recommendation in order to resolve the complaint.

## Data protection and GDPR

All those dental professionals for whom DCS had an email address were contacted about the survey. The email provided information about the study and about data protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Appendix 4). It was explained that taking part in the survey was voluntary and that the decision whether to take part would have no impact on their registration with the GDC. The dental professionals were informed that Customer Satisfaction UK would be in contact by telephone to ask them to take part in the survey and they were given the opportunity to opt out at this stage by replying to the email to say that they did not want to be contacted.

## Methodology

The DCS has commissioned Customer Satisfaction UK, an independent specialist consultancy, to undertake a telephone survey of dental professionals who have recently used its service.

The objective of this survey is to understand dental professionals' experiences of this service, their overall perceptions of it and the value it provides.

The feedback obtained provides the DCS with an objective, comprehensive and up to date insight into its services. It identifies strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

The questionnaire used, devised through close consultation with the DCS, covers the full sequence of dental professionals' dealings with the DCS.

Throughout the survey, respondents were asked a series of both qualitative and quantitative questions.

Where relevant, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with various elements of the service provided by the DCS using a 6-point verbal scale of satisfaction. These discrete verbal ratings were subsequently converted to their numerical equivalents.

In the summary charts which follow, the proportions of respondents who are fairly, very and extremely satisfied have been colour-coded in shades of green of increasing intensity. Similarly, the proportions of respondents who are fairly, very or extremely dissatisfied have been shown in shades of orange or red of increasing intensity.

Extremely dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Fairly satisfied
Very satisfied
Extremely satisfied

Interviews were conducted during May and June 2019.

**This report includes all the comments made by respondents – including explanatory and supplementary comments and suggestions for improvement.** Where practical, these comments have been broadly categorised to identify the underlying issues.

**Please note that throughout this report, for brevity, the Dental Complaints Service is referred to as the DCS.**

## Contacts

The DSC provided Customer Satisfaction UK with the contact details of 110 dental professionals who had recently used the service.

These comprised cases received during the period between October 17 to February 19.

For seven contacts the information was found to be incorrect, for two contacts the phone number was missing, and ten contacts were duplicates. This left a total of 91 useable contacts.

Customer Satisfaction UK interviewed 49 of these respondents; achieving a response rate of 54%.

- 40 respondents completed the full survey.
- 9 respondents declined to complete the full survey but either gave a partial response (which included a recommendation score and supplementary comments) or completed the shortened version of the survey.
- 2 respondents only gave a brief comment.
- 12 respondents declined to take part.

Of the 23 contacts who either only answered the shortened survey, made a brief comment, or declined to take part:

Number of respondents	Reasons for shortened responses and declining
9	Didn't wish to take part or preferred not to
8	Had no time
3	Couldn't remember details
1	Responded by email
1	Language issues
1	On maternity leave

Those with wrong information:

Number of respondents	Wrong information
3	Had not used the DCS
2	Left the practice
1	Number not recognised
1	Didn't know of the complaint



## Executive Summary

Overall, users of the DCS are satisfied with the service provided.

They are highly satisfied with the DCS's management of the complaints process.

- **The service was transparent** – 71% very or extremely satisfied.
- **The service was professional** - 77% very or extremely satisfied.
- **The process was managed efficiently** - 81% very or extremely satisfied.
- **The process was managed speedily** - 76% very or extremely satisfied.

Similarly, respondents are highly satisfied with the Complaints Officer that they dealt with.

- **The service provided by their Complaints Officer** - 77% very or extremely satisfied.
- **Their Complaints Officer was easy to deal with** - 83% very or extremely satisfied.
- **Their Complaints Officer kept them informed** - 76% very or extremely satisfied.
- **Their Complaints Officer listened to their point of view** - 74% very or extremely satisfied.

However, although highly satisfied with the people they dealt with and with the management of the complaints process, respondents are less satisfied with their experience of the process and its value to them.

- **The advice given by their Complaints Officer** - 61% very or extremely satisfied.
- **The service provided by the DCS was helpful in resolving your case** – 61% very or extremely satisfied.
- **The way DCS handled their complaint** - 57% are very or extremely satisfied.

And, although remaining relatively high, satisfaction levels fall further with the ultimate resolution of the case – 52% very or extremely satisfied, 18% dissatisfied.

Comments made indicate that the principal reasons for respondents' dissatisfaction concern having to refund patients to close the case and the perception that the Dental Complaints Service is biased in favour of the patient.

Two satisfaction questions illustrate the dissatisfaction of some respondents with the impartiality and fairness of the DCS

- **The service was impartial in resolving the complaint** – 58% very or extremely satisfied, 21% dissatisfied.
- **The service was fair and proportionate** – 62% very or extremely satisfied, 23% dissatisfied.

Some respondents perceive that the DCS is inherently biased toward the complainant.

*'They didn't listen to me and I was pre-judged even before the process started.'*

*'They should also take into account the views of the dentist and not just the patient.'*

*'Their approach was all geared to resolving the issue from the complainant's perspective. They didn't take any evidence into account. It was almost like they were negotiating on behalf of the patient and only took into account their perspective, rather than both sides.'*

**Some respondents perceive that some complainants are opportunistic, only seeking a refund, and therefore a judgement in their favour is unfair.**

*'Patients lie to get refunds and this culture is being encouraged across the board. All she (the complainant) wanted was to get her money back.'*

*'It was a blatant complaint to get a refund. The DCS were impartial. I would have liked it if someone had seen what was going on.'*

**Some respondents perceive that some complaints are without foundation and should be filtered out by a more effective DCS vetting process.**

*'The DCS tried to calm the situation down, but there didn't seem to be a 'vetting' stage to prevent unnecessary stress to the dentist.'*

*'They could have had a clinician look at the case, say that I had not done anything wrong, and suggest she come back to me to have the side effect of the treatment repaired.'*

*'Possibly have more knowledge of a Clinical Technician's position. We are a new area in the industry and a bit more understanding of our position in the industry would be helpful.'*

**Some respondents consider that the DCS and the Complaints Officers should be more empathetic to the circumstances of the dental professionals involved.**

*'They take no account whatsoever of the lengths we go to please the patient. At the end of extremely lengthy periods of treatment, patients can decide that the treatments are not fit for purpose.'*

*'Be impartial. Understand that dentistry can be complicated; we don't sell things off the shelf!'*

**Some respondents consider that the DCS lacks sufficient knowledge of dentistry and dental professionals to be able to make informed judgements.**

*'It would be better if they were clinicians, or were at least advised by clinicians.'*

*'There should be someone with the knowledge to look at it from a dentist's point of view and give an independent view of the case, before it gets drawn out and messy.'*

*'Professionals involved should be trained in dental knowledge and terminology.'*

*'I think the service should be staffed by dentists.'*

But, these comments should be seen in context. It must be remembered that the majority of respondents are very satisfied with the service provided by the DCS and the resolution achieved.

Several value the service in helping to resolve an issue which may instead have become drawn out, stressful and time consuming.

Respondents also see the DCS as a useful alternative to the GDC; indeed, a valued protection against having to deal with the GDC. Comments made at stages throughout the survey indicate a

considerable wariness and antipathy towards the GDC. Of the 40 respondents who completed the full interview, eight (20%) made such comments: These comments are reproduced here:

*'I would rather they went to the DCS than the GDC, who are totally against dentists and cause a lot of stress.'*

*'Dealing with the DCS prevents things escalating to the GDC, which becomes a nightmare.'*

*'The perception is that you can end up in front of the GDC for fairly minor things, so it's nice to know that there is a middle ground and only the worst cases should go to the GDC. I was very encouraged by the process.'*

*'In [an advisory role], I see and report upon many cases where patients are directed to the GDC unnecessarily. The DCS has an important role and should be promoted more. As a dentist when you see the words 'GDC' and 'complaint' you get very stressed. If the DCS was promoted more I think a lot more dentists would stay in the profession.'*

*'And all the time, hanging over you is the fact that if you don't get it sorted out it will end up as a GDC hearing - and everyone wants to avoid that because they have a very anti-dentist stance, in the view of the profession.' AND 'Despite being dissatisfied with the outcome, I'm glad the DCS were there to prevent it going to the GDC. Overall, I'd rather they were there, than weren't there.'*

*'It worked very well without the heavy-handed approach of the GDC.' AND 'The NHS could use this service. All complaints (Dental) should be assessed by the DCS before going to GDC which can seem very threatening to dentists, as they, "Use a sledgehammer to crack a nut."'*

*'The GDC should be kept away. They cause a great deal of trouble, misery and grief, are unnecessarily heavy handed and provide appalling treatment. The DCS is the best thing they have done and should be involved far more in resolutions between dentists and patients. The GDC is an appalling regulator.'*

*'My perception was poor, that the DCS was funded by the GDC and would be punitive, rather than engage.'*

Regardless of the overall satisfaction with the DCS, about a quarter would be wary of recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional. The reasons for this relate mainly to concerns about the lack of impartiality addressed above, with explanatory comments such as *"The DCS assists the patient."*

Several suggested that dental professionals facing a complaint should speak to their indemnity provider as the first option. In fact, the majority (78%) of respondents sought information, advice or support from their indemnity organisation or equivalent and 90% of these were satisfied that this service was useful.

In general, compared with the DCS, indemnity providers are considered to be on the side of the dental professional, without the requirement of the DCS to be impartial.

Some respondents suggested that the DCS could build on its success, offering a wider range of services to dental professionals. For example, it was suggested that they could provide an advice line

through which they can offer advice to dental professionals on how to respond to complaints. Also, they could provide training in how to avoid complaints and how to respond to them.

*'In a similar way to indemnity, we could get clinical advice, get direction how to respond. The DCS could extend their services to include services similar to indemnity, like drafting letters.'*

*'Maybe provide a phone service, like an advice line, and even better, an app.'*

Several respondents suggested that the service should be extended to include NHS patients.

*'The DCS is set up for private complaints, but it is a very good organisation for all complaints (private or NHS). It should be the first port of call for complaints - it would save the GDC loads of time and money.'*

*'I think it is a very good "Gold Star" service, which should be rolled out more widely throughout the NHS.'*

Generally, before using it, respondents had little knowledge of the DCS as an organisation.

Prior to their complaint, almost a quarter of respondents, 23%, had not heard of the DCS. A further 41%, had heard of it, but did not have a clear perception about the services it provided.

The remaining 36% gave comments which showed a diversity of perceptions of the DCS.

Some perceived that the DCS was one sided towards the patient and that it served to protect patients' interests within the resolution process.

*'I thought they'd be completely one-sided. The aim of the GDC is to protect the public. There is no remit to protect professionals.'*

*'I thought they looked after the patient first and dentists would not get a fair deal.'*

However, there were contrasting views. In comparison, other respondents expected the DCS to provide a valuable, helpful and innovative service and act as an impartial mediator, helping clients to reach amicable resolutions.

Following the resolution of their complaint, 73% of respondents considered that their perceptions of the DCS had changed, mostly for the better.

*'I was pleasantly surprised. They were impartial.'*

*'They did convince me that they were trying to resolve the complaint impartially.'*

One of the lowest levels of satisfaction in the entire survey relates to the question 'how satisfied were you that from the beginning the dental complaints process was clearly explained to you?' with 22% of respondents being dissatisfied and a further 22% being only fairly satisfied. Clearly, if dental professionals do not have a clear understanding of the role of the DCS before their involvement with it, it is important to ensure that once engaged, they are fully informed about the process. Setting the correct expectations from the start will be beneficial in ensuring a successful outcome and, in the process, help to reverse preconceptions about any bias in the service.

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## Conclusion:

By and large, the service provided by the DCS is seen to be of good quality; professional, efficient, and effective. Good quality Complaints Officers provide a valued service helping dental professionals to resolve complaints more easily and promptly, without the need for involvement with the GDC.

Indeed, building on its success, some respondents suggest that the DCS could extend its services, providing more general advice and also support about preventing and dealing with complaints. They even suggest that the DCS service would be beneficial in the public sector.

Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement; approximately one fifth of respondents do not perceive the DCS to be fair and impartial in its approach, mainly because the resolutions are seen to be biased in favour of the patient.

Critically, dental professionals have a low awareness of the DCS, and a pre-conception that it would not represent their cases in an even-handed manner.

This may colour their subsequent attitudes in dealing with the DCS, being less willing to trust the fairness of any resolution and more willing to perceive that there is bias in the outcome.

Therefore, it is suggested that the DCS should work to build awareness - of its services and of the impartiality of those services. Ideally, this will create a virtuous circle, setting the correct expectations, building confidence, enhancing reputation and encouraging greater use.

## Average Satisfaction

For various questions throughout the survey respondents were invited to indicate their level of satisfaction whether they were:

- Extremely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

These discrete verbal responses were then converted to their numerical equivalents, where 1 equals extremely dissatisfied and 6 equals extremely satisfied. Average satisfaction scores can be calculated by dividing the sum of all responses for that question by the number of responses.

The table below ranks the average scores for all the satisfaction questions asked in the survey from highest to lowest average satisfaction.

Respondents are most satisfied with the process followed by the panel in resolving their complaint (however, only two respondents answered this question). Respondents are also highly satisfied that their Complaints Officer was easy to deal with and that the process was managed efficiently.

Respondents are less satisfied that the DCS was impartial, fair and proportionate in resolving the complaint and with the ultimate resolution of their case.

	Average Satisfaction
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint? <i>Note: Only two respondents answered this question.</i>	5.50
Complaints Officer was easy to deal with?	4.94
The process was managed efficiently?	4.92
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?	4.89
The process was managed speedily?	4.87
Complaints Officer kept you informed?	4.85
Complaints Officer listened to your point of view?	4.74
Dental Complaints Service was professional?	4.68
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?	4.66
Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?	4.65
You were kept informed about the progress with your case?	4.59
Complaints Officer was impartial?	4.56
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?	4.55
How satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?	4.53
Complaints Officer was knowledgeable and skilled?	4.44
Dental Complaints Service was transparent?	4.44
From the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?	4.38
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?	4.30
How satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?	4.26
Dental Complaints Service was fair and proportionate?	4.26
Dental Complaints Service was impartial in resolving the complaint?	4.22

#### Key

Satisfaction	Score
Extremely Satisfied	5.16 – 6.0
Very Satisfied	4.33 – 5.15
Fairly Satisfied	3.49 – 4.32
Fairly Dissatisfied	2.66 – 3.48
Very Dissatisfied	1.83 – 2.65
Extremely Dissatisfied	1.0 – 1.82

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## Detailed Analysis

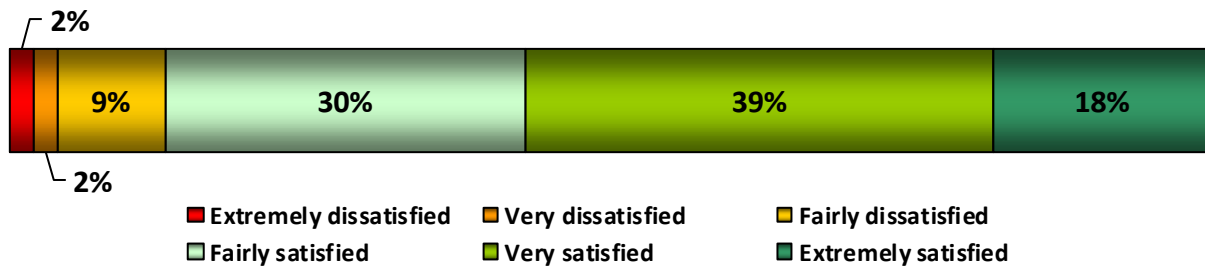


## Section 1: Overall experience

### Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?

Overall, 87% of the respondents were satisfied with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled their complaint; 57% were either very or extremely satisfied.

Six respondents were dissatisfied.



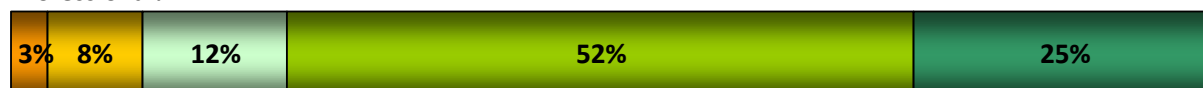
**How satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was...**

- **Professional?**
- **Impartial in resolving the complaint?**
- **Fair and proportionate?**
- **Transparent?**

Large proportions of respondents were very or extremely satisfied with these elements of their dealings with the DCS. In particular, 71% were very or extremely satisfied that the service was transparent, and 77% that it was professional.

However, more than a fifth were dissatisfied that it was impartial in resolving the complaint and that the service was fair and proportionate, 21% and 23% respectively.

**Professional?**



**Impartial in resolving the complaint?**



**Fair and proportionate?**



**Transparent?**



■ Extremely Dissatisfied    
 ■ Very Dissatisfied    
 ■ Fairly Dissatisfied  
■ Fairly Satisfied    
 ■ Very Satisfied    
 ■ Extremely Satisfied

**If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.**

**Dissatisfied:**

Respondents who were dissatisfied believed the DCS to be biased in favour of the patient with little regard to the views of the dental professionals. They have an impression that they have little protection against unreasonable or dishonest patients and a general feeling of a broader culture, not restricted to the DCS, which is unsympathetic to the profession.

Dissatisfied responses
'I felt like the DCS acted more on the side of the patient.'
'There was no consideration regarding my views on this matter; they are over-protecting the patients.'
'I felt that the service was unreasonably biased against the dental practitioner; 'guilty until proven innocent' was their attitude.'
'The DCS seemed to take the patient's side, and resolved in the patient's favour, no matter what.'
'Their approach was all geared to resolving the issue from the complainant's perspective. They didn't take any evidence into account. It was almost like they were negotiating on behalf of the patient and only took into account their perspective, rather than both sides. The Officer I spoke to was not a dentist and had no dental knowledge; he just had an understanding of it.'
'I have only dealt with the committee once and I felt it was geared to the patient. The complaint was made years after the treatment and I was threatened by the patient. No one listened to my side; it was, "Pay her (the patient) and she'll be fine." I had offered the patient free treatment and I paid for her to go elsewhere. Dentists should not be threatened. There is no protection for the dentist. Payment is the bottom line.'
'I am a Clinician Dental Technician. My job is to make dentures. A patient can turn round after I've made them, and a dentist has approved them, and say they aren't fit for purpose. I then have to give them their money back and they can also keep the teeth. There is absolutely no protection for me.'
'They take no account whatsoever of the lengths we go to please the patient. At the end of extremely lengthy periods of treatment, patients can decide that the treatments are not fit for purpose.'
'I am not going to say "very satisfied" because there is no one in this country on the side of the dentists. Patients lie to get refunds and this culture is being encouraged across the board. All she (the complainant) wanted was to get her money back. This is now so common that the DDU have changed their tactics to deal with complaints and insist that people go to another dentist and get the work done, rather than just giving a refund. The DCS should be more skewed on the side of the dentist. I feel there is no respect for dentists. I have been spat on, sworn at and I do not like the environment. Despite the lack of dentists in this country, people are regularly quitting to go to New Zealand or Australia.'

Three respondents considered that the DCS acted unprofessionally, by not following the correct procedures, by providing advice outside its remit, or by-passing complaints to the GDC without prior consultation.

Dissatisfied responses
'They requested things that may not comply with some regulations. I did not feel they were appropriate when dealing with sensitive materials and advice. They were not professionally prepared when requesting things that did not follow proper channels.'
'I thought they were impartial, but they passed the patient complaint onto the GDC without consulting me. I was not involved in any discussions regarding the complaint.'
'The DCS had been giving the complainant advice outside their remit, which is not equitable or fair.'

### Extremely satisfied:

In contrast to the dissatisfied respondents, the extremely satisfied respondents considered that the service provided by the DCS was impartial, providing a resolution that was fair and reasonable to both the dental professional and the patient.

Extremely satisfied responses
'They always show impartiality and act in the best interests of both parties. Their main goal is to find a solution that is agreeable for everyone.'
'The negotiators/intermediaries are a really good stop point for both patients and clinicians. It's a half-way house, which allows you to gather your senses. It's really good, a great service.'
'The patient was unreasonable and would not engage in dialogue until the DCS were involved and brought about a reasonable, fair resolution.'
'I was delighted that this was the route the patient took, in comparison to other less pleasant ways it could have been dealt with.'

Extremely satisfied respondents also found the resolution process to be professional, straightforward and helpful.

Extremely satisfied responses
'I think it is a very good "Gold Star" service, which should be rolled out more widely throughout the NHS.'
'They were very good, extremely helpful and this put me at ease.'
'They are very professional, and it was a straightforward process. I had no problems.'
'The Complaints Officer was excellent; it was handled professionally.'
'From what I remember, it was pretty straightforward. It was all sorted out. It was a while ago. The situation had been resolved, so the DCS made a courtesy call, checking to see if I was happy.'
'They listened to me and sorted the matter out. They made it simple. It felt like I was finally being listened to.'
'They were very informative; it was easy to come to a conclusion without any added stress.'

## How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?

Note: This question was only included in the shortened questionnaire asked of eight respondents.

Respondents who had a good experience with the DCS commented that they found the DCS to be professional, helpful, and straightforward. One commented that the service provided by the DCS was better than that of the GDC.

How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
'Professional. Everything went smoothly.'
'It was fine - better than the GDC.'
'The gentleman I dealt with was very good and helpful. It was a long time ago; I can't remember too much detail. I was contacted by email. I think the complaint was made with the NHS first and the DCS second. I had to check all the details and forward them. Because I had all the details, it was straightforward: just a case of me forwarding the details.'
'It's a while ago; I don't have much to say about it. It was fairly satisfactory.'
'It was ages ago. The DCS was thorough, friendly and helpful. The patient did not complain to me. They looked into how to complain and presumably found the GDC complaints service. They did not let me know there was an issue.'

Other respondents had a less positive experience with the DCS. One commented that the DCS was unhelpful in resolving their complaint as it was immediately passed on to the GDC. Another complained of confusion when the same complaint was being dealt with by both the DCS and the GDC. A third appeared to be confused between the DCS and the GDC.

How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
'I only had one call from the DCS and then the issue went to the GDC panel. The DCS said they were an intermediary company, but they did not attempt to resolve anything.'
'A patient maliciously filed complaints to both the GDC Fitness to Practice Panel and the DCS at the same time hoping to cause maximum damage. The DCS wasn't aware of the double filing (lack of internal communication and flagging). I informed the DCS about the letter from the FTPP I received, upon which the DCS stopped working on the case and let the FTPP conduct the process of complaint. It is a disgrace that this happened; it rendered the DCS useless. If the DCS had continued to investigate, it would have thrown out the case much sooner and more efficiently. Patients should be provided with only one point of complaint, as most cases are NOT a fitness to practice case.'
'The complaints are not fair. It is not defined why the patient has put in the complaint. We need more help from the GDC to reply to patients.'

## Prior to using the Dental Complaints Service, what was your perception of the organisation and the service they provide?

It appears that the DCS has a low profile amongst dental professionals. Almost a quarter of respondents, 23%, had not heard of the DCS prior to their complaint. 41%, had heard of them, but did not have a clear perception about them.

The remaining 36% gave comments which showed a diversity of perceptions of the DCS.

Some perceived that the DCS was one sided towards the patient and that it served to protect patients' interests within the resolution process.

What was your perception of the DCS and the service they provide?
'I thought they'd be completely one-sided. The aim of the GDC is to protect the public. There is no remit to protect professionals.'
'I didn't know what to expect. I thought they were more to protect patients and take a stand against professionals.'
'I thought the service would be more lenient towards the patient. I thought it would not be impartial. This was my first formal, written complaint.'
'I thought they were biased towards the patient.'
'I thought they looked after the patient first and dentists would not get a fair deal.'

In comparison, other respondents expected the DCS to provide a valuable, helpful and innovative service and act as an impartial mediator, helping clients to reach amicable resolutions.

What was your perception of the DCS and the service they provide?
'I had not used them, but I had heard that they were helpful.'
'I considered that they were a much needed organisation providing a very valuable service.'
'I thought they were a quite innovative, arm's length service. They seemed sensible.'
'I thought they were impartial.'
'I understood they were an arbitration panel, handling private complaints. I presumed they liaised with the patient and with me. They were mediators.'
'My idea of the DCS was they were for both sides - dentist and patient.'
'I had no experience of them, but I believed that they were on the side of the patient, but also quite fair.'
'I thought that they would help us come to an amicable resolution of the problem, but that there would be a clinician involved and more help for me as a dentist, and with some learning outcomes.'

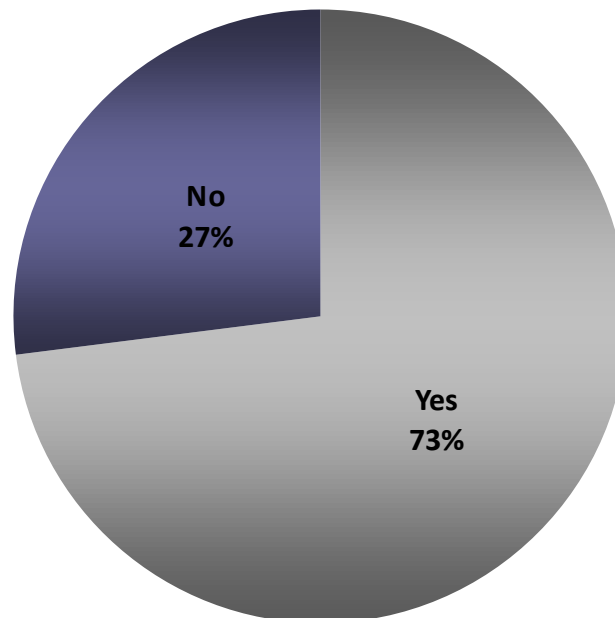
### Additional comments:

One respondent commented:

'My perception was poor, that the DCS was funded by the GDC and would be punitive, rather than engage.'
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## Following the resolution of the complaint did your perception change?

Following the resolution of their complaint, 73% of the respondents' said their perception of the DCS had changed.



### Additional comments:

Of those whose perceptions had changed, all but one respondent said that their opinion had improved and that they found the service to be fair and impartial.

Additional comments
'I was pleasantly surprised. They were impartial.'
'This wasn't the case; they support dentists as well. I thought they were more one-sided.'
'The DCS is not one-sided! Working with dentures is highly problematic, but there is a high chance of resolution with the DCS.'
'They were fair. In future, I would not be so apprehensive or anxious about the process or routine. I would have more peace of mind about the complaint.'
'They did convince me that they were trying to resolve the complaint impartially.'
'They seemed to gently mediate and solve the problem.'
'It was all to do with liaising with the patient to give her the refund she wanted.'
'The process was drawn out by the patient and it was not going anywhere until the DCS mediated and attempted to draw a line before the next stage, going to a panel, which was not in anyone's interest.'
'It proved to be a straightforward, sensible process.'
'They passed the complaint to the GDC without consulting me.'



## Section 2: Handling of the case

## How satisfied were you...

- That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?
- That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?
- That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?
- That the process was managed speedily?
- That the process was managed efficiently?

Most respondents were highly satisfied in their answers to each of these questions.

Respondents were least satisfied that the resolution process was clearly explained to them from the beginning; 22% were dissatisfied and a further 22% were only fairly satisfied.

Respondents were most satisfied that the process was managed speedily and efficiently. Only one respondent was dissatisfied.

Respondents were less satisfied with communication during the resolution process: 32% were dissatisfied or only fairly satisfied that they were kept informed about the progress with their case and 29% that the DCS was easy to contact.

**That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?**



**That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?**



**That the Dental Complaints Service were easy to contact?**



**That the process was managed speedily?**



**That the process was managed efficiently?**



■ Extremely Dissatisfied    
 ■ Very Dissatisfied    
 ■ Fairly Dissatisfied  
■ Fairly Satisfied    
 ■ Very Satisfied    
 ■ Extremely Satisfied

**If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.**

### Dissatisfied:

Comments emphasise respondents' dissatisfaction with the process of communication with the DCS and indicate some confusion about the actual procedures involved.

Dissatisfied responses
'The DCS always refuse to communicate in writing. There is no email communication, only verbal contact. It can be quite frustrating. You are also limited to three phone calls. If the DCS Adviser does not get anywhere with the three phone calls, then it goes to the next level.'
'There were times they went a bit silent. They weren't easy to contact - I could only correspond by email, and when it's a simple query, it would be easier to pick up the phone. The process took a long time, about nine months from recollection.'
'On occasions, I have emailed or phoned and got no response.'

Some respondents were dissatisfied that they weren't fully informed about the procedure and the progress with their complaint.

Dissatisfied responses
'They didn't fully explain everything to me.'
'The procedure and their remit was not explained to me.'
'It was not explained that there was no resolution as the patient can come back at any point. It was too impartial. If the patient is given a refund, that should be the end.'
'I remember not being quite sure of what was going on.'
'I was not kept informed.'

Other respondents echoed comments elsewhere in this survey that the process and its outcome was biased in favour of the patient.

Dissatisfied responses
'The process was explained, but I was under the impression that they would be more on my side. (I felt that they were slightly more on the side of the patient).'
'The patient only wanted money and the DCS were only interested in the outcome, not listening to my side.'

## Extremely Satisfied:

In contrast to those who are dissatisfied, extremely satisfied respondents comment on the good communications during the resolution process and the speedy and straightforward outcome.

Extremely satisfied responses
'When I sent an email, they responded very quickly.'
'They were very easy to deal with and their communication is very good.'
'Phone calls were answered straight away, emails responded to within the hour.'
'The process was quick, I think.'
'It was resolved fairly quickly and straightforwardly.'
'They made sure they kept me informed throughout.'
'It was a confusing, unusual case but they made it clear regarding the process that would be followed.'

## Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with its handling of your case.

Respondents suggested that they would like the DCS to handle their case in a fairer, more balanced way, taking their views more into account and acknowledging the efforts they have already made to resolve the issue.

Increasing satisfaction with the handling of your case
'Even though I felt it was balanced, they do always try to protect the patient more and try to avoid more conflict, rather than really deal with the situation "how it was".'
'They should also take into account the views of the dentist and not just the patient.'
'They could weigh up the facts on both sides of the parties.'
'Take into consideration the efforts put in by dental professionals. They put a huge effort in, and there is real emotional turmoil.'
'They could try to have a slightly more balanced view of the situation. I don't know 100% what their remit is, but it just seemed to be to get what the patient wants. It would be better if they tried to explain what the issues are to the patient and help them along. In my particular case, there was a difficulty in that there was a problem of understanding from the patient's perspective of what the issues were. In the end, it was easier for me to concede because the DCS Officer was focused on getting what the patient wanted, as opposed to taking on board what I was trying to explain. Incidentally, the patient was super-happy and still wants to come back and be treated by me.'

Respondents suggested that, from the beginning, the resolution process and possible outcomes should be better explained both to the dental professionals and to the patients. They also suggested better communications about the progress of the case.

Increasing satisfaction with the handling of your case
'They could have kept me informed of the process and progress of the case.'
'They could explain the process and the stages of the process; who would do what, what legal powers they had, whether the resolution was an ultimate one or a recommendation, the extent of their authority.'
'The DCS should make it clear to the patient that if something is agreed upon, that is the end of the complaint. There should be a clear pathway to the end point of the complaint. I am still unsure if the case is closed, or whether the patient can keep coming back.'
'It seemed quite late in the process when I became aware of who it was that was dealing with it (i.e. the DCS). This may not have been their fault.'

One respondent would like the process to be completed more quickly with the DCS being more proactive.

Increasing satisfaction with the handling of your case
'Just speed up the whole process really.'
'When I first mentioned the case, they could have chased up for the information they needed.'
'There was nothing really to improve on; it was resolved in three or four days. The only thing was, I had to chase them up at the start.'

Respondents suggested that the DCS could employ more staff, especially qualified dentists. One suggested that it would be beneficial if the DCS dental professionals were to provide constructive advice once the case has been resolved.

Increasing satisfaction with the handling of your case
'I am not sure that they employ enough staff (that might be why I sometimes got no response).'
'They should have dentally-qualified people (i.e. dentists) running the service.'
'Have a few clinical members who can look at the complaint and make learning suggestions afterwards in a constructive manner.'

Other respondents commented that they would like the DCS to be more accessible, to be firmer with patients and to stick to their remit. One suggested that the DCS could promote itself more effectively to emphasise its impartiality.

Increasing satisfaction with the handling of your case
'They could be more accessible, given our work pattern. They are available 9am-5pm.'
'They should be firm with the patient and stop them threatening. The partner of the patient also wanted money, but backed off.'
'Stick to their remit.'
'Given that I had an in-built bias that the DCS were against me, they could do with some publicity or communication to point out that they arbitrate to reach common ground.'

## Section 3: Complaints Officer

## How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?

77% of the respondents were either very or extremely satisfied with the service provided by their Complaints Officer. Of these 14% were extremely satisfied. Only one respondent was dissatisfied.



- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

### Additional comments:

Some respondents reported that they weren't aware that they had a Complaints Officer. One dealt with more than one person.

Additional comments
'I didn't have one that I know of.'
'I'm not sure I had one; I remember speaking to a Scottish person, but it was only a short telephone conversation.'
'I did not deal with any particular person.'
'I dealt with two, but one left. Both were very good.'
'As far as I could tell.'
'The Complaints Officer was excellent.'
'She listened and was very good. Although she didn't understand my area (I am Clinical Technician, not a dentist). I made the appliance, and she acknowledged the hours, time and cost to me. Although she was unaware of this process, she put the case forward to the patient which helped us to come to a final agreement.'
'He was doing his job, but it was unbalanced. He made it clear how it could be resolved - essentially by conceding to the patient. The tone was, if you agree what she asks for, she'll be happy.'

## How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer...

- Was impartial?
- Was easy to deal with?
- Listened to your point of view?
- Was knowledgeable and skilled?
- Kept you informed?

Most respondents were highly satisfied in their responses to each of these questions, in particular that their Complaints Officer was easy to deal with and kept them informed. They were slightly less satisfied that their Complaints Officer listened to their point of view.

However, around one in six respondents were dissatisfied that their Complaints Officer was impartial and was knowledgeable and skilled.

### How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer was impartial?



### How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer was knowledgeable and skilled?



### How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer was easy to deal with?



### How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer kept you informed?



### How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer listened to your point of view?



■ Extremely Dissatisfied     
 ■ Very Dissatisfied     
 ■ Fairly Dissatisfied  
■ Fairly Satisfied     
 ■ Very Satisfied     
 ■ Extremely Satisfied



## How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?

91% of the respondents were satisfied with the advice given by their Complaints Officer. 61% were very or extremely satisfied. However, a large proportion, 39%, were dissatisfied or only fairly satisfied.



## If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.

### Dissatisfied:

Some dissatisfied respondents considered that there was a bias towards the patient in their cases and the resolution that was ultimately offered.

Dissatisfied responses
'I felt the set-up was not impartial (not that they were personally biased in any way).'
'I felt I was being pre-judged and my explanation on this matter was ignored.'
'Everything was geared towards the patient, and the patient only wanted money. The Officer did not look at our side, or tell the patient to back off when they threatened.'
'They made the decision and told me to go with the refund. I had no choice in the matter.'
'He was very polite, but the issue is, it wasn't a balanced approach. It was geared to the patient. If that's what the DCS's role is, to be an advocate for the patient, that's fine, but there was no deviation or attempt to explain the circumstances. There was also a lack of dental knowledge or background.'

### Extremely Satisfied:

Respondents were extremely satisfied because their cases had been handled quickly, efficiently and impartially.

Extremely satisfied responses
'I had no issues with him at all. Everything went very well.'
'Everything was handled efficiently.'
'He was quick to look into the case. Others were slow, but he listened.'
'He was calmly innovative and a good mediator.'
'They were very good, fair and professional.'
'They opened up impartial communication, which was what was required.'
'They were great; very calming at a stressful time.'

**Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with the service provided by your Complaints Officer.**

In order to increase their satisfaction, respondents suggested that the DCS could be more knowledgeable about clinicians' circumstances and the way they work, and more sympathetic to their circumstances.

Increasing satisfaction with the service provided by your Complaints Officer
'They could be more knowledgeable about dentist's instructions.'
'It would be better if they were clinicians, or were at least advised by clinicians.'
'Take a slightly more balanced view of the clinical situation. They need either some independent dental support or to have some dental knowledge themselves. Essentially, my experience was that the Complaints Officer was acting as a spokesperson for the patient, rather than an intermediary.'
'Possibly have more knowledge of a Clinical Technician's position. We are a new area in the industry and a bit more understanding of our position in the industry would be helpful. Previously they have always dealt with patients and dentists, rather than Clinical Technicians and patients. The patient would come directly to us rather than the dentist. We have been a legal profession for nine years so are relatively new.'
'Be impartial. Understand that dentistry can be complicated; we don't sell things off the shelf!'

The DCS could be fairer in their resolutions, and less biased against the clinician.

Increasing satisfaction with the service provided by your Complaints Officer
'They could weigh up the evidence fairly. We paid for remedial treatment prior to the refund, and the patient did not wish to come in to see us to discuss things after that treatment, but reported us anyway.'
'Acknowledge when the dentist is right. They could see the rights and wrongs of a case, rather than avoiding conflict.'
'By not being so generous to the patient, but ultimately we all want the problem to go away. It can end up costing more if their advice isn't followed.'
'If a patient threatens, the committee should listen to the dentist, rather than take the easy way out (i.e. payment to the patient).'

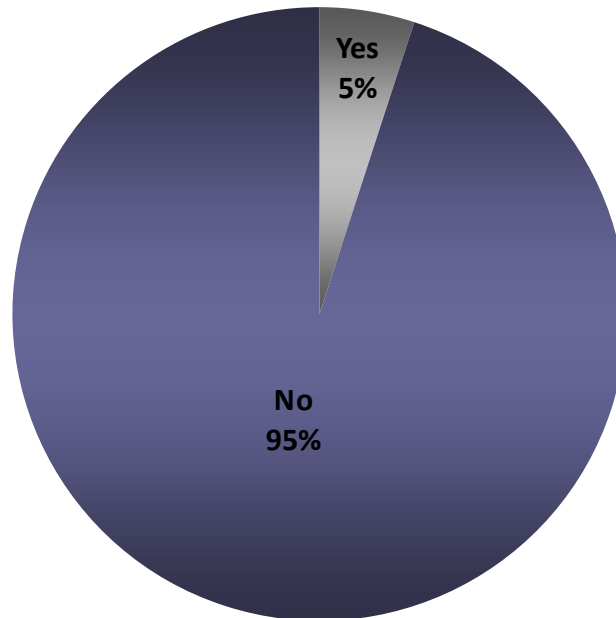
Other respondents suggested that they would have liked more personal contact with their Complaints Officer and also greater clarity regarding the finality of the resolution for both the dental professionals and patients.

Increasing satisfaction with the service provided by your Complaints Officer
'A conversation, personal contact, more talking, would have helped (rather than letters).'
'Inform me of an outcome that would be final, rather than suggesting something that might bring it to a close. (They are only able to advise, rather than impose).'
'They should make it clear to the patient that the outcome is fixed if any chosen outcome is agreed to.'

## **Section 4: Complaint by the Panel**

### Did your complaint go to a panel for resolution?

Only two respondents' complaints went to a panel for resolution. Most, 95%, did not.



### If so, how satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?

One respondent was extremely satisfied, the other was very satisfied.



- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

### Please explain your answer.

The panel gave a balanced consideration with a fair decision.

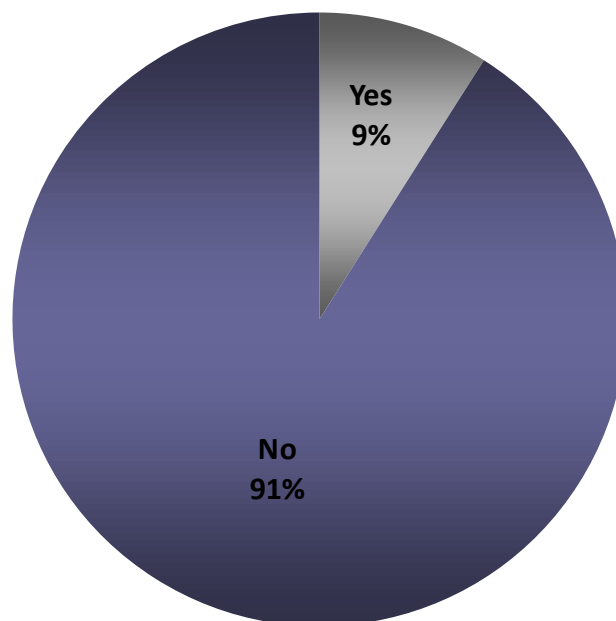
Satisfaction with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint.
'They always had a balanced view.'
'They listened to both sides, looked at the evidence and decided what was right and wrong. The decision was fair.'

**Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?**

Neither respondent made a suggestion.

**If you did not go to a panel meeting, were you offered one?**

Of the respondents who did not go to a panel meeting, only three were offered one.



**If you were offered a panel meeting and did not attend, what was your reason?**

Respondents who were offered a panel meeting but did not attend, ultimately did not need it, having achieved a resolution in other ways.

Reasons for not attending a panel meeting
'It wasn't necessary.'
'We had the option of a refund, to avoid going to a panel. We preferred that.'
'If we had not agreed, it would have gone to this next stage. The resolution was the result of a specialist's opinion.'

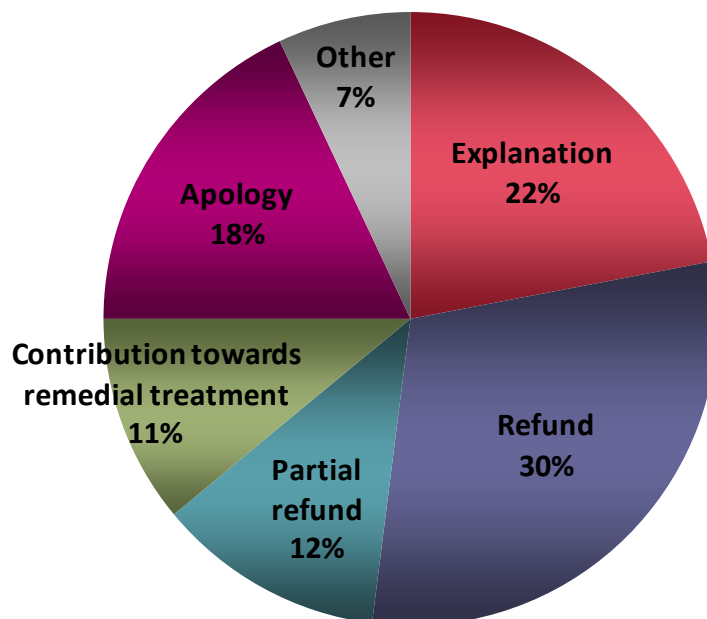
## Section 5: Resolution of your case

## Resolution of your case

Which of the following were involved in the resolution of the complaint? Please indicate all that apply. Explanation, Refund, Partial refund, Contribution towards remedial treatment, Apology, Other (please specify).

Most respondents gave more than one answer.

Refunds, explanations and apologies were the most frequent outcomes from the resolution process, comprising 70% of the total.



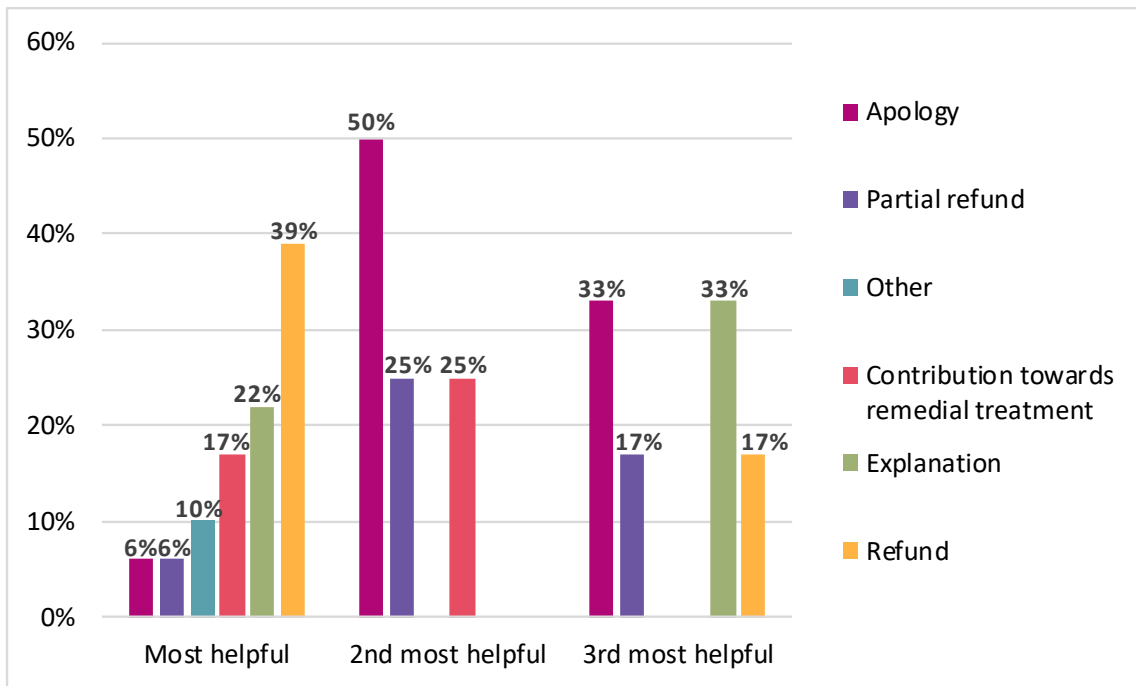
Please rank these from the most helpful to the least helpful towards the resolution of this complaint.

39% of respondents considered a refund to be the most helpful resolution of their complaint, followed by an explanation, chosen by 22% of respondents.

It is difficult to interpret responses to this question with confidence.

Whilst a refund or an explanation are considered to be the most helpful actions in resolving a complaint, providing an apology features significantly as a second choice.

Can this be interpreted that the most helpful resolution is a refund or an explanation, **together with** an apology?

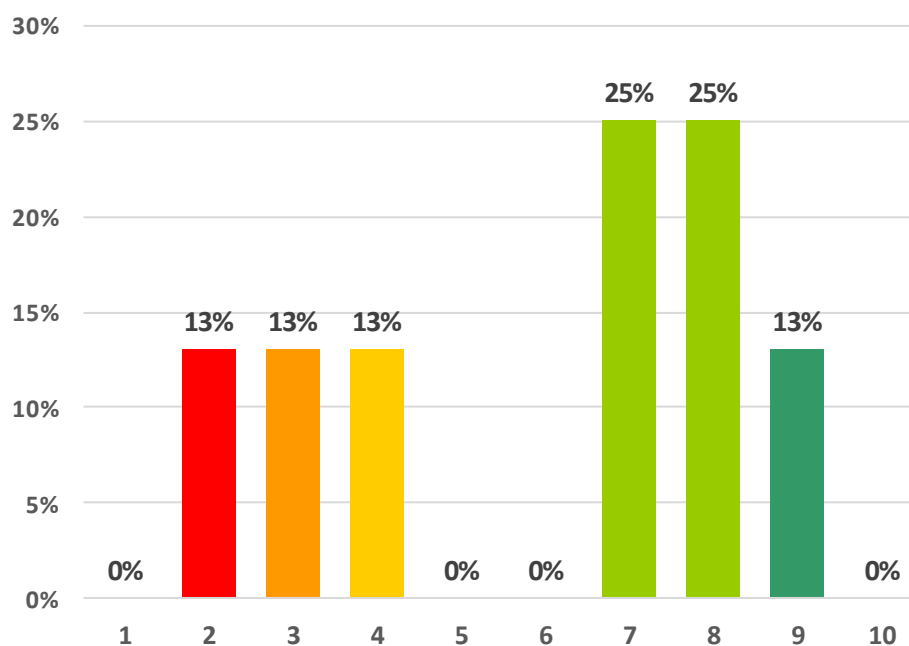




**If the resolution of this complaint involved an apology, in your view, to what extent do you think that this made a difference in the complainant’s satisfaction with the resolution of their complaint?**

Respondents rated this question on a scale of 1-10, where a score of 10 indicates that an apology made the greatest difference (improvement) in the complainant’s satisfaction

Most of the respondents (63%) rated this question on the higher end of the scale, giving responses of 7-9 out of 10, indicating that they found an apology can make a considerable difference to the complainants’ satisfaction with the resolution of their complaint.



**Additional comments:**

Several respondents commented that an apology was only slightly helpful, as the complainant mainly wanted a refund.

Additional comments
'The apology helped a little.'
'Explanation and partial refund were equal. I wrote a letter and gave money.'
'The explanation and refund were equally helpful.'
'She did not accept the apology. Part of her dissatisfaction concerned her insistence that her appointment time was wrong. She disagreed with the time she had been given and wanted compensation for the time she had wasted attending at the wrong time.'
'For me the explanation was most helpful, but for the patient it would be the partial refund.'
'The patient was only "gunning for" a refund. It seemed they were complaining prior to the denture being fitted. The apology made no difference.'

## Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?

82% of respondents were satisfied with the ultimate resolution of their case; 52% were very or extremely satisfied.

18% of respondents were dissatisfied, and a further 30% only fairly satisfied.



- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

## Please explain your answer.

Respondents considered that their case was resolved quickly, efficiently and in a professional way. The process relieved some of the pressure and stress otherwise experienced by the respondents.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'It was handled efficiently.'
'It was resolved efficiently without too much stress and without involving me too much.'
'It relieved a lot of pressure.'
'It was resolved pretty quickly. Basically, the patient wanted implants via a check-up, so it didn't need to be escalated if they had been transparent to the DCS. Once the DCS were given the information, it was soon resolved. The Complaints Officer was amazing.'
'I was satisfied because the patient was happy and that it was done and dusted.'
'It was resolved in a clear, professional way.'

Respondents appreciated the DCS intervention, helping them to manage and to resolve an issue more easily and promptly.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'I was happy it didn't go further and with how the DCS helped me. Obviously, I wasn't completely happy that it hadn't been resolved before this.'
'It was what should have happened in the first place and should not have got so far.'
'When someone comes back and says they are not happy with their treatment, you are always disappointed, but I was pleased with the resolution.'
'It was not what I wanted, but I was reasonably satisfied.'

Some respondents were satisfied that the DCS helped them to achieve a fair and amicable resolution.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'I was perfectly happy with the outcome.'
'It was resolved to both parties' satisfaction. They got rid of the conflict fairly and indiscriminately.'
'The decision was fair, based on what had happened.'
'It was a fair result. I did not think there was cause for complaint and neither did they.'
'It was sorted amicably and I still treat the patient.'

However, some respondents were less satisfied because the resolution involved a refund which they considered to be expedient but unfair or unjust.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'I had to give a refund, but other than that, there were no issues.'
'I was the one who refunded the money, in part.'
'I was not happy at the beginning, but I did not want to go to a panel so paid the refund.'
'They resolved the case quickly, but as you can imagine, I didn't really want to give a refund.'
'I offered her a refund. She wouldn't co-operate and would not come back to the practice or go to another dentist. There was a disparity between her expectations and ours.'
'I would have preferred not to have given money back, as I didn't feel I'd done wrong.'
'I did everything in my power - explained everything and showed documentation - so I felt it was unfair to give a full refund. The facts were not weighed up by anybody.'
'I feel I wasn't in the wrong and had to give a (partial) refund that I shouldn't have had to. I had explained the risks. She had signed the agreement; when something that had been mentioned went wrong, she should have come back to me. The culture is "give them a refund to shut them up".'
'Anyone can raise a complaint and there is no other resolution than a refund.'

Other respondents were less satisfied as they considered the process to be one-sided.

One respondent had to resolve a complaint directed against them personally whilst they considered that it should have been directed against the clinic they worked for.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'I was glad to have it done, but didn't think the outcome was fair. The patient complained of work they hadn't paid for. I wasn't given a chance to put that right, before it went to the DCS, so the patient ended up with free work, they complained and I paid.'
'My clinical time to solve this issue in the first place was not compensated; they did not listen to me.'
'There was no longstanding damage, but no protection of myself from the threats.'
'I expected the complaint to be directed at the practice, where I then worked. I was not named as the clinician, and should not have had to resolve the issue, as the complaint should have been directed at the practice.'

For some respondents their complaints were dismissed, withdrawn or resolved internally.

Satisfaction with the ultimate resolution of your case
'The complaint was dismissed.'
'The GDC saw through it all and it was dismissed.'
'We sorted it out internally.'
'It was a while ago, so I'm finding it hard to remember exactly what it was about. I think the patient withdrew in the end. I was found not guilty. In these cases, the complainant thinks they are always correct and the professional is always wrong.'

**Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?**

Whilst 61% of respondents were very or extremely satisfied that the service provided by the DCS was helpful in resolving their case, more than a third, 39% were dissatisfied or only fairly satisfied.



**Please explain your answer.**

Respondents' comments emphasise the helpful, valuable and impartial service provided by the DCS.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'They were very helpful.'
'It was very helpful.'
'It was pivotal to my case.'
'It was invaluable.'
'It was very helpful, but I hope it will not be necessary again. It was the only time this has happened.'
'They did not criticise me in any way and were very helpful.'
'They have been very helpful with everything so far.'
'It was helpful from the patient's point of view particularly.'
'They were very helpful and gave me good advice, as they knew I was newly graduated. It was definitely helpful.'
'If it had progressed and the patient had got a lawyer, it would be down to chance whether they found me troublesome or not. This is really an indictment on the rest of the system. It's the lesser of two evils.'
'They were very helpful. Obviously, it's difficult to tell what went on between the DCS and the complainant, but the suggestions they made were sensible, reasonable and proportionate. This may not have been the case, had they used a no-fee lawyer.'
'I felt in a bit of a dilemma as I realised the patient wasn't happy and I wasn't getting anywhere by speaking to them direct. The DCS helped me come to a decision and to know that sometimes things aren't worth pursuing. They have an intermediary role and give impartial advice - I realised I can't fix everything.'
'It contributed to the resolution. It was more of a formality.'
'They listened to both sides of the case and handled it professionally and fairly.'
'It was impartial; neither helpful nor unhelpful.'
'They act as mediator when a dentist cannot resolve issues with the patient. An independent, constructive approach is the best way forward, which was the input of the DCS.'

The complaint was dealt with quickly and efficiently by the DCS. The DCS's service and approach is better than that of the GDC.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'It was dealt with quickly and efficiently.'
'They were easy to contact, and I was pleasantly surprised by their tone and manner, but they should tell the patient they cannot threaten.'
'They were quite quick in dealing with the complaint. I did not have to wait for a response to emails. It was a quick resolution.'
'It worked very well without the heavy handed approach of the GDC.'
'I feel they dealt with the case better than the GDC would have done; they took the complaints through the stages. It is better for the GDC to deal with cases this way. They should use this mechanism for all patient cases (even for NHS).'

The DCS helped respondents to bring their complaint to a conclusion.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'They bring conflict to a close. The patient is well looked after.'
'Because it came to a conclusion without going to further investigation. This was the correct procedure.'
'Because it brought matters to a conclusion.'
'It got resolved and she couldn't take it further (her aim had been to get all her money back).'

Respondents commented that some complaints were deemed unnecessary and even eventually dismissed. To avoid the stress that is experienced from unnecessary complaints, the DCS could vet the complaints they receive.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'They agreed there was no cause for complaint.'
'It was ultimately dismissed.'
'The patient never intended to come back to the practice. We asked them to come in. The DCS could have been bypassed.'

Some respondents' comments can be interpreted that DCS could be biased towards the complainant/ or are not fully impartial and fair.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'They had decided the solution. It was my one and only option, to refund.'
'They are being over-protective towards patients.'
'There is no protection for people in my profession. If people have done their homework, they'll know that if they complain and say the dentures don't fit, they'll get a refund.'

One respondent comment that the communication with patient was done by email. Another respondent comment that DCS contacted him/her when their matter was resolved.

Why the service provided by the DCS was helpful
'The only help was communication with the patient. It was resolved via my indemnity. The only contact was by email. I did not want my contact details known.'
'They checked in once the matter was resolved.'

**Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could have done to increase your satisfaction with the resolution of your case.**

Respondents suggest that in some cases the DCS could be more impartial and more intent on finding a resolution which was fairer to the dental professional involved.

Increasing satisfaction with the resolution of your case
'They could be more impartial and fair.'
'Take a more balanced view.'
'It was a blatant complaint to get a refund. The DCS were impartial. I would have liked it if someone had seen what was going on.'
'Listen and understand. Have a better insight into what has happened. Read the information and offer a fair resolution.'
'They could have looked for a reasonable outcome, rather than just resolving the complaint. For example, if you go to the doctor with a leg ulcer and he says, "we'll take the leg off", it solved the problem, but maybe it's not the outcome you wanted. Or you go to your boss to say you're not happy, then he resolves it by sacking you, without offering you the chance to improve your working conditions. I feel the complaint was dealt with, but that it wasn't dealt with justly or fairly.'
'They could have chased it up and requested extra documents to give them more information.'

Respondents would like more protection, which could be achieved by the DCS vetting complaints before accepting them.

Increasing satisfaction with the resolution of your case
'There needs to be protection in place and a process for this type of complaint.'
'I was getting letters saying I was lying about having a family bereavement! An initial vetting of the patient's case would have made it clear that they had not got a genuine cause for complaint.'
'The DCS tried to calm the situation down, but there didn't seem to be a "vetting" stage to prevent unnecessary stress to the dentist.'
'They could have had a clinician look at the case, say that I had not done anything wrong, and suggest she come back to me to have the side effect of the treatment repaired.'

Respondents would like the DCS to have more contact with the parties involved and to discuss an overview of the decisions made.

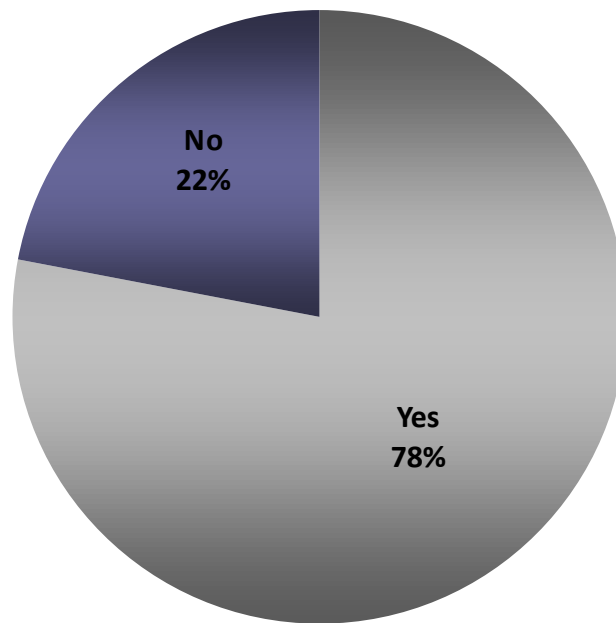
Increasing satisfaction with the resolution of your case
'There should be more contact with all parties involved. The complaint involved other clinicians. The patient was barred from the practice and he got the refund from me, rather than from the practice.'
'They should answer my emails when I tell them I am being threatened.'
'I would have liked the facts to have been weighed up. There could have been a bit of an overview, explaining to the dentist what the decision was.'

**Section 6: Further Case Details.  
Dental Complaints Service in General**



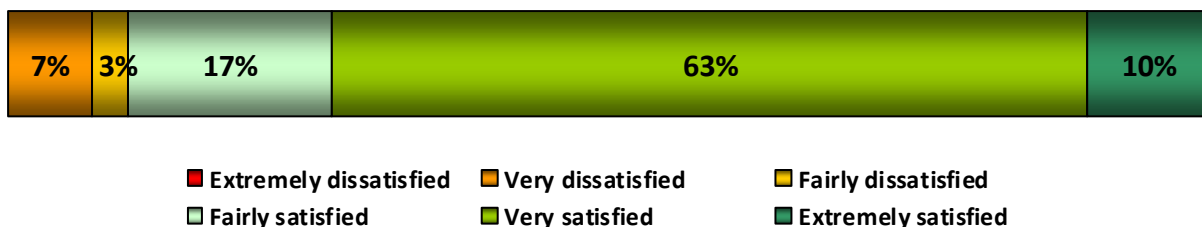
**For this case, did you seek information, advice or support from your indemnity organisation or equivalent?**

The majority (78%) of the respondents sought information, advice or support from their indemnity organisation or equivalent; eight respondents did not.



**How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?**

90% of the respondents were satisfied that this information, advice and support was useful; 73% were very or extremely satisfied. 10%, three respondents, were dissatisfied.



### Additional comments:

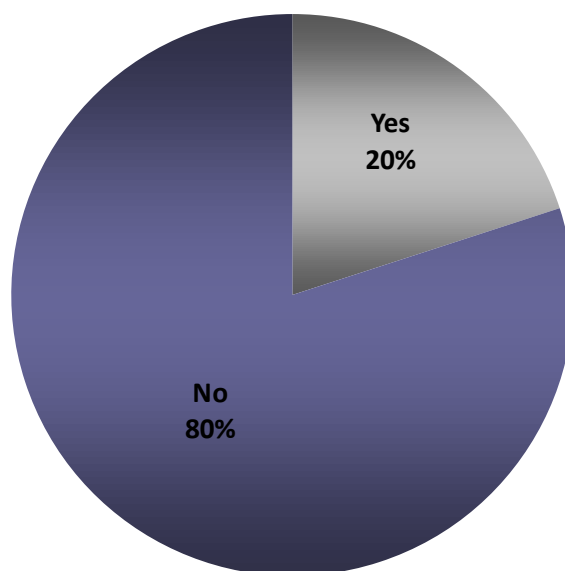
One respondent commented that it is compulsory to contact their indemnity organisation or equivalent about a complaint for insurance purposes. One respondent found the complaint was resolved through a letter drafted with the help of the indemnity organisation, rather than the DCS.

Other respondents found the information, advice or support from their indemnity organisation or equivalent to be of little value and that the advice from the DCS was more beneficial.

Additional comments
'It's a condition that they be informed of a complaint, otherwise your insurance is void.'
'A letter was drafted by myself and the indemnity organisation. In terms of resolving the case, it was the indemnity that got the resolution.'
'It was rubbish. They said it was best to agree to a satisfactory amount of payment as a goodwill gesture, which I did, but the patient was not satisfied with the amount. I said the patient could no longer use our practice, but was told I could not stop them using the services of our practice.'
'They just said to "suck it up" really.'
'The advice from the DCS was more beneficial.'

## Did the Dental Complaints Service signpost you to other sources of information, advice or support?

80% of respondents were not signposted by the DCS to other sources of information, advice or support; 20%, seven respondents, were.



### Additional comments:

Two respondents were signposted to their indemnity organisation or to the Federation of Small Business (FSB). Two others weren't signposted to other sources as the DCS advised them appropriately themselves.

Additional comments
'They signposted the indemnity organisation, which I had already contacted.'
'They may have suggested speaking to the FSB, if the complaint goes further, i.e. to a legal matter.'
'They did not need to.'
'Anything I had questions on, they advised appropriately. I was very happy with their service.'

### If so, how valuable was that signposting?

Some respondents, about half, found the signposting to be very helpful, others not so much as they already had sought legal advice.

How valuable was that signposting?
'Very.'
'Very helpful.'
'I was happy with it.'
'I can't remember.'
'It was not very valuable, as I was just told to look at some general information.'
'It did not matter, as I had already gone to indemnity.'
'I would have done this anyway (taken legal advice).'

## Following your experience of the Dental Complaints Service how likely are you to signpost patients to?

Almost all respondents, 90%, said that they were likely to signpost patients to the DCS. Some would do so after first following their internal complaints process.

How likely are you to signpost patients to the DCS?
'Yes, if applicable.'
'Yes, I would if need be.'
'Yes but I hope not to have to.'
'I would be very happy to.'
'It is likely, as it is the only place we can go. We can get a local resolution, rather than going to the GDC. I would seek support from the indemnity organisation, as my first port of call.'
'Fairly likely, but I hope I won't have to again!'
'More likely.'
'Pretty likely, if it needed to go that way.'
'Very likely.'
'Very likely.'
'Very likely.'
'Yes, very likely.'
'It is very likely that I would.'
'Very likely. They are up front. I am very happy to signpost them to the DCS.'
'Highly likely.'
'Extremely likely.'
'Definitely! I would rather they went to the DCS than the GDC, who are totally against dentists and cause a lot of stress.'
'If there is an issue, yes I would.'
'I will do if it is ever needed.'
'We do this anyway.'
'It is my duty to: part of my Complaints Procedure for patients.'
'We have to. We give patients the information routinely.'
'It is not something I have thought about. However, with regard to a disagreement between me and a patient, then yes, I would suggest this direction.'
'I've no problems with that. Patients can communicate with the DCS.'
'I might, if it helps people to resolve disputes.'
'If they needed advice, I would, but it is preferable to handle things in-house, if possible.'
'I still would; it is better than a "no win, no fee" lawyer. It is good for the patient to sound off.'
'I would signpost patients because it is less scary than directing them to the GDC. The DCS keeps complaints more local. In terms of getting resolution, complaints should go directly to the practice. The first point of referral should be the Practice Manager.'
'Our website does, but personally I'd rather try and resolve any complaint myself. I accept that some patients are unable to tackle things without a third party.'
'I would signpost them to the DCS if a patient had a problem, but my complaint was simple - black and white.'
'I would, after going through the practice complaints process first.'

Five respondents were less likely or unlikely to signpost patients to the DCS. They gave a variety of reasons, although only one cited specific dissatisfaction with the services provided by the DCS.

How likely are you to signpost patients to the DCS?
'I am not.'
'I wouldn't. It's not something I would do.'
'Not very, because ultimately I ended up doing what the patient wanted to resolve it. It wasn't a balanced view and there was a lack of dental knowledge.'
'We do signpost to them, that's what we have to do after offering a local resolution first. We do it anyway - but how much more likely am I to signpost them as a result of this complaint? Not at all.'
'Very unlikely! It would involve complaints against a colleague and wouldn't be ethically right.'

**On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?**

This question enables the calculation of the Net Promoter Score. This is commonly considered to be a predictor of customer loyalty.

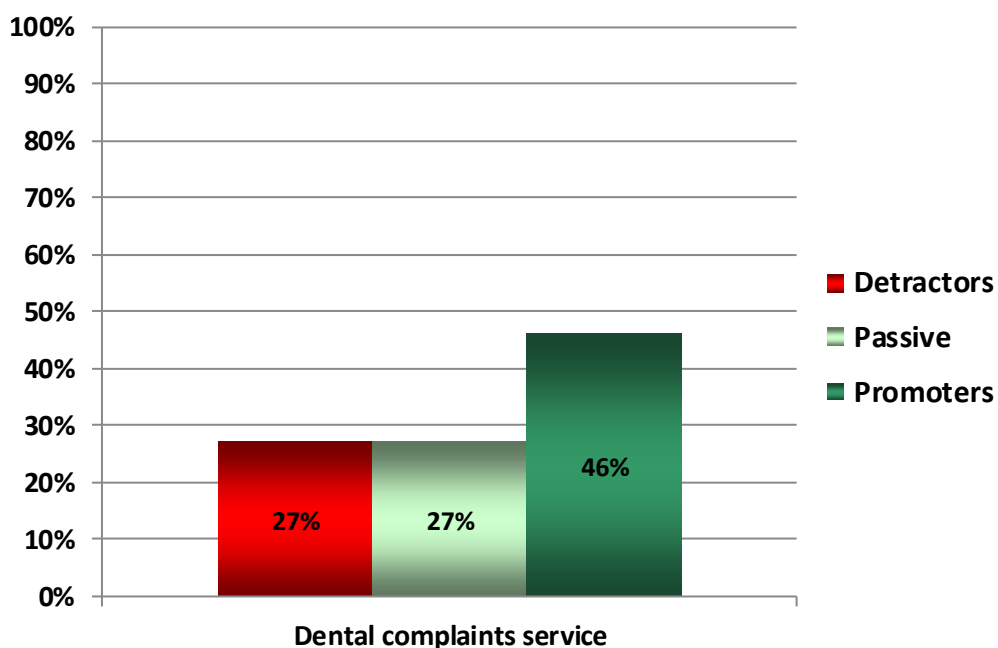
Obviously, ‘customer loyalty’ is not a literally relevant performance measure in this case. However, the Net Promoter Score is a useful indicator of the reputation of the DCS amongst dental professionals, and their willingness to recommend the service to others.

Respondents are grouped as follows:

- **Promoters** (score 9-10) are enthusiastic service users, who would strongly recommend the DCS to others in their profession.
- **Passives** (score 7-8) are considered to be generally satisfied with the service but limited in their enthusiasm to promote the DCS amongst their colleagues.
- **Detractors** (score 0-6) are those who may have some criticisms of the DCS or be reluctant to advocate its use to other dental professionals.

Subtracting the percentage of **Detractors** from the percentage of **Promoters** yields the Net Promoter Score, which can range from a low of -100 (if every respondent is a Detractor) to a high of 100 (if every respondent is a Promoter).

On this occasion, the total **Net Promoter Score is 19**. A score of 19 could be considered good as nearly half (46%) of the respondents are Promoters – keen to recommend the DCS service to others. 27% of respondents are Detractors – less satisfied individuals who could potentially damage the reputation of the DCS through negative word-of-mouth.



(An internet search has not been able to find credible figures to compare these results with similar organisations).

## Please explain your answer.

Some of those who are likely to recommend the DCS (being classified as 'Promoters') were satisfied with the supportive, professional and effective service provided.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
10	'It was very good.'
9	'Because it worked well.'
8	'I am satisfied with their work.'
10	'I have been most impressed with the service and feel it is the right approach in most cases.'
10	'Considering how this case was handled and resolved, I would definitely recommend them.'
10	'I was happy with the way they handled the complaint.'
7	'It would be quite likely.'
10	'They did provide a great service.'
10	'It was easy to solve, and quick.'
8	'It has been a quick process so far.'
8	'I would definitely recommend, as it gets things resolved quickly. They notify the patient and the dentist. The Complaints Officer was very helpful.'
10	'They were supportive and professional.'
8	'They are very useful in dealing with complaints.'
9	'They were very helpful, easy to deal with and they did not put the blame on me.'
10	'It is a great intermediary. You get advice and guidance from a smaller arm of the GDC. I feel confident with them; with the DCS, it's not so frightening.'
10	'The DCS has an important role and should be promoted more. As a dentist when you see the words "GDC" and "complaint" you get very stressed if the DCS was promoted more I think a lot more dentists would stay in the profession.'
9	'It's an interesting one. I'd never had a complaint until I helped another dentist's patient. Even though I felt that the evidence showed it to be an unjustified complaint, I wanted to get it out of the way and settle it. I wasn't going to be awkward with a patient who I felt was unreasonable. The guy from the DCS was pleasant, helpful and fairly efficient. He handled it really quite well. He was reasonable to deal with.'
10	'I have a high regard for the service. They are professional, and the process is very, very fair.'
10	'I think they act in the best interests of the patient. They try to evaluate both sides, and are very compassionate.'
10	'My case was handled fairly. They listened to me and looked at the papers.'

Furthermore, respondents found the DCS to be a good medium for communication between themselves and their patients, mediating a resolution and bringing the complaint to a conclusion.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
10	'Most of the problems between dentists and patients are due to a lack of communication, and the DCS can open up the channels of communication.'
8	'I would highly recommend them. When communications with the patient broke down, the DCS acted as an intermediary between me and the patient. There was good communication.'
10	'They keep the lawyers out of it. In many cases mediation is all that is necessary.'
5	'Because it's brought matters to a conclusion.'

Some respondents would recommend the DCS as they found it to be better than the other alternatives they faced, in particular involving the GDC.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
6	'It's better than the alternative.'
8	'The alternative (going to the GDC) is not good.'
10	'Out of 10? 100. It is better than going to the GDC.'
10	'Dealing with the DCS prevents things escalating to the GDC, which becomes a nightmare.'
10	'The DCS is set up for private complaints, but it is a very good organisation for all complaints (private or NHS). It should be the first port of call for complaints - it would save the GDC loads of time and money.'

Some respondents, mostly detractors, considered that the DCS were not impartial, acting more on behalf of patients. pre-judging the situation and not listening to the dental professional.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
0	'I thought they only acted on behalf of the patient.'
8	'The DCS assists the patient.'
DK	'Why would I recommend the DCS to a fellow dental professional? It is a patient-centred approach. We dentists go to indemnity in the first instance, though I did not need to.'
7	'They could be more impartial.'
1	'They didn't listen to me and I was pre-judged even before the process started.'
4	'I feel I was not listened to in the way I should have been.'



Some detractors would rather advise the use of their own indemnity provider as a first port of call instead of recommending the DCS.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
0	'I would seek indemnity, as the first port of call.'
6	'Where dentists have their own indemnity, I would not recommend the DCS.'
0	'I understand the patient contacts the DCS and they get in touch with the practitioners, but I only had one call. I would advise fellow professionals to call their indemnity organisation.'

Some respondents, who are mainly Detractors, were unsure about the function and operation of the DCS.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
7	'It was okay, not exceptional. It's an average mark.'
DK	'I do not know whether I would recommend them.'
6	'I don't know; I don't know if there's a reason for a dentist to contact them.'
5	'There is some level of obscurity and "unknowns." I do not know if the process is optional or mandatory.'
1	'Due to the reasons I've outlined - the DCS served no useful purpose. The patient was trying everything simultaneously - legal and court action and conciliation. I can't give an accurate representation of their service from this case - it was bizarre.'

Other comments highlight that more awareness is needed of the DCS within the dental profession and that they did not have much interaction with the DCS.

Recommendation score	Recommending the services of the DCS to a fellow dental professional
7	'I didn't know that this was an option. You need to raise awareness in the dental profession.'
7	'I was satisfied; there wasn't much interaction.'

**Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to improve your overall satisfaction with its service.**

Respondents suggest that there should be more information about the DCS available, building awareness of it and the nature of the service.

Improving overall satisfaction with the DCS.
'There should be a resource telling dentists more about the DCS and its function (or a helpline?).'
'Advertise themselves a bit more. There are still a lot of patients and dentists who don't know they're there.'
'By pointing out through advertisement or letter that they are not just working for the patient, and maybe give some statistics (e.g. 7/10 cases find against the patient).'
'They could provide a leaflet or pack to guide you, regarding what you are expected to do and information about the process.'

Respondents also suggest that satisfaction with the DCS could be improved by it being fairer, more impartial and listening more closely to both sides.

Improving overall satisfaction with the DCS.
'As I've already mentioned, it could be more balanced to both perspectives.'
'They could weigh up the facts on both sides.'
'They could be more impartial.'
'Listen to the dentist as well and not just automatically take the patient's side.'
'They need to listen to both sides and communicate back. They should keep transparency when there is contact with the patient.'
'It's a difficult one. I know they operate under constraints. They are limited in what they are able to do. But if I had a magic wand? They could listen to both sides and make an adjudication, rather than offer possibilities to both sides, that both sides have to agree on. You end up accepting a deal to get it out of the way. And all the time, hanging over you is the fact that if you don't get it sorted out it will end up as a GDC hearing - and everyone wants to avoid that because they have a very anti-dentist stance, in the view of the profession.'

More clinicians could be involved within the DCS in order to understand the dental professional's perspective and to provide guidance and learning.

Improving overall satisfaction with the DCS.
'There should be someone with the knowledge to look at it from a dentist's point of view and give an independent view of the case, before it gets drawn out and messy.'
'Have more clinicians involved, and give guidance, and have learning outcomes.'

Respondents suggest that there could be more personal contact from the DCS, particularly regarding the progress of their case.

Improving overall satisfaction with the DCS.
'A higher level of personal contact (i.e. phone calls instead of letters).'
'The contact situation could have been a bit better. I received a letter initially and I had to make a lot of calls to chase it up. I didn't get a proper explanation until the Complaints Officer was involved - then it was better.'
'They could keep me informed of the progress of the case.'
'Possibly a telephone call - it helps to have a conversation about things.'

Respondents also suggest that patients are given clearer understanding and expectations of the service and firmer deadlines.

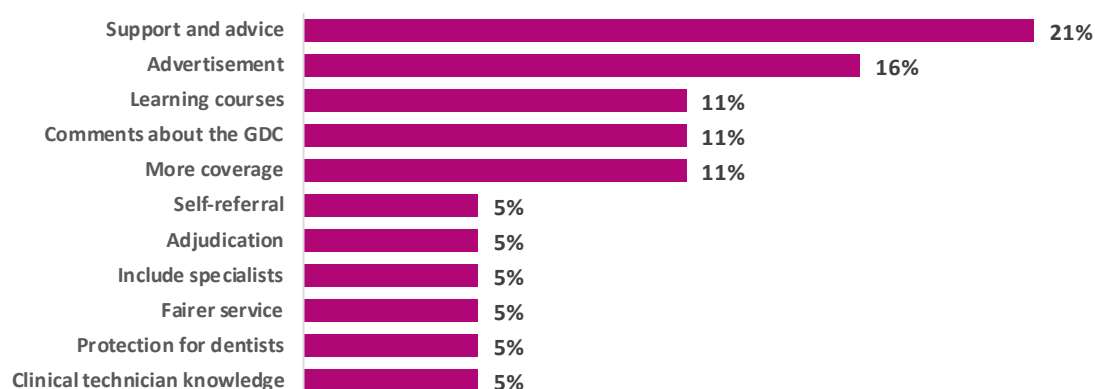
Improving overall satisfaction with the DCS.
'The DCS should change the patient's expectation of what the outcome is. The DCS is mainly for the patient, so there should be strict rules for them that if they do not respond in a certain time, the case is closed. My case got closed, reopened twice, there was no response to a letter, so it was closed, the patient given 14 days, but they responded 2½ months later.'
'Clarify their remit and what they've discussed with both sides, and clarify the procedure and how it's proceeding. Even if it is not resolved, there should be intermittent updates provided; even if there's nothing to say, it shouldn't be left open ended.'
'There could have been more follow up to resolve the issue. If I had been the patient I would have expected more attempts to resolve the issue.'

## Section 7: Final Questions

**Please could you suggest any extension to the remit of the Dental Complaints Service and the services it provides, which would be of benefit to you and your profession.**

19 respondents provided suggestions of how the DCS could extend their remit and service provided.

These ranged from offering more support and advice services to dental professionals (such as learning courses and apps) to more advertising and extending the service to NHS patients.



Some respondents suggest that the DCS could advertise itself and its services more widely and effectively. This would help in differentiating it from the GDC, and dispel any negative preconceptions about the DCS and its service.

Suggestions of extensions to the remit of the DCS and the services it provides.
'I just think that the profession doesn't know enough about them. They are affiliated to the GDC and they should promote them more. It should be advertised that they are there for dentists as well as patients - I think newly qualified dentists in particular would benefit from knowing about the service.'
'They have no media presence. Their website is not very developed. I do not know if they are part of the GDC. There could be greater clarity, explanation of the process, the options available and whether things are set in stone.'
'The way complaints come through from patients, if they cannot be handled by the practice's own complaints policy, then I would strongly advertise the DCS on the GDC website.'
'There seems to be a bit of a disconnect between regulators and the profession, and feelings of fear, paranoia and defensiveness. This was not my experience of this service; I was very happy. The perception is that you can end up in front of the GDC for fairly minor things, so it's nice to know that there is a middle ground and only the worst cases should go to the GDC. I was very encouraged by the process.'

Respondents also suggest that the DCS could expand its services to the profession, advising them how to avoid complaints and to handle them once made. They could provide an advice line.

Suggestions of extensions to the remit of the DCS and the services it provides.
'Maybe do some CPD courses on how to avoid complaints?'
'Lectures on handling patient complaints, or providing information about how to handle patient complaints.'
'They could provide a support mechanism for dentists; in the way they do for patients. They could offer advice to the profession.'
'In a similar way to indemnity, we could get clinical advice, get direction how to respond. The DCS could extend their services to include services similar to indemnity, like drafting letters. The response could be quicker.'
'Maybe provide a phone service, like an advice line, and even better, an app.'
'It would be handy to have a breakdown or summary of the investigation and discussion leading to the advice the DCS were giving. Regarding transparency, the details and advice given to the patient could be relayed back to the dentist.'

Some respondents suggest that the DCS service could be improved if it had access to external, independent specialist expertise.

Suggestions of extensions to the remit of the DCS and the services it provides.
'To have the ability to achieve a balanced perspective by having access to independent dental advice or some dental knowledge.'
'Have specialist dental practitioners (or a panel) that they can use to refer complaints to. This would take that part of the problem out of the hands of the dentist or the complainant.'

There was a diversity of other suggestions.

Suggestions of extensions to the remit of the DCS and the services it provides.
'I'm not sure if they cover private and NHS patients - I did ask but no one could answer.'
'The NHS could use this service. All complaints (Dental) should be assessed by the DCS before going to the GDC, which can seem very threatening to dentists as they, "Use a sledgehammer to crack a nut."''
'To get more information on the clinical technician area of the industry. It was a complete unknown when I spoke to them.'
'If there was a way to self-refer, it would be very helpful.'
'If the DCS were able to adjudicate, that would make the whole process simpler and more satisfactory.'
'The GDC should be kept away. They cause a great deal of trouble, misery and grief, are unnecessarily heavy handed and provide appalling treatment. The DCS is the best thing they have done and should be involved far more in resolutions between dentists and patients. The GDC is an appalling regulator.'

**Please feel free to make any further comments of suggestions which may be of value or of interest to the Dental Complaints Service.**

Despite already having spent some time being interviewed, a large proportion of respondents were still sufficiently engaged at the end of the process to volunteer further comments which they considered could be of value or interest to the DCS. Several made positive comments about the quality of the service provided by the DCS and the people there.

Respondents would like to see a form of patient education from the DCS and the hiring of (more) dentally qualified staff. They also suggest that the DCS could be a 'blue-print' for handling complaints and should take more cases from the GDC and even from the NHS. Two respondents comment about the DCS being a welcome intermediary, avoiding contact with the GDC.

One respondent commented that they would like to learn more about the process of panel meetings.

Further comments
'It would be a good thing if they could do something in patient education.'
'Sometimes, patients, especially if foreign, think they have the right to do what they want and dentists and doctors have no come back. The DCS can't really do anything about this view in general, it's really educating the whole country.'
'Professionals involved should be trained in dental knowledge and terminology.'
'I think the service should be staffed by dentists.'
'The DCS should be a blue print for how to handle all complaints - it would take pressure off the GDC and the NHS. Give them all to DCS.'
'I didn't know they existed, but I am happy that they do. DCS should work <u>with</u> the GDC and make sure all complaints about negligence <u>must, must, must</u> go through the DCS first. Then threatening behaviour from patients might stop. Indemnity organisations have advised dentists to tell patients to go straight to the NHS or DCS, rather than to the GDC with complaints. Dentists are treated like dirt in front of patients. Dentists who are taken to court by complainants should have the right to counter-claim for emotional stress, character defamation and loss of reputation. We should fight and be a powerful group of people!'
'It was a nice easy experience; not traumatic at all.'
'The Complaints Officer, was courteous and helped to direct the patient to be more realistic in her attitude.'
'Despite being dissatisfied with the outcome, I'm glad the DCS were there to prevent it going to the GDC. Overall I'd rather they were there, than weren't there.'
'In my situation, they dealt with a very awkward patient. I pity the "poor sods" who had to talk to this person. It is a thankless task. The turnover of personnel is not surprising. The DCS personnel are invaluable.'
'I would like to understand more about the panel meetings and if these are offered only when complaints are escalated.'
'They try to make it as easy and friendly as possible between the two parties. I did not have any information. I did not know there was a complaint until the DCS said someone had sent a letter of complaint.'
'The DCS could make more contact with the practitioner. I got one call from them. I did not know who they were. They did not attempt to resolve anything.'
'I was fine with the scenario, but because it happened a while ago - last year - it would have been easier to give suggestions if the survey had been done sooner. There'd be more detail.'

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**Your responses here are dealt with absolute anonymity, unless you would like someone from the Dental Complaints Service to contact you personally to discuss your dealings with them. If so, we will pass on your details and ask them to get in touch.**

Five respondents would like someone from the DCS to contact them personally. This information has already been passed on to the DCS.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

<b>Overall experience</b>
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
How satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impartial in resolving the complaint?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair and proportionate?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparent?</li> </ul>
If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.
How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
Prior to using the Dental Complaints Service, what was your perception of the organisation and the service they provide?
Following the resolution of the complaint did your perception change?
<b>Handling of the case</b>
How satisfied were you:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the process was managed speedily?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the process was managed efficiently?</li> </ul>
If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.
Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with their handing of your case.
<b>Complaints Officer</b>
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?
How satisfied are you that your Complaints Officer:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was impartial?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was knowledgeable and skilled?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was easy to deal with?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kept you informed?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listened to your point of view?</li> </ul>
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?
If you are dissatisfied at all or are extremely satisfied in your responses to any of these questions, please explain why.
Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with the service provided by your Complaints Officer.

### Complaint by Panel

Did your complaint go to a panel for resolution?

If so, how satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?

Please explain your answer.

Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to increase your satisfaction with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?

If you did not go to a panel meeting, were you offered one?

If you were offered a panel meeting and did not attend, what was your reason?

### Resolution of your case

Which of the following were involved in the resolution of the complaint? Please indicate all that apply. Explanation, Refund, Partial refund, Contribution towards remedial treatment, Apology, Other (please specify).

Please rank these from the most helpful to the least helpful towards the resolution of this complaint.

If the resolution of this complaint involved an apology, in your view, to what extent do you think that this made a difference in the complainant's satisfaction with the resolution of their complaint?

Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?

Please explain your answer.

Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?

Please explain your answer.

Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could have done to increase your satisfaction with the resolution of your case.

### Further Case Details. Dental Complaints Service in General

For this case, did you seek information, advice or support from your indemnity organisation or equivalent?

How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?

Did the Dental Complaints Service signpost you to other sources of information, advice or support?

If so, how valuable was that signposting?

Following your experience of the Dental Complaints Service how likely are you to signpost patients to the Dental Complaints Service?

On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?

Please explain your answer.

Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to improve your overall satisfaction with its service.

### Final Questions

Please could you suggest any extension to the remit of the Dental Complaints Service and the services it provides, which would be of benefit to you and your profession.

Please feel free to make any further comments or suggestions which may be of value or of interest to the Dental Complaints Service.

Your responses here are dealt with with absolute anonymity unless you would like someone from the Dental Complaints Service to contact you personally to discuss your dealings with them. If so, we will pass on your details and ask them to get in touch.

## Appendix 2 - Shortened Survey

Eight contacts answered the shortened survey questionnaire.

The question 'How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?' was added and only used in the shortened survey questionnaire.

Overall experience
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
How would you describe the way the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?
Please suggest at least one thing that the Dental Complaints Service could do to improve your overall satisfaction with its service.
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?
Please explain your answer.
Please could you suggest any extension to the remit of the Dental Complaints Service and the services it provides, which would be of benefit to you and your profession.
Please feel free to make any further comments or suggestions which may be of value or of interest to the Dental Complaints Service.
Your responses here are dealt with absolute anonymity unless you would like someone from the Dental Complaints Service to contact you personally to discuss your dealings with them. If so, we will pass on your details and ask them to get in touch.

## Appendix 3 - Heat Maps

Individual responses are summarised graphically on the next five pages as a heat map.

The proportions who are fairly, very and extremely satisfied have been colour coded in shades of green of increasing intensity. Similarly, the proportions of respondents who are fairly, very or extremely dissatisfied have been shown in shades of yellow, orange or red of increasing intensity.

Inspection of these heat maps shows the broad patterns of satisfaction, but also enables the identification of 'hot-spots' where individual respondents or particular elements of the service provided by the DCS stand out.

The following scales are used:

<b>Extremely Dissatisfied</b>	<b>ED</b>
<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>VD</b>
<b>Fairly Dissatisfied</b>	<b>FD</b>
<b>Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>FS</b>
<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>VS</b>
<b>Extremely Satisfied</b>	<b>ES</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>DK</b>

<b>Yes (positive)</b>	<b>Y</b>
<b>No (negative)</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>NA</b>

<b>Detractor</b>	<b>0-6</b>
<b>Passive</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>Promotor</b>	<b>9-10</b>

There are blank cells where the question has not been answered.

	Respondents									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Overall experience</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?	ES	FS	ES	FD	ED	ES	VS	VS	VS	VS
Professional?	ES	ES	ES	FD	FS	ES	VS	VS	VS	ES
Impartial in resolving the complaint?	ES	FS	ES	FD	ED	ES	VS	VS	VS	VS
Fair and proportionate?	ES	FD	VS	FD	ED	ES	VS	VS	VS	VS
Transparent?	ES	VS	ES	FD	FS	VS	VS	VS	VS	ES
<b>Handling your case</b>										
That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?	VS	FD	VS	FD	FS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?	VS	FD	ES	VS	FS	VS	VS	VS	VS	ES
That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?	VS	FD	ES	VS	FS	VS	VS	VS	FS	VS
That the process was managed speedily?	ES	VS	ES	FS	FS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
That the process was managed efficiently?	ES	VS	ES	FS	FS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
<b>Complaints Officer</b>										
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?	ES	VS	VS	FD	DK	ES	VS	VS	VS	VS
Was impartial?	VS	FS	ES	ED		VS	VS	VS	ES	VS
Was knowledgeable and skilled?	VS	VD	VS	FD		VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
Was easy to deal with?	VS	VS	ES	FS		VS	VS	VS	VS	ES
Kept you informed?	VS	FS	ES	FS		VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
Listened to your point of view?	VS	FD	ES	ED		VS	VS	VS	VS	ES
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?	VS	FS	VS	FD		VS	VS	VS	VS	ES
<b>Panel</b>										
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Resolution of your case</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?	VS	FS	FS	ED	ED	VS	VS	VS	VS	FS
Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?	VS	VS	ES	FD	ED	ES	VS	VS	VS	ES
<b>About the case and Dental Complaints Service</b>										
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?	ES	VS	VS	FS				VS	VS	
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?	10	10	10	1	DK	10	9	8	10	10

	Respondents									
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>Overall experience</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?	ES	FS	FS	VS	ES			VS	VS	VS
Professional?	ES	VS	VS	VS	ES			VS	VS	VS
Impartial in resolving the complaint?	VS	FD	FS	FS	VS			VS	VS	VS
Fair and proportionate?	VS	FD	FD	VS	VS			VS	VS	VS
Transparent?	VS	FS	VS	VS	ES			VS	VS	VS
<b>Handling your case</b>										
That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?	FS	FD	VS	VS	ES			VS	VS	VS
That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?	FS	VD	VS	VS	VS			VS	VS	FS
That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?	FS	VS	VS	NA	VS			VS	NA	VS
That the process was managed speedily?	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS			VS	VS	VS
That the process was managed efficiently?	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS			VS	VS	VS
<b>Complaints Officer</b>										
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?	DK	FS	VS	ES	VS			VS	VS	VS
Was impartial?		FD	VS	FS	VS			VS	VS	VS
Was knowledgeable and skilled?		FD	VS	ES	VS			VS	VS	FS
Was easy to deal with?		FS	VS	ES	VS			VS	VS	VS
Kept you informed?		FS	VS	ES	VS			VS	VS	VS
Listened to your point of view?		VS	FS	ES	VS			VS	VS	FS
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?		FD	FS	NA	VS			VS	VS	VS
<b>Panel</b>										
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?	NA	NA	NA	NA	ES			NA	NA	NA
<b>Resolution of your case</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?	ES	FS	FD	FS	ES			FS	VS	FS
Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?	VS	FS	FD	VS	ES			VS	VS	FS
<b>About the case and Dental Complaints Service</b>										
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?		VD	VS	ES	FS			VS	VS	
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?	10	0	4	10	10	6	10	9	8	10

	Respondents									
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<b>Overall experience</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?	ES	FS	VS	FS	VS	VS	FD	FS	VS	VD
Professional?	VS	FD	VS	VS		VS	FS	FS	FS	VD
Impartial in resolving the complaint?	VS	DK	FS	FD		VS	FD	NA	FS	ED
Fair and proportionate?	VS	DK	VS	FD		VS	FD	FS	FS	ED
Transparent?	VS	DK	VS	VS		VS	DK	FS	FS	FD
<b>Handling your case</b>										
That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?	FS	DK	FS	FS		FD		FS	FS	FD
That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?	NA	VS	VS	VS		FS		VS	FS	VS
That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?	NA	VS	VS	VS		FS		FS	FD	VS
That the process was managed speedily?	VS	ES	ES	VS		ES		FS	FS	VS
That the process was managed efficiently?	VS	VS	ES	VS		ES		FS	FS	VS
<b>Complaints Officer</b>										
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?	VS	FS	ES	FS		VS		VS	VS	FS
Was impartial?	VS	DK	VS	FD		VS		FS	FS	VD
Was knowledgeable and skilled?	VS	DK	VS	FD		VS		FS	FS	VD
Was easy to deal with?	VS	VS	VS	VS		VS		FS	FS	VS
Kept you informed?	NA	VS	VS	VS		VS		FS	FS	VS
Listened to your point of view?	VS	FS	VS	VS		VS		FS	FS	VS
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?	VS	DK	VS	FS		FS		FS	NA	VS
<b>Panel</b>										
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	VS
<b>Resolution of your case</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?	VS	DK	NA	FS		FS		ES	FS	VS
Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?	VS	FS	VS	FS		FS		VD	NA	VS
<b>About the case and Dental Complaints Service</b>										
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?	VS	VS	VS			VS		VD	VS	VS
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?	6	5	8	0	DK	6		7	8	7

	Respondents								
	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
<b>Overall experience</b>									
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?			FD	FS	VS	FS	FD	FS	FS
Professional?			VS	VS	VS	FS	FD		
Impartial in resolving the complaint?			VS	FS	VS	FD	FD		
Fair and proportionate?			VS	FS	VS	FD	FS		
Transparent?			VS	VS	VS	FS	ED		
That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?			FD	VS	VS	VS	VD		
That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?			VS	VS	VS	VS	VD		
That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?			VS	VS	VS	VS	FS		
That the process was managed speedily?			VS	VS	VS	VS	FS		
That the process was managed efficiently?			VS	VS	VS	VS	FS		
<b>Complaints Officer</b>									
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?			VS	VS	VS	FS	FS		
Was impartial?			VS	VS	VS	FD	FS		
Was knowledgeable and skilled?			FS	VS	VS	FD	FS		
Was easy to deal with?			VS	VS	VS	FS	FS		
Kept you informed?			VS	VS	VS	FS	FS		
Listened to your point of view?			VS	VS	VS	FD	FS		
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?			NA	FS	FS	VD	FS		
<b>Panel</b>									
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?			NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		
<b>Resolution of your case</b>									
Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?			VD	FS	VS	VD			
Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?			VS	FS	VS	FD			
<b>About the case and Dental Complaints Service</b>									
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?			VS		VS	FS	VS		
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?	9	8	10	6	8	7	1	7	0



	Respondents									
	40	41	42	43	45	46	47	48	49	50
<b>Overall experience</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way that the Dental Complaints Service handled the complaint?	VS	ES	VS	ES	VS		VS	FS	FS	FS
Professional?	ES	ES	VS	ES	VS		VS		VS	VS
Impartial in resolving the complaint?	VS	ES	VS	ES	VS		VS		FS	FS
Fair and proportionate?	VS	ES	VS	ES	VS		VS		FS	FS
Transparent?	VS	ES	VS	ES	FS		VS		FS	FS
That from the beginning, the Dental Complaints Service resolution process was clearly explained to you?	FS	ES	VS	VS	FD		VS			VS
That you were kept informed about the progress with your case?	FS	ES	VS	VS	FD		FS			FS
That the Dental Complaints Service was easy to contact?	VS	FS	VS	VS	NA		VS			FD
That the process was managed speedily?	VS	FS	VS	VS	FS		FS			FD
That the process was managed efficiently?	VS	ES	VS	VS	FS		VS			FD
<b>Complaints Officer</b>										
How satisfied are you with the service provided by your Complaints Officer (the person you have been dealing with)?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			FS
Was impartial?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			VS
Was knowledgeable and skilled?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		FS			FS
Was easy to deal with?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			VS
Kept you informed?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			FS
Listened to your point of view?	ES	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			VS
How satisfied are you with the advice given by your Complaints Officer?	VS	ES	VS	VS	NA		VS			FS
<b>Panel</b>										
How satisfied are you with the process followed by the panel in resolving your complaint?										
<b>Resolution of your case</b>										
Overall, how satisfied are you with the ultimate resolution of your case?	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS		VS			FD
Overall, how satisfied are you that the service provided by the Dental Complaints Service was helpful to you in resolving your case?	VS	ES	VS	VS	FS		FS			FS
<b>About the case and Dental Complaints Service</b>										
How satisfied are you that this was useful to you?	ES	VS	VS	FS			FS			FD
On a scale from 0 to 10 how likely are you to recommend the services of the Dental Complaints Service to a fellow dental professional?	8	10	10	10	DK	10	10	7		5

## Appendix 4 - Data protection and GDPR

The following statement was issued by the DCS specifying the data protection processes followed during this survey. These have been complied with in full.

### What will we do with the data you give us?

The DCS is partnering with 'Customer Satisfaction UK', a market research organisation with which we have a contractual relationship, to complete this phase of the project. This will include telephone surveys taking place and a post-survey report. The DCS will share some participants' personal data with Customer Satisfaction UK solely for this purpose (the information requested above). Your feedback will be recorded anonymously, and notes taken by the facilitators, solely for the purpose of writing the report. This data will be destroyed by Customer Satisfaction UK on completion of the report by 31 May 2019.

The DCS will use any personal data gathered for or during this survey solely for the 'DCS Review' project; that includes a post-survey report. All data about participants who assisted in the survey in the report will be anonymised. The report will be published on the DCS and GDC website.

All personal data held by DCS/GDC relating to this phase of the project will be deleted on publication of the workshop report, unless requested otherwise by individual participants, e.g. if they wish to be updated on further phases of the project. All personal data will be disposed of by 31 May 2019. A copy of the anonymised report itself and anonymised data will be retained in line with the DCS/GDC's retention schedule.

### Why we use your personal data

Under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, the DCS/GDC has processed your personal data in order to contact you about this survey because the processing is necessary for the exercise of the GDC's statutory functions; and processing is in the public interest. This is also why we will process the personal data you give us, or is collected during the survey, if you agree to take part.

**Please note:** you are under no obligation to take part in this survey – participation is voluntary. For the avoidance of doubt, we can assure you that deciding not to take part will have no impact on your registration with the GDC.

### Your rights and other helpful information

You have various rights in connection with any personal data about you that is held by the GDC or which you give us for the purposes of this project. These include the right to request a copy of that data; the right to object to it being processed; and the right to request its deletion. More about these rights along with information about the GDC's Data Protection Officer, retention time frames, and about the complaints process may be found at <https://www.gdc-uk.org/footer/privacy>