

HEARING HELD IN PUBLIC

Professional Conduct Committee Initial Hearing

27 January to 2 February 2026

Name: SYMES, Lucy Ann

Registration number: 234518

Case number: CAS-204551

General Dental Council: James Halliday, counsel (27 to 30 January 2026)
Eleanor Curzon, counsel (2 February 2026)
Instructed by Rosie Geddes, IHLPS

Registrant: Not present
Not represented

Fitness to practise: Impaired by reason of misconduct

Outcome: Suspended with immediate suspension (with a review)

Duration: Six months

Immediate order: Immediate suspension order

Committee members: Kerry McKeivitt (Lay) (Chair)
Matthew Smith (Dentist)
Avril Fraser (Dental Care Professional)

Legal adviser: Melissa Coutino (27 January 2026)
Richard Ferry Swainson (28, 29 and 30 January and
2 February 2026)

Committee Secretary: Gareth Llewellyn

Determination on preliminary matters – 28 January 2026

Name: SYMES, Lucy Ann

Registration number: 234518

1. This is a hearing before the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC). The hearing is being held remotely using Microsoft Teams in line with the Dental Professionals Hearings Service's current practice.
2. Miss Symes is not present and is not represented in her absence. James Halliday of counsel, instructed by Rosie Geddes of the General Dental Council's (GDC's) In-House Legal Presentation Service (IHLPS), appears for the GDC.

The charge

3. The charge that Miss Symes faces at this hearing reads as follows:

That being registered as a dental care professional Lucy Symes's (234518) fitness to practise is impaired in that:

1. Between 29 August 2023 and 30 August 2023, whilst attending Royal United Hospital with an admitted patient, you interfered with the patient's treatment, including by;

- a) Removing a cannula that was, or had been, providing intravenous medication from the patient;*
- b) Providing aspirin to the patient; and*
- c) Speaking on behalf of the patient.*

2. On 30 August 2023, you were hostile and confrontational to members of staff at Royal United Hospital including by;

- a) Stating, 'You need to watch what you say to people and who you say it to', or words to that effect;*
- b) Stating, 'You need to be careful my sister works here' or words to that effect;*
- c) Swearing; and*
- d) Stating, 'it is my f'ing birthday and didn't want to be here anyway' or words to that effect.*

3. On 30 August 2023 you were escorted from the premises of Royal United Hospital by security.

4. Your actions in relation to allegations 1, and 2, either taken together, in whole or in part, or individually were;

- a) Intimidating; and / or*
- b) Threatening.*

AND that by reason of the facts alleged, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

Adjournment of hearing

4. Having commenced the hearing at 1005 hours on 27 January 2026, the Committee adjourned the hearing until 1100 hours given the absence of Miss Symes. The Committee was informed that attempts had been made by the GDC and the Dental Professionals Hearings Service by email and telephone on the morning of the hearing to invite her to join the proceedings, but that she had not responded. The Committee determined that it would be appropriate to allow

more time for Miss Symes to join the hearing, and for the GDC to continue to attempt to secure her attendance.

5. The hearing resumed at 1100 hours. Mr Halliday informed the Committee that the GDC's efforts to contact Miss Symes have continued to be unsuccessful. The Committee then invited Mr Halliday's submissions as to service of the notice of hearing and proceeding in the absence of Miss Symes. The Committee also heard the advice of the Legal Adviser on those matters concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard.
6. Prior to the Committee commencing its deliberations on service and proceeding in absence, the Committee returned in session to announce that the Legal Adviser was unable to continue with the hearing, and that, in order for arrangements to be made to replace the Legal Adviser, the hearing would adjourn until 0930 hours on 28 January 2026. The Committee informed Mr Halliday that, in the circumstances, and for the purposes of continuity, the Committee would be assisted by Mr Halliday repeating his submissions on service and proceeding in absence at that time, prior to the Committee receiving the advice of the new Legal Adviser on those matters.
7. The hearing then resumed on the morning of 28 January 2026. Mr Halliday repeated his submissions on service and proceeding in absence as summarised below, and the Committee heard the legal advice of the new Legal Adviser.

Service of notice of hearing

8. Mr Halliday submitted that service of notice of this hearing has been properly effected in accordance with Rules 13 and 65 of the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 ('the Rules'). On 1 December 2025 a notice of hearing was sent to the address that Miss Symes has registered with the GDC, setting out the date and time of this hearing, as well as the fact that the hearing would be conducted remotely. The notice was sent using the Royal Mail's Special Delivery service. The Royal Mail's Track and Trace service records that the notice was delivered on the afternoon of the following day, namely 2 December 2025. A copy of the notice was also sent to Miss Symes by first class post and email.
9. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser concerning the principles to which it should have regard. The Committee determined that service of the notice of this hearing has been properly effected in accordance with the Rules.

Proceeding in absence

10. The Committee then went on to consider whether to exercise its discretion to proceed in the absence of Miss Symes in accordance with Rule 54 of the Rules. The Committee heard that Mr Halliday on behalf of the GDC invites the Committee to proceed in Miss Symes's absence.
11. The Committee accepted the advice provided by the Legal Adviser concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard. The Committee was mindful that its discretion to conduct a hearing in the absence of a registrant should be exercised with the utmost care and caution. After careful consideration the Committee determined that it would be fair and appropriate to proceed in Miss Symes's absence. The Committee is mindful of the potential inconvenience that would be caused to the GDC, and the witnesses whom it intends to call, were it to postpone the hearing. The Committee considers that the GDC has made every effort to secure Miss Symes's attendance at this hearing, and it considers that Miss Symes has voluntarily absented herself from the hearing. In the Committee's judgement an adjournment, which has not been requested, would be unlikely to secure her attendance. The Committee was also mindful of the public interest in an expeditious consideration of the allegations that have led to this hearing.

Admissions

12. Notwithstanding the absence of Miss Symes, Mr Halliday invited the Committee to consider whether to find the facts alleged at sub-heads of charge 1 (a) and 3 proved on the basis of the admissions that Miss Symes set out in her response to the heads of charge on a 'standard directions response form' signed and dated 11 October 2025. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard.
13. The Committee was satisfied that the representations made in Miss Symes's response constitute admissions to sub-heads of charge 1 (a) and 3. The Committee determined and announced that the facts alleged at heads of charge 1 (a) and 3 were proved on the basis of Miss Symes's admissions in accordance with Rule 17 (4).

Findings of fact – 30 January 2026

Background to the case and summary of allegations

14. The allegations giving rise to this hearing arise out of an incident that is said to have taken place on the night of 29 and 30 August 2023. The alleged events occurred whilst Miss Symes was accompanying a patient who had been admitted to hospital in relation to an ear, nose and throat-related (ENT) issue.
15. The GDC alleges that Miss Symes interfered with the patient's treatment, in that she removed a cannula that was, or had been, providing intravenous medication to the patient; that Miss Symes provided aspirin to the patient; and that Miss Symes spoke on behalf of the patient. The GDC alleges that such conduct was intimidating and threatening.
16. The GDC further contends that Miss Symes acted in a hostile and confrontational manner towards members of staff at the hospital in terms of the statements that she made to them, which included instances of swearing. The GDC again contends that such conduct was intimidating and threatening.
17. It is further alleged that Miss Symes was subsequently escorted from hospital premises by security.

Evidence

18. The Committee has been provided with documentary material in relation to the heads of charge that Miss Symes faces, including the witness statements and documentary exhibits of a staff nurse at the hospital in question, who is referred to for the purposes of these proceedings as Witness 1; those of a senior sister at the hospital, who was referred to as Witness 2; those of a safeguarding lead at the hospital, who is referred to as Witness 3; those of a caseworker in the GDC's Fitness to Practise team, who is referred to as Witness 4; and those of a paralegal in the GDC's In-House Legal Presentation Service, who is referred to as Witness 5.
19. The Committee has also been provided with Miss Symes's witness statements in the form of two emails sent to the GDC on 13 October 2025; her response to the allegations on a 'standard directions response form' dated 11 October 2025; testimonials from two colleagues; and photographs and a video clip, which were undated and which appear to relate to an unrelated incident, provided by Miss Symes.
20. The Committee heard oral evidence from Witness 1, Witness 2 and Witness 3.

Further representations from Miss Symes

21. At the conclusion of the GDC factual case on 28 January 2026 the Committee was provided with an email from Miss Symes that she sent to the GDC at 1220 hours on that date. In her email Miss Symes apologised for the delay in informing the GDC that she would not be in attendance. Miss Symes also invited the Committee to put certain questions to Witness 1, Witness 2 and Witness 3. The Committee had by that time finished hearing the evidence of each of those witnesses, and had duly released them from their respective oaths.
22. The Committee determined that there were insufficient grounds to recall any of the witnesses. The Committee considered that the first matter raised would have required questions to have been asked of the witnesses that would have been inadmissible because they would have invited opinion evidence. The second matter raised by Miss Symes about her wellbeing was not relevant to the matters alleged. The third matter raised, relating to the alleged provision of aspirin as referred to at sub-head of charge 1 (b), had been thoroughly explored with the witnesses during their evidence.

Committee's findings of fact

23. The Committee has taken into account all the evidence presented to it, both written and oral. It has considered the submissions made by Mr Halliday on behalf of the GDC, as well as the written representations provided by Miss Symes. The Committee has had regard to the GDC's *Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees* (January 2026).
24. The Committee has accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard. The Committee is mindful that the burden of proof lies with the GDC, and has considered the heads and sub-heads of charge against the civil standard of proof, that is to say, the balance of probabilities. The Committee has considered each head and sub-head of charge separately, although some of its findings will be announced together.
25. I will now announce the Committee's findings in relation to each head and-sub head of charge:

1.	<i>Between 29 August 2023 and 30 August 2023, whilst attending Royal United Hospital with an admitted patient, you interfered with the patient's treatment, including by;</i>
1. (a)	<i>Removing a cannula that was, or had been, providing intravenous medication from the patient;</i> Admitted and proved
1. (b)	<i>Providing aspirin to the patient; and</i> Proved
	In approaching this sub-head of charge, the Committee took account of the written evidence of Witness 1, who was on duty as a staff nurse on the hospital ward to which the patient in question had been admitted. In her witness statement Witness 1 stated that, although she could see a written entry referring to Miss Symes providing aspirin to the patient in the patient's notes, she was not able to recall any such event and was not able to comment further. The relevant entry in the patient's notes was made by Witness 2, which were written in retrospect later on 30 August 2023. The entry records that Miss Symes stated that she gave two

	<p>aspirin to the patient. Witness 1 stated that she assumed that the entry in the patient's notes was correct.</p> <p>The Committee also took account of the written evidence of Witness 2, who was on duty as a senior sister on the hospital ward to which the patient in question had been admitted. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Witness 1 had informed her that Miss Symes had given the patient two aspirin.</p> <p>The Committee further took account of the written evidence of Witness 3, who was on duty as a safeguarding lead. In her witness statement Witness 3 stated that Witness 2 informed her that Miss Symes had given tablets to the patient. Witness 3 stated that, when she and Witness 2 spoke with Miss Symes, Miss Symes stated that she had given the patient medication from a bag. In her oral evidence to the Committee Witness 3 stated that the bag may have been Miss Symes's handbag.</p> <p>In her unsigned and unsworn witness statement of 13 October 2025 Miss Symes stated that the patient whom she was accompanying had taken two aspirin from her own bag on account of the pain that she was experiencing, and that she informed the attending nurse, whom the Committee understands to be a reference to Witness 1. Miss Symes denied that she had given any medication to the patient.</p> <p>The Committee has placed particular weight on the near-contemporaneous written notes of Witness 2 as referred to above. The Committee notes that this written evidence is supported by the written and oral evidence of Witness 1, Witness 2 and Witness 3 as summarised above. The Committee finds that the evidence presented to it is sufficient to demonstrate that Miss Symes provided aspirin to the patient in question. The Committee noted the written statement of Miss Symes as summarised in the previous paragraph, but was not able to place weight on this account, as Miss Symes was not present at the hearing to give sworn evidence on this point.</p> <p>The Committee then went on to consider whether Miss Symes's giving of aspirin to the patient in question amounted to her interfering with the patient's treatment.</p> <p>The Committee considers that Miss Symes did interfere with the patient's treatment by providing aspirin to the patient. The Committee notes that the patient was receiving treatment, including medication in the form of IV paracetamol, and that Miss Symes's provision of aspirin fell outside of that prescribed treatment, and constitutes interference with that treatment.</p> <p>The Committee therefore finds the facts alleged at sub-head of charge 1 (b) proved.</p>
<p>1. (c)</p>	<p><i>Speaking on behalf of the patient.</i></p> <p>Not proved</p>
	<p>In approaching this sub-head of charge the Committee took particular account of the written evidence of Witness 2. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Miss Symes spoke on behalf of the patient. Miss Symes's involvement is also recorded in the patient's contemporaneous and near-contemporaneous notes, where Miss Symes's direct involvement by speaking on behalf of the patient is documented. This includes comments about the patient requiring a computed tomography (CT) scan. The Committee considers that the evidence</p>

	<p>presented to it is sufficient for it to find that Miss Symes spoke on behalf of the patient.</p> <p>Having determined that Miss Symes spoke on behalf of the patient, the Committee went on to consider whether this amounted to her interfering with the patient's treatment.</p> <p>The Committee considers that the GDC has not demonstrated to the standard required that Miss Symes's speaking on behalf of the patient amounted to an interference with the patient's treatment. The Committee considers that the GDC has not adduced sufficient evidence to prove that Miss Symes's speaking on behalf of the patient had a material effect on the patient's treatment.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Committee finds the facts alleged at sub-head of charge 1 (c) not proved.</p>
2.	<p><i>On 30 August 2023, you were hostile and confrontational to members of staff at Royal United Hospital including by;</i></p>
2. (a)	<p><i>Stating, 'You need to watch what you say to people and who you say it to', or words to that effect;</i></p> <p>Proved</p>
	<p>In approaching this sub-head of charge the Committee took particular account of the written evidence of Witness 2. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Miss Symes stated to her, '<i>you need to watch what you say to people and who you say it to</i>'. This account is corroborated by Witness 2's near-contemporaneous entry in the patient's notes, with words similar to, or to the effect of, the phrase alleged at this sub-head of charge recorded in those notes.</p> <p>The Committee accepts this unchallenged evidence, supported as it is by the near-contemporaneous entries that Witness 2 made in the patient's notes, and finds that this evidence is of sufficient credibility to demonstrate that Miss Symes spoke the phrase alleged at this sub-head of charge.</p> <p>The Committee then went on to consider whether this proven conduct amounted to behaviour that was, as alleged, hostile and confrontational. The Committee again took account of the evidence of Witness 2, who in her evidence describes hostile behaviour on the part of Miss Symes. The Committee considers that Miss Symes's behaviour as alleged at this head of charge goes towards, and constitutes, hostile and confrontational behaviour.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Committee finds the facts alleged at sub-head of charge 2 (a) proved.</p>
2. (b)	<p><i>Stating, 'You need to be careful my sister works here' or words to that effect</i></p> <p>Proved</p>
	<p>The Committee took account of the written evidence of Witness 2. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Miss Symes stated to her, '<i>you need to be careful my sister works here</i>'. This account is corroborated by Witness 2's near-contemporaneous entry in the patient's notes, with words similar to, or to the effect of, the phrase alleged at this head of charge recorded in those notes.</p>

	<p>In her unsigned and unsworn witness statement of 13 October 2025 Miss Symes stated that she does not have a sister who works at the hospital in question, which implies that she did not make the alleged comment. The Committee noted this evidence, but was not able to place weight on this account, as Miss Symes was not present at the hearing to give sworn evidence on this point.</p> <p>The Committee accepts the evidence of Witness 2, supported as it is by the near-contemporaneous entries that she made in the patient's notes. The Committee finds that the evidence adduced by the GDC is of sufficient credibility to demonstrate that Miss Symes spoke the phrase alleged at this head of charge.</p> <p>The Committee then went on to consider whether this proven conduct amounted to behaviour that was, as alleged, hostile and confrontational. The Committee again took account of the evidence of Witness 2, who in her evidence describes hostile behaviour on the part of Miss Symes. The Committee considers that Miss Symes's behaviour as alleged at this sub-head of charge goes towards, and constitutes, hostile and confrontational behaviour.</p>
2. (c)	<p><i>Swearing; and</i></p> <p>Proved</p>
	<p>The Committee approached this sub-head of charge on the basis that the swearing alleged at this sub-head of charge is different and distinct from the alleged instance of swearing that forms the basis of sub-head of charge 2 (d) below. In other words, the Committee accepted that a finding of fact at head of charge 2 (d) does not mean that a finding of fact at sub-head of charge 2 (c) necessarily follows, although any such finding at sub-head of charge 2 (d) may be taken into consideration at sub-head of charge 2 (c). The Committee gave consideration to sub-head of charge 2 (d) before returning to sub-head of charge 2 (c).</p> <p>The Committee took account of the evidence of Witness 2. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Miss Symes's '<i>behaviour was manic and involved shouting and swearing</i>', and that Miss Symes was '<i>gobbing off</i>', which Witness 2 clarified in her oral evidence to mean swearing.</p> <p>The Committee notes that there is no reference in the patient's notes to Miss Symes swearing, save for the reference to the comment that forms the subject of sub-head of charge 2 (d) below. The Committee also notes that Witness 1 and Witness 3 do not recall Miss Symes swearing. Furthermore, Witness 2 had more interactions with Miss Symes than the other witnesses, and at times when the other witnesses were not present. Accordingly, the fact that Witness 1 and Witness 3 do not recall swearing does not undermine the evidence of Witness 2. Therefore, and noting that Witness 2's evidence is unchallenged, the Committee considers that the evidence presented to it is of sufficient cogency and credibility for the Committee to determine that Miss Symes did indeed swear, as alleged at this sub-head of charge.</p> <p>The Committee then went on to consider whether this proven conduct amounted to behaviour that was, as alleged, hostile and confrontational. The Committee again took account of the evidence of Witness 2, who in her evidence describes hostile behaviour on the part of Miss Symes. The Committee considers that Miss Symes's behaviour as alleged at this sub-head of charge goes towards, and constitutes, hostile and confrontational behaviour.</p>

2. (d)	<p><i>Stating, 'it is my f'ing birthday and didn't want to be here anyway' or words to that effect.</i></p> <p>Proved</p>
	<p>In approaching this sub-head of charge the Committee took particular account of the written evidence of Witness 2. In her witness statement Witness 2 stated that Miss Symes stated to her that it was her '<i>f'ing birthday</i>', and that she did not want to be there anyway. This account is corroborated by Witness 2's near-contemporaneous entry in the patient's notes, with words similar to, or to the effect of, the phrase alleged at this sub-head of charge. Witness 2 provided this same evidence in her oral evidence.</p> <p>The Committee accepts the evidence of Witness 2, supported as it is by the near-contemporaneous entries that she made in the patient's notes. The Committee finds that the evidence adduced by the GDC is sufficient to demonstrate that Miss Symes spoke the phrase alleged at this sub-head of charge.</p> <p>The Committee then went on to consider whether this proven conduct amounted to behaviour that was, as alleged, hostile and confrontational. The Committee again took account of the evidence of Witness 2, who in her evidence describes hostile behaviour on the part of Miss Symes. The Committee considers that Miss Symes's behaviour as alleged at this sub-head of charge goes towards, and constitutes, hostile and confrontational behaviour.</p>
3.	<p><i>On 30 August 2023 you were escorted from the premises of Royal United Hospital by security.</i></p> <p>Admitted and proved</p>
4.	<p><i>Your actions in relation to allegations 1, and 2, either taken together, in whole or in part, or individually were;</i></p>
4. (a)	<p><i>Intimidating; and / or</i></p> <p>Proved in relation to head of charge 2 only</p>
4. (b)	<p><i>Threatening.</i></p> <p>Proved in relation to head of charge 2 only</p>
	<p>The Committee finds that the GDC has not demonstrated to the standard required that Miss Symes's proven conduct at head of charge 1 was intimidating and/or threatening. The Committee found that the GDC has not adduced sufficient evidence to prove that Miss Symes's removal of a cannula and provision of aspirin constituted behaviour that was intimidating or threatening.</p> <p>The Committee does however find that Miss Symes' hostile and confrontational conduct at sub-heads of charge 2 (a), 2 (b), 2 (c) and 2 (d), both individually and collectively, represent actions that were both intimidating and threatening. In reaching this conclusion the Committee had regard to the evidence of Witness 2 and Witness 3. Witness 2 stated in her evidence that she perceived Miss Symes's statements to be threats, and her manner when making those statements to be '<i>threatening and intimidating</i>', leading her to the conclusion that Miss Symes was</p>

being 'hostile, aggressive and threatening'. Witness 3 gave evidence of Miss Symes's 'verbally aggressive/combatative' conduct, and behaving in a threatening manner towards Witness 2.

The Committee accepts as credible the evidence of Witness 2 and Witness 3 as to the intimidating and threatening nature of the statements that it found Miss Symes made. Accordingly, the Committee finds the facts alleged at sub-heads of charge 4 (a) and 4 (b) proved in relation to head of charge 2.

26. We move to stage two.

Determination on misconduct, impairment and sanction – 2 February 2026

27. Following the handing down of the Committee's findings of fact on 30 January 2026, the hearing proceeded to stage two; that is to say, misconduct, impairment and sanction.

Proceedings at stage two

28. The Committee has considered all the evidence presented to it, both oral and written. It has taken into account the submissions made by Mr Halliday on behalf of the GDC, and the written representations made in advance of the hearing by Miss Symes. In its deliberations the Committee has had regard to the GDC's *Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees* (January 2026). The Committee has accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard.

Evidence at stage two

29. The Committee received no further evidence at this stage of the hearing.

Summary of submissions

30. Mr Halliday on behalf of the GDC invited the Committee to find that the proven facts amount to misconduct. Mr Halliday submitted that Miss Symes poses a risk to the public, and that, accordingly, her fitness to practise is currently impaired. Mr Halliday further submitted that a finding of impairment is also required in the wider public interest. Mr Halliday invited the Committee to consider imposing a sanction of suspension for a period of between nine and 12 months, with a review hearing to take place prior to the end of that period.

Fitness to practise history

31. Mr Halliday addressed the Committee in accordance with Rule 20 (1) (a) of the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 ('the Rules'). Mr Halliday stated that Miss Symes has no fitness to practise history with the GDC.

Misconduct

32. The Committee first considered whether the facts that it has found proved at heads and sub-heads of charge 1 (a), 1 (b), 2 (a), 2 (b), 2 (c), 2 (d), 3, 4 (a) and 4 (b) constitute misconduct. In considering this and all other matters, the Committee has exercised its own independent judgement.

33. In its deliberations the Committee has had regard to the following paragraphs of the GDC's *Standards for the Dental Team* (September 2013) in place at the time of the incidents giving rise to the facts that the Committee has found proved. These paragraphs state that as a dental care professional you must:

9.1 *Ensure that your conduct, both at work and in your personal life, justifies patients' trust in you and the public's trust in the dental profession.*

9.1.1 *You must treat all team members, other colleagues and members of the public fairly, with dignity and in line with the law.*

34. The Committee's findings of fact relate to an incident that took place on the night of 29 and 30 August 2023 whilst Miss Symes was accompanying a patient who had been admitted to hospital. The Committee has found that Miss Symes interfered with the patient's treatment, in that she removed a cannula that was, or had been, providing intravenous medication to the patient, and provided aspirin to the patient. The Committee also found that Miss Symes acted in a hostile and confrontational manner towards members of staff at the hospital in relation to statements that she made to them, which included instances of swearing. The Committee found that Miss Symes's conduct in that regard was intimidating and threatening. The Committee also found that Miss Symes was subsequently escorted from hospital premises by security.
35. In light of the findings of fact that it has made, the Committee has determined that the proven facts amount to misconduct. Miss Symes's unjustified interference with a patient's treatment, and her intimidating, threatening, hostile and confrontational behaviour towards members of staff, culminating in her being escorted from the hospital by security, represent a serious falling short of the standards reasonably to be expected of a registered dental care professional. The Committee considers that Miss Symes's acts would be viewed as deplorable by her fellow practitioners.
36. The Committee has therefore determined that the facts that it has found proved amount to misconduct.

Impairment

37. The Committee next considered whether Miss Symes's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of the misconduct that it has found. In doing so, the Committee again exercised its own independent judgement. Throughout its deliberations, the Committee has borne in mind that its overarching objective is to protect the public, which includes the protection of patients and the wider public, the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and in the regulatory process, and the declaring and upholding of proper standards of conduct and behaviour.
38. The Committee has determined that Miss Symes's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of the misconduct that it has found. The Committee has been provided with no information from Miss Symes to demonstrate that she has reflected upon, and has taken steps to remedy, her misconduct. Miss Symes does not appear to recognise that her conduct was wrong, and has not shown any insight into behaviour which is so damaging to her fitness to practise. In particular, Miss Symes does not appear to understand the risk of harm that her conduct may have posed to the patient in question, as well as the prospect of, for instance, emotional or psychological, harm that her behaviour may have presented to members of staff. In the Committee's judgement the risk of harm that her behaviour posed to members of staff is demonstrated by the fact that security guards were asked to escort her from the premises, and the Committee notes in particular that Witness 2 stated that she was used to incidents of hostility and intimidation at work, and felt particularly troubled by Miss Symes's conduct. The Committee considers that Miss Symes has put a patient, and others, at unwarranted risk of harm, and is liable to do so in the future because of her lack of insight and remediation. The Committee therefore finds that Miss Symes's fitness to practise is currently impaired on public protection grounds.

39. Furthermore, the Committee considers that a finding of impairment is also required to maintain public confidence in the profession and to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour. The Committee considers that Miss Symes has brought the profession into disrepute, and that she is liable to do so again in the future on account of her lack of insight into, and remediation of, her misconduct. The Committee particularly considers that a finding of impairment is required in the public interest because Miss Symes has breached a fundamental tenet of the profession, namely the requirement to treat people with fairness and dignity, and that Miss Symes is similarly liable to do so again on account of the absence of insight, reflection and remediation. In the Committee's judgement the public's trust and confidence in the profession, and in the regulatory process, would be significantly undermined if a finding of impairment were not made given the serious nature of Miss Symes's misconduct.
40. Accordingly, the Committee finds that Miss Symes's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of her misconduct on both public protection and public interest grounds.

Sanction

41. The Committee then determined what sanction, if any, is appropriate in light of the findings of facts, misconduct and impairment that it has made. The Committee recognises that the purpose of a sanction is not to be punitive, although it may have such an effect, but is instead imposed to protect patients and safeguard the wider public interests mentioned above.
42. In reaching its decision the Committee has again taken into account the GDC's *Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees* (January 2026). The Committee has applied the principle of proportionality, balancing the public interest with Miss Symes's own interests. The Committee has once more exercised its own independent judgement.
43. The Committee has paid careful regard to the mitigating and aggravating factors present in this case.
44. In respect of the mitigating factors that are present, the Committee notes that Miss Symes has no fitness to practise history with the GDC, that the events in question took place over one night and related to a single, albeit ongoing, incident, with some repetition of behaviour as part of that ongoing event. Although Miss Symes has referred to difficult personal circumstances at and shortly before the relevant times, the Committee found that it was unable to place weight on this information, as Miss Symes has provided little in the way of supporting information in relation to those factors.
45. The Committee took account of the two testimonials submitted by Miss Symes as referred to above. The Committee could not establish when those testimonials were written, save to note that Miss Symes emailed them to the GDC in October 2025. The authors of the testimonials do not state that they are aware of the allegations that Miss Symes faced, and do not state explicitly that they are content for their testimonials to be provided to the Committee. One of the testimonials appears to have been written for the purposes of a job reference. The Committee was therefore not able to place significant weight on these testimonials.
46. In terms of aggravating factors, the Committee notes that Miss Symes placed patients and members of staff at the risk of harm, that the patient whom she accompanied is recorded in the patient's notes as being vulnerable, that Miss Symes lacks insight into her misconduct, and has not provided any evidence of remorse and apology for, or remediation of, her misconduct.
47. The Committee has considered the range of sanctions available to it, starting with the least restrictive. In the light of its findings, the Committee considers that taking no action or issuing a reprimand would not be sufficient in the particular circumstances of this case. In the Committee's judgement the safety of the public, and public trust and confidence in the

profession and in the regulatory process, would be significantly undermined if no action were taken or if a reprimand were issued. In the Committee's judgement a more restrictive sanction is required to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour.

48. The Committee next considered whether it would be appropriate to conclude the case with a direction of conditional registration. The Committee considers that conditions cannot be formulated to adequately manage the risks to the public that it has identified. The Committee was particularly mindful that Miss Symes is not present at this hearing, which means that it is even more difficult for the Committee to identify workable conditions with which she would comply. The Committee further considers that a direction of conditional registration would not be sufficient to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour or maintain public trust and confidence in the profession.
49. The Committee next considered whether to direct a period of suspended registration. After careful consideration, the Committee has determined that it would be appropriate and proportionate to suspend Miss Symes's registration. The Committee again notes that Miss Symes lacks insight into her acts, that she is liable to repeat her misconduct, and that the public and the wider public interest would be insufficiently protected by a lesser sanction.
50. The Committee did consider whether the higher, and ultimate, sanction of erasure would be appropriate. It considered that no higher sanction than that of suspension is needed in order to address the public protection and public interest considerations referred to above. The Committee considers that, whilst Miss Symes's misconduct is serious, in the Committee's judgement the misconduct that it has identified does not connote a deep-seated and harmful professional attitudinal problem. Accordingly, a direction of erasure would be disproportionate.
51. The Committee hereby directs that Miss Symes's registration shall 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. In the Committee's judgement this period of time is likely to be required by Miss Symes to develop and demonstrate insight into, and remediation of, her misconduct, should she be minded to do so. The Committee considers that this period of time is commensurate with its findings, and in particular its identification of the need to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour and to maintain public trust and confidence in the profession. In determining that a period of six months is appropriate for the suspension of Miss Symes's registration, the Committee also took into account that Miss Symes has been suspended for a period of over two years by way of an interim order.
52. Although the Committee in no way wishes to bind or fetter the Committee which will review Miss Symes's suspension in approximately six months' time, it considers that that Committee may be assisted by Miss Symes producing a reflective statement addressing the Committee's findings. The future reviewing Committee may also be assisted by Miss Symes's engagement with the GDC, and her attendance at the review hearing, as well as updated testimonials addressing her progress in dealing with the Committee's findings.

Existing interim order

53. In accordance with Rule 21 (3) of the Rules the interim order of suspension in place on Miss Symes's registration is hereby revoked.
 54. The Committee now invites submissions as to whether Miss Symes's registration should be made subject to an immediate order of suspension, pending its substantive direction of suspension taking effect.
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Determination on immediate order – 2 February 2026

55. Ms Curzon on behalf of the GDC submitted that an immediate order of suspension is necessary to protect the public and is otherwise in the public interest.
56. The Committee has again had regard to the GDC's *Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees* (January 2026). The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser concerning its powers and the principles to which it should have regard.
57. In all the circumstances, the Committee considers that an immediate order of suspension is necessary to protect the public and is otherwise in the public interest. The Committee has determined that, given the risks to the public and the public interest that it has identified, it would not be appropriate to permit Miss Symes to practise before the substantive direction of suspension takes effect. The Committee considers that an immediate order for suspension is proportionate, and is consistent with the findings that it has set out in its foregoing determination.
58. The effect of the foregoing determination and this immediate order is that Miss Symes's registration will be suspended from the date on which notice of this decision is deemed to have been served upon her. Unless Miss Symes exercises her right of appeal, the substantive direction of suspension will be recorded in the register 28 days from the date of deemed service. Should Miss Symes decide to exercise her right of appeal, this immediate order of suspension will remain in place until the resolution of any appeal.
59. That concludes this case.