

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PAPERS****Professional Conduct Committee  
Review Hearing****2 May 2024****Name:** PARTRIDGE, Melanie**Registration number:** 200278**Case number:** CAS-196855

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**General Dental Council:** Rosie Geddes, IHLPS (not present)**Registrant:** Not present  
Not represented

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**Fitness to practise:** Impaired by reason of misconduct**Outcome:** Suspension extended (with a review)**Duration:** 12 months

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**Committee members:** Gregory Heath (Dentist) (Chair)  
Alastair Smith (Lay)  
Caroline Ross (Dental Care Professional)**Legal adviser:** Jenny Appleton**Committee Secretary:** Gareth Llewellyn

1. Neither party is present at this resumed hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC). The hearing is being conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams in line with the GDC's current practice. The GDC has invited the Committee to conduct the hearing on the papers in the absence of both parties.

**Purpose of hearing**

2. The purpose of today's hearing is to review a substantive direction of suspension first imposed on Miss Partridge's registration by the PCC on 11 May 2022. The hearing is being held in accordance with section 36Q of the Dentists Act 1984 (as amended) ('the Act').

**Service**

3. The Committee first considered whether service has been properly effected in accordance with the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 ('the Rules').
4. In their written submissions the GDC submitted that Miss Partridge has been properly notified of today's hearing in accordance with Rule 28 of the Rules. The Committee noted that a notice of hearing was sent to Miss Partridge's registered address on 18 March 2024 using the Royal Mail's Special Delivery postal service. The notice set out the date, time and venue of the hearing, as well as confirming the nature of the hearing and the powers available to the Committee. The notice was returned to the GDC's offices by the Royal Mail on 19 March 2024 with the information that the addressee was unknown and that the item was refused. Copies of the notice were also sent to Miss Partridge by first class post and email.
5. The Committee accepted the advice provided by the Legal Adviser. Having regard to the GDC's submissions and the evidence placed before it the Committee was satisfied that service has been properly effected in accordance with the Rules.

**Proceeding in absence**

6. The Committee then went on to consider whether to exercise its discretion to proceed in the absence of Miss Partridge in accordance with Rule 54 of the Rules. It was mindful that the discretion to proceed in the absence of a registrant must be exercised with the utmost care and caution. In their written submissions the GDC invited the Committee to proceed in the absence of Miss Partridge.
7. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser. It determined that it would be appropriate and fair to proceed in the absence of Miss Partridge. The Committee considers that the GDC has made every effort to secure Miss Partridge's attendance. The Committee considers that an adjournment, which has not been sought, would be unlikely to secure Miss Partridge's attendance. The Committee was also mindful of the public interest in the expeditious consideration of this case.

**Existing order**

8. In May 2022 the PCC held a hearing of inquiry in relation to allegations relating to Miss Partridge's fitness to practise. The Committee found that Miss Partridge had failed to protect the confidentiality of a GP and a patient, and had provided false information to her employer about those matters. The Committee found that the provision of such false information amounted to dishonest conduct. The Committee also found that Miss Partridge had failed to co-operate with the GDC's investigation, and had failed to maintain appropriate standards of

behaviour in relation to the content of emails that she sent to the GDC. The Committee went on to find that Miss Partridge's fitness to practise was impaired by reason of misconduct on public protection and public interest grounds, and that her registration should be suspended for a period of six months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that period of suspended registration.

9. The direction of suspended registration was reviewed by the PCC on 23 November 2022. The PCC determined that Miss Partridge's fitness to practise remained impaired, and that her registration should again be suspended for a period of six months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that period of suspended registration.
10. The direction of extended suspended registration was next, and most recently, reviewed by the PCC on 26 May 2023. The PCC determined that Miss Partridge's fitness to practise remained impaired, and that her registration should be suspended for a period of 12 months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that period of suspended registration.
11. It falls to this Committee to review the suspension.

### **Committee's determination**

12. The Committee has carefully considered all the information presented to it, including the submissions of the GDC. It noted that in their written submissions the GDC submitted that Miss Partridge's fitness to practise remains impaired, and that it would be appropriate to extend her period of suspended registration by 12 months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that further period.
13. In its deliberations the Committee has had regard to the GDC's *Guidance for the Practice Committees, including Indicative Sanctions Guidance* (October 2016, updated December 2020). The Committee has accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

### **Impairment**

14. The Committee has determined that Miss Partridge's fitness to practise remains impaired. The Committee has not been provided with any evidence from Miss Partridge to suggest that she has developed insight into, or has taken steps to remedy, her misconduct. The Committee considers that there is therefore a continued risk of Miss Partridge repeating her misconduct, and with it a risk of harm to the public.
15. The Committee also considers that a finding of impairment is again required in the wider public interest in order to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour and to maintain public trust and confidence in the profession on account of the nature and seriousness of Miss Partridge's unremediated misconduct. The Committee considers that a reasonable and informed member of the public would be shocked and troubled if a finding of impairment were not made in the particular circumstances of this case.

### **Sanction**

16. The Committee next considered whether it would be appropriate to revoke the suspension, or to replace the suspension with a direction of conditional registration.
17. The Committee considered that revoking the suspension would place the public and the public interest at unwarranted risk of harm. The Committee is also not able to identify conditions which would adequately meet the risks of harm that it has identified, particularly as Miss Partridge is not engaging with these proceedings. There is simply no information

before the Committee to suggest that Miss Partridge would comply with conditions, even if they were capable of being formulated.

18. The Committee then went on to consider whether to extend the extant direction of suspension. The Committee determined that a further period of suspended registration is the appropriate and proportionate outcome in the particular circumstances of this case. The Committee has determined that Miss Partridge's suspension should be extended by a further period of 12 months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that extended period of suspension.
19. Although this Committee in no way wishes to bind or fetter the Committee which will review the suspension, it considers that the reviewing Committee may be assisted by evidence of Miss Partridge's meaningful engagement with the GDC and the regulatory process, a reflective statement demonstrating her insight into, and understanding of, her failings, and an update about Miss Partridge's current circumstances and her future intentions in relation to her registration.

### **Right of appeal**

20. Miss Partridge will have 28 days from the date on which notice of this decision is deemed to have been served on her to appeal against this decision. Should she decide to appeal, the existing direction of suspension will remain in force until the resolution of any such appeal. Should she decide not to appeal, the current suspension will take effect on the date on which it would otherwise expire.
21. That concludes this case for today.