

'Customer care support is no longer available': Smile Direct Club closes down

The online dentistry firm Smile Direct Club has shut down its global operations months after filing for bankruptcy in the US, leaving customers in the middle of treatment in limbo.

The company founded in 2014 had been providing its customers with affordable clear aligners remotely, without the need to see a dentist.

But its winding down means many of its customers who were in the midst of treatment have been left in the dark.

A statement on Smile Direct Club's website reads: "Smile Direct Club has made the incredibly difficult decision to wind down its global operations, effective immediately.

"For new customers interested in Smile Direct Club services, thank you for your interest, but aligner treatment is no longer available through our telehealth platform.

"For existing customers, we apologise for the inconvenience, but customer care support is no longer available."

Existing customers were told that they would have to consult their doctor or local dentist if they wished to continue their aligner treatment.

The US-based company concluded by thanking customers for letting them "improve over two million smiles and lives".

It comes several months after it filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy in the US, which aims to give a company breathing space for a limited time so it can attempt to sort out its finances.

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Efforts to get Smile Direct Club's founders to provide fresh capital and buy it out of bankruptcy failed, leading to the company to announce its closure on Friday.

Customers have taken to social media to voice their frustrations.

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One Facebook user said they had four weeks left of their aligner treatment when the company went bust, adding that their treatment so far has been rendered "pointless" because their teeth will revert to their original position.

They also spoke out against the removal of Smile Direct Club's "lifetime guarantee," one of the company's most appealing features.

The company's lifetime guarantee promised customers a 30-day money-back promise, prorated refunds after those 30 days, free aligner refinements during treatment and free touch-ups for life.

Their FAQ section covering the lifetime guarantee once read: "We'll work with you before, during, and after treatment to make sure you get the results you want – at no additional cost."

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That section has been replaced with the following statement:
“Effective immediately the Lifetime Smile Guarantee no longer exists.”

It adds that there will be more information to come about customer refunds and additional steps they can take once the bankruptcy process has progressed.

The company was \$900m in debt when it filed for bankruptcy, according to Bloomberg, having never turned a profit since it went public in 2019.