

## Dental Complaints Service – Performance Report Q3 of 2019

<b>Purpose of paper</b>	To report on the performance of the Dental Complaints Service (DCS) for quarter 3 (Q3), 2019
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Action</b>	To <b>Note</b>
<b>Corporate Strategy 2016-19</b>	Patients: Objective 4 – To direct patients who have concerns to the most appropriate organisation, so that problems can be resolved quickly, fairly and cost effectively. .
<b>Business Plan 2019</b>	Continue to raise awareness of the service and drive down the number and age of complaints.
<b>Decision Trail</b>	None
<b>Next stage</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Recommendations</b>	The Council is asked to <b>note</b> the paper.
<b>Authorship of paper and further information</b>	Michelle Williams DCS Head of Operations <a href="mailto:mwilliams@dentalcomplaints.org.uk">mwilliams@dentalcomplaints.org.uk</a> T: 020 8253 0811
<b>Appendices</b>	None

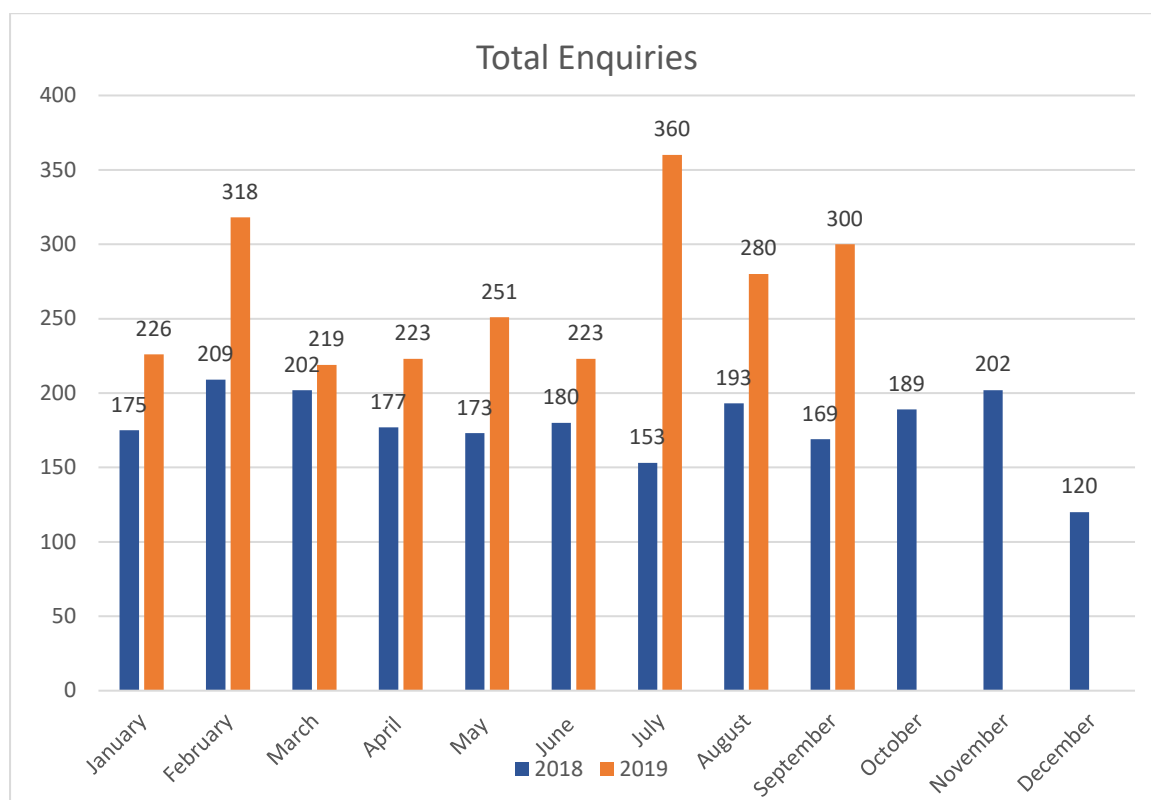
## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. DCS performance has been impacted across quarter 3 of 2019 by the on-going increase in enquiries that we have experienced throughout the year.
- 1.2. We continue to explore how we might build and strengthen the offer and, to that end, have been reviewing feedback received from a recently completed independent survey of registrants who have participated in the service. This, together with the review of 2015-18 indicates a service that is valued by those who use it, becoming better established as a distinct offer and has clarity vis-à-vis its relationship with Fitness to Practise.
- 1.3. Within the DCS Review Phase II project, part of Shifting the balance, we have made progress in evaluating the current DCS offering against the broader system-wide handling of complaints to explore how there might be the opportunity to modify the offering to better complement the whole landscape. We are also preparing to test different operational delivery models and have created an objective evaluation framework to support this analysis.

## 2. Analysis of Performance

### Incoming enquiries

- 2.1. During Q3, 940 enquiries were received. 98% (921) were responded to within 2 days, an improvement from 84% in Q2.
- 2.2. The average number of enquiries for 2019 has risen to 267 per month in comparison to 186 in 2018, an increase of 43%. In part this has been driven by two exceptional events in February and July with large numbers of complaints for a single registrant however DCS are currently working with the Senior Research Analyst to identify other possible drivers for the general observed increase in enquires over the last 9 months.



- 2.3. Of the 940 enquiries logged in Q3, 103 cases were opened of which 14 referrals to FTP were made (1.4% against enquiries). All enquires are signposted to their dental

professional to seek local resolution and if appropriate to the relevant organisation which enables the patient to resolve their concerns appropriately. Private patients are advised they can contact DCS again should local resolution fail. A more detailed breakdown of contact types is provided below:

Signposted to	Total	Signposted to	Total
NHS England	161	Dental Professional requesting complaints advice	0
NHS NI	3	Dental Professional requesting leaflets	1
NHS Scotland	9	Patient not engaging	1
NHS Wales	5	Outside of time remit	26
Advice on accessing records	1	Patient does not wish to pursue	26
Clinical Advice	12	Patient pursuing independently	173
Dental Professional raising staff issues	9	Request for compensation <sup>1</sup>	33
Outside of geographical remit	4	Request for conduct investigation- not high risk	7
GDC process enquiry	11	Denplan	10
Contractual issue	39	Nonregistered staff	3
Debt collection	7	Other	286
Dental Professional not registered	10	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>837</b>
		<b>DCS Cases</b>	<b>103</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>

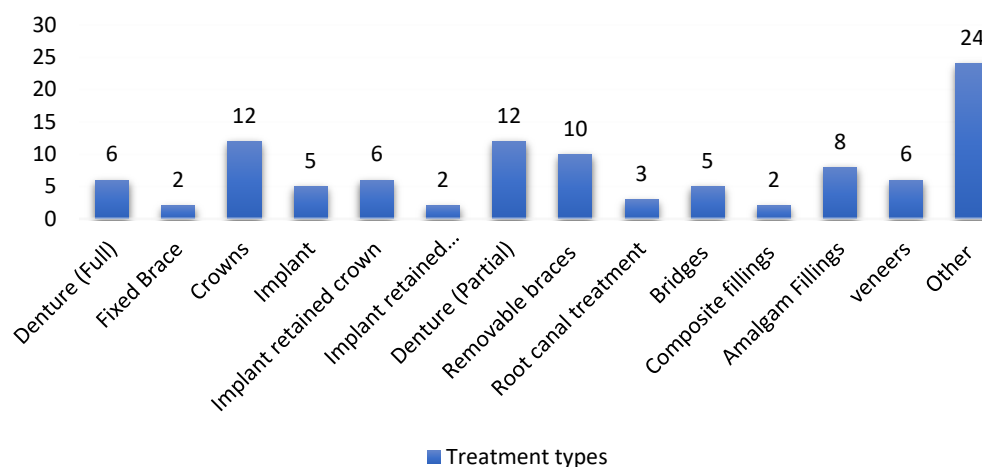
### Complaint issues

- 2.4. The most dominant issues raised in Q3 by complainants were a perceived failure of treatment (83).

### Treatment types

- 2.5. Main treatment types relating to complaints raised:

### Treatment types giving rise to complaint



<sup>1</sup> Note: The DCS remit is only to recover the full cost, or equivalent treatment, for patients – we are not able to engage with requests for compensation beyond the cost of treatment.

- 2.6. During Q3 there were 2 complaints regarding fixed braces, 10 regarding removable braces. 6 complaints regarding implant retained crowns, 5 implant retained full dentures, 2 implant retained partial dentures and 5 regarding the actual implant. 86% (88) of the complaints raised related to the more costly forms of treatment such as dentures, braces, bridges, crowns and implants.

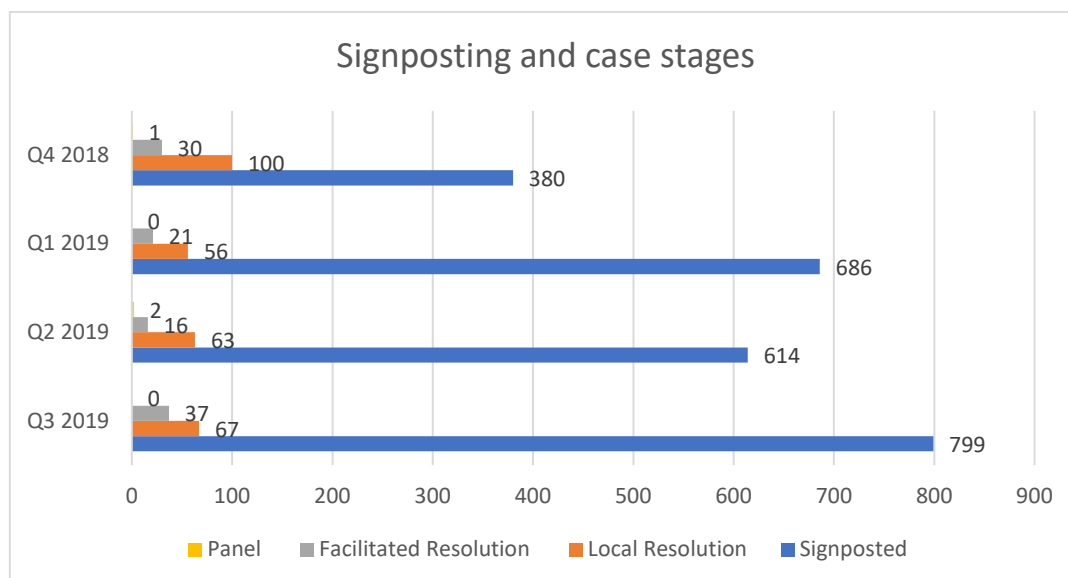
### **Geography of complaints**

- 2.7. The geographic region that private complaints predominately arose from over the last 12 months is London. London is consistently the highest region that generates complaints this is due to the high concentration of private dental practices within the area coupled with higher expectations, particularly for the most expensive treatments/providers.
- 2.8. The number of complaints raised in each country is reported below. Across the United Kingdom this equates to approximately 1.5 complaints per million people raising a complaint in relation to private treatment.

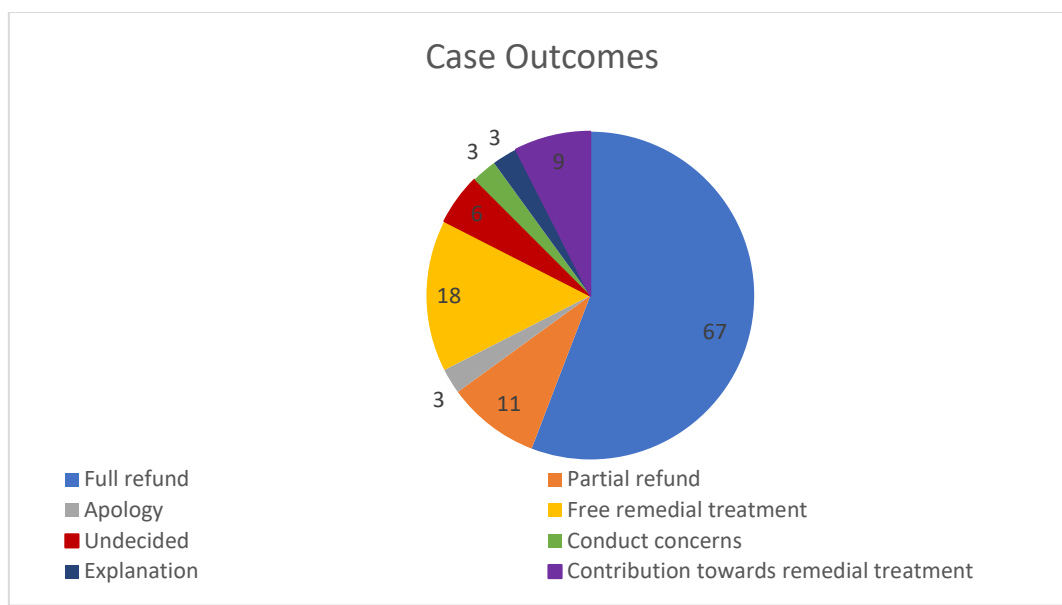
Country	Complaint (cases) Numbers Q3	People in each country (M)	Complaints per M population	Registrants in Each country	Complaints per 000 Registrants
England	98	56.6	1.7	94,388	1.04
Scotland	3	5.45	0.6	11,685	0.26
N Ireland	0	1.8	0	3,976	-
Wales	2	3.18	0.6	5,259	038
Chanel Islands	0	0.16	0	464	-
Total cases	103	67.5	1.5	111,796	0.92

### **Outcomes**

- 2.9. In Q3 2019, 112 cases concluded 84% of all cases resolved within 3 months. The average resolution time for Q3 was 47 days. We continue to resolve the overwhelming majority of cases we open.
- 2.10. 60% of complaints were resolved at local resolution, 33% at the facilitated resolution stage and 7% of cases were referred to a panel, transferred to FtP or closed as the patient chose to pursue alternative mechanisms for resolution.



- 2.11. For resolved cases the most common outcome is to obtain a refund to enable the patient to have their treatment completed by another dental professional. 60% of the resolved cases were resolved following a full refund by the dental professional. During Q3 this amounted to £62,426 from the £76,889 initially requested.
- 2.12. Free remedial treatment was the second most common outcome with 16% of complaints resolved followed by 8% of complaints being resolved by way a partial refund. When assessing a complaint, the complaints officer will detail each outcome the patient is seeking, often a dental professional will apologise for the distress or need for the patient to complaint without request. It could be considered that by the dental professional apologising for the upset that may have been caused by the need to complain, without prompting, makes the patient feel they have been listened to and received a sincere and authentic apology and therefore do not need to pursue this further as an outcome.



Note: Patients can raise more than 1 complaint/issue and outcome for each aspect of the complaint.

### **FtP Referrals**

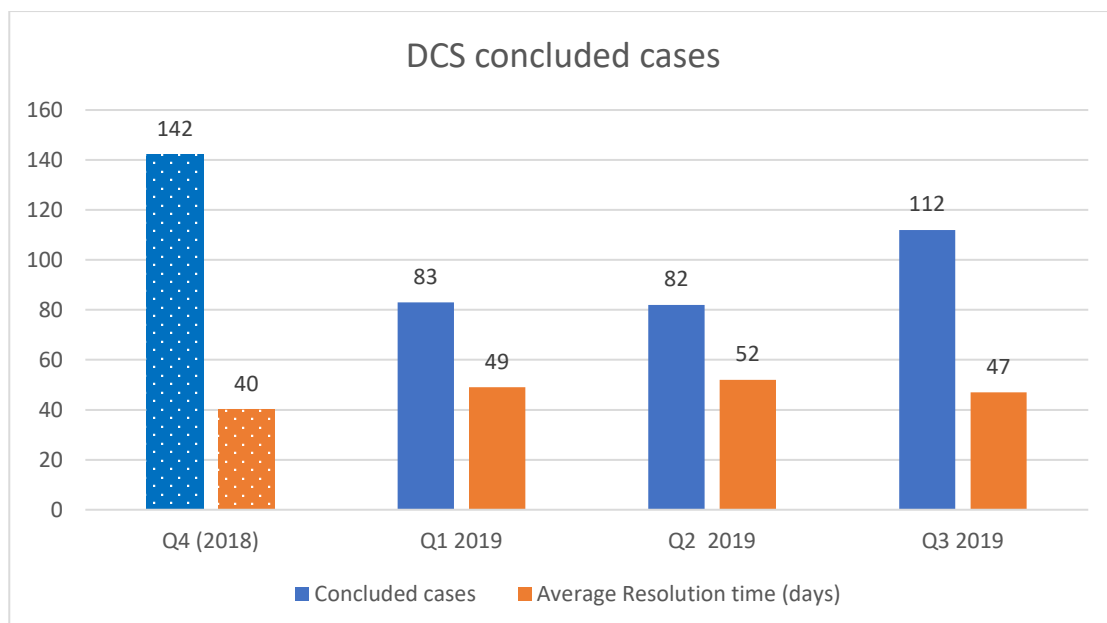
- 2.13. There were 14 FTP referrals representing 1.4% of enquiries in Q3. Of these, 12 were subsequently moved forward to Casework Assessment for investigation.

### **Illegal Practice Referrals**

- 2.14. 3 referrals were made from DCS to the In-House Appeals and Criminal Enforcement team during Q3 these were in relation to tooth whitening and online orthodontics.

### **Performance**

- 2.15. The number of cases concluded by DCS in Q3 are set out below in figure 6. The average resolution time has dropped to 47 days at the end of Q3. This is an improvement of 5 days in comparison to Q2. During Q3 DCS have been assisting with a single complex case arising at the end of the quarter involving multiple patients where a discussion regarding liability between the current practice owner, the previous owner (the practice went into administration), a registrant who has remained with the practice and the respective indemnity organisations. This has resulted in extended communications with patients seeking redress and will impact the Q4 performance. Following no progression of the cases as neither party would take ownership of the complaints, the decision was made at the start of Q4 to refer 8 cases to FTP in the interest of the public.



- 2.16. Concluded cases are complaints that have closed at any of the four operational stages. No cases were progressed to the panel meeting stage during Q3.
- 2.17. When cases are closed, feedback forms are sent to patients and dental professionals to obtain feedback on the service that they have received. In Q2, the overall level of customer satisfaction showed 83% of respondents found the service they received to be good or excellent. This has improved to 100% satisfaction in Q3. All feedback is fed back into the DCS Review to enable the DCS to fulfil its objectives where possible.

#### **NHS Complaints signposting**

- 2.18. Following signposting to the NHS by DCS feedback is sought as to the outcome of complaints resolution within the NHS. 20 Automated feedback requests were sent by DCS during Q3. With only 1 response received during this period, the patient reported that the matter with the dental professional was still unresolved.

#### **DCS Review Phase 2**

- 2.19. During the period DCS completed their independent survey with dental professionals. This work enabled DCS to gain a clear understanding of the Dental Professionals' experience of the service and see where we can improve. Initial findings are that despite some concerns regarding the DCS as a 'patient champion' all aspects of the service had a net favourable score. The full findings will be published in Q4.
- 2.20. We are now preparing to evaluate alternative delivery models against assessment criteria developed in conjunction with the project team mapping the system wide handling of complaints to ensure that any future provision can provide the requisite service. The analysis will also incorporate a Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluation.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. The Council is invited to note the performance of DCS in Q3 of 2019.