

When the BAPD formed in April 2022, one of the medium to long term aims was to become a valued stakeholder with our regulatory bodies. Once the acute problem of Covid was resolving, this aim started to become possible to work towards.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> April, a group of BAPD board members met virtually with the new Chair of the General Dental Council, Lord Toby Harris. Also at this meeting was the Registrar Ian Brack, and the Head of Communications and Engagement at the GDC, Joanne Rewcastle.

As you will have come to expect from the BAPD, the agenda for discussion we sent over in advance was necessarily going to make for comfortable feedback for those at the GDC. The discussion was very frank and candid from both sides, and we came away from the meeting feeling that there seems to be a wish at the GDC to put the issues of the past few years behind them and move forward. It appeared that the GDC attendees were listening to us and quite keen to point out that what had happened in the past was indeed in the past and distance was being put between then and now. This was one of the most important acknowledgements we wanted to get.

Many aspects were discussed about the state of dental regulation, which included the issues with the legislation that the GDC is forced to work within, but also the reluctance of the GDC to become involved with dealing with, or criticising the issues that are not necessarily related to individual registrants but the actual system that clinicians are having to work within. This system can cause tensions between the GDC Standards, and the imposed national contractual requirements, which is not the fault of dentists. The length of time to deal with Fitness to Practice cases was also discussed. It was refreshing for us to find that the GDC also shares our frustrations, as the legislation that it works under is often very rigid and needs updating effectively to deal with a modern profession and the way it works. The issue of the increasing number of Blue on Blue cases was discussed (where one practitioner reports another to the GDC) and how the process has therefore become weaponised.

Coupled with this last point, we pointed out quite starkly the perception that the profession had, and still has, of the GDC being an organisation that is largely feared, and this did appear to be taken on board as an issue that they need to look at addressing. We emphasised the importance of the effect this has on the mental health and wellbeing of practitioners and how they would not be performing optimally under this type of fear.

The standards and quality of dental education was another concern that was raised and the GDC's responsibility in that area to ensure that graduates are suitable prepared and trained to enter into the lion's den of modern UK dentistry. Defensive dentistry shouldn't be something that is routinely practiced as a result of the fear of being sanctioned by a regulator.

At one point Lord Harris indicated that he was sorry that the meeting was only an hour long as he was quite enjoying the discussions we were having. We felt this was not necessarily something that we would have expected to hear in the past.

It was agreed that we would have regular meetings (diaries permitting) and the next one will be with the head of Fitness to Practice at the GDC in July.