The initial Scope of Practice (SoP) Document was launched by the GDC in April 2009; this was primarily for use by the dental team. The GDC explains that the “Scope of Practice is a way of describing what you are trained and competent to do. It describes the areas in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practice safely and effectively in the best interests of patients”.

In November last year the GDC began a review of its SoP document; the purpose of this review is to evaluate the effectiveness of the document; do the dental profession find it useful? An online consultation was set up on the GDC earlier in the year to seek feedback. This is still available now and registrants are being urged to go online and take part. The closing date for the consultation is 31st December 2011 and can be found at www.gdc-uk.org.

The GDC are applying an evidence-based rationale to the Scope of Practice (SoP) Review Project. At the SoP Review Working Group meeting on 6 July, it was discussed that good quality evidence must be produced to support what goes in to the revised Scope of Practice document. Concerns were raised by the GDC Research Manager to whether the online consultation would be sufficient in gathering evidence from a wide range of the dental profession; all working group members agreed and it was decided a package of evidence gathering methods must be used to stratify the consultation. It is also planned that additional questionnaires will be available via the various professional associations.

Whatever methods are adopted for use, they will only be valuable if as many registrants as possible respond to the consultation and provide their feedback. This will allow the SoPWG to make the necessary suggestions and recommendations to the GDC Council. Who ultimately decide what goes in and what stays out of the SoP document.

Owing to some aspects of SoP overlapping the work of the Standards Committee, the timescale for the SoP has been pushed back three months; this is to ensure the new SoP document will encompass current and up to date advice and guidance. The Standards Committee are currently considering options regarding direct access – that dental hygienists and dental therapists could see patients without referral from a dentist. Possible fundamental changes such as this would need to be included in the reviewed SoP document.

So go on have your say, get involved and help ensure high quality patient care is delivered by a diverse multi-disciplinary and forward thinking dental team.

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About the author
Angie McBain began work as a dental nurse in general practice in Scotland, but changed track to gain an HND in Fashion. She gained the NERDN National Certificate in 1989 whilst working in General Practice in London; then subsequently worked in the Oral-Maxillofacial/Ortho Dept of Bedford Hospital, obtaining a Distinction, and the Roche award in the NERDN Certificate in Dental Sedation Nursing. After completing the Stage One FAYCT, Angie began teaching at her local college, becoming an NVQ Assessor, obtaining the D5/75, the Stage 2 FAYCT and the V1 internal verifier’s awards. She is now lead Dental Nurse Tutor for Barnfield College, Luton and wrote the first Foundation Degrees in both Dental Nursing and Dental Practice Management for the College/University of Bedfordshire. She holds the City & Guilds Licence in Dental Nursing and the Certificate in Education. Angie is also the ICP Tutor for the East of England Diploma; she was the recipient of the 2010 BADN Outstanding Contribution to Dental Nursing Award and is a Fellow of BADN, she is currently studying for the Post Graduate Certificate in Dental Education.