

Mr Nick Patsias
Chair, Bromley Local Dental Committee
The Federation of London Local Dental Committees
4 Bloomsbury Place
London WC1A 2QA

08 August 2016

Dear Mr Patsias

Thank you for your letter of 12 July 2016, and for taking the time to raise our points at the LDC meetings and Federation Council meeting. We welcome any opportunity for discussion about how the dental industry can be improved for professionals and patients, and you have outlined a number of interesting and constructive points in your letter.

At the GDC, we are committed to improving the way in which we work with our partners, including the Department of Health and NHS England. The examples you gave present excellent discussion points for us to take up with these partners, to ensure we are doing everything we can within our remit to support patients and professionals. I agree with you when you say that dentistry doesn't take place in a vacuum. The industry is in a time of great change, and we need to work together with our partners now more than ever to ensure we are fit for future, and to provide professionals and patients with the support they need.

Here at the GDC, it is our responsibility to ensure efficient regulation of dental professionals to enhance patient safety, improve the quality of dental care and help ensure public confidence in dental regulation. Patient safety is always our highest priority, and fitness to practise is certainly an integral part of this. However, I believe that it is time for the GDC to move on from being seen as a 'complaints' organisation. That is why we are influencing the public debate about professional healthcare regulation more widely, drawing attention effectively to the growing weight – with all the accompanying stress for registrants – of fitness to practise processes and the need to find better alternatives.

We intend later in the year to consult widely on a range of potential measures for ensuring that the right issues are addressed in the right place at the right time for the right cost (in terms of financial cost and burden on registrants). This involves extensive engagement with our partners- including NHS England and equivalent bodies in the devolved nations, and the Care Quality Commission – and of course, the profession itself.

As I mentioned in my last letter of 15 March 2016, we work in a legal framework that determines the extent of our remit, limiting our power on issues that fall within the remit of our partners. This is the case with regard to contract negotiations or representing professionals in discussions about tariffs for NHS work. Though we have no remit in this area, we are certainly committed to working with our partners to improve the current regulation for professionals. As such, the examples you raised will be used in learning and as discussion points with our partners. However, we are not a lobbying body and I therefore suggest that you also raise these points with NHS England and the Department of Health.

As I stated in my last letter, we see local professional committees as providing a key foundation for dialogue with the profession. I genuinely appreciate any opportunity for constructive discussion with the profession, as it's only when points like this are raised that we can work together to improve our processes for the benefit of professionals and patients.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Moyes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William Moyes

Chair, General Dental Council