

**PUBLIC HEARING  
(part-held in private)**

**Professional Conduct Committee  
Initial Hearing**

**7-9 April 2026**

**Name:** DE BONO, Christopher Keith  
**Registration number:** 58814  
**Case number:** CAS-211467-R7B4L9

---

**General Dental Council:** Victoria Shehadeh of Counsel  
Instructed by Carly Smith of IHLPS (not present)

**Registrant:** Not present  
Joanna Flowers of Dental Protection (not present)

---

**Fitness to practise:** Impaired by reason of misconduct and convictions

**Outcome:** Suspension (with a review)

**Period:** 12 months

**Immediate order:** No immediate order

---

**Committee members:** Martin Isherwood (DCP) (Chair)  
Kavitha Vivekanantham (Dentist)  
Chantelle Findlow (Lay)

**Legal adviser:** Paul Kilcoyne

**Committee Secretary:** Paul Carson

---

### The Charge

“That being registered as a dentist:

1. On 8 September 2023, you were convicted at Wellingborough Magistrates’ Court of an offence of driving a motor vehicle in excess of 70 miles per hour, contrary to section 89(1) Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.
2. On 6 November 2023, you were convicted at Northampton Magistrates’ Court of:
  - a) An offence of driving a motor vehicle without a licence whilst disqualified from holding or obtaining such a licence, contrary to section 103(1)(b) Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988; and
  - b) An offence of using a motor vehicle on a road or public place without a valid policy of insurance, contrary to section 143 Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.
3. You failed to inform the General Dental Council, immediately or at all, that on 8 September 2023 you were convicted of the criminal offence set out at 1. above.
4. You failed to inform the General Dental Council, immediately or at all, that on 6 November 2023 you were convicted of the criminal offences as set out at 2.a) and 2.b) above.
5. Your conduct set out at 3 and 4 above, was:
  - a) misleading; and / or
  - b) dishonest

And that by reason of the above your fitness to practise is impaired by conviction and / or misconduct.”

Findings of fact 8 April 2026

1. Mr De Bono was neither present nor represented at the hearing, which was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams. The allegations against him relate to convictions he received in September and November 2023 for driving offences and his failure to have immediately informed the General Dental Council (GDC) of these convictions, which is alleged to have been misleading and dishonest.
2. On 10 November 2023, an anonymised informant wrote to the GDC to express concern that Mr De Bono had been convicted of driving offences, stating:

*'The link below relates to an individual who was caught by Northamptonshire Police travelling at 162mph in his Porsche 911. He was banned from driving for this offence.*

*The individual in question was then caught driving while disqualified and lied to police when stopped. He would have also been driving without insurance.*

*I might be wrong, but I believe the driver to be a dentist called Keith Debono who runs [a dental practice]. A simple date check on his age against your records would narrow down whether it is the same individual.*

*Anyone stupid enough to drive at these speeds on public roads and then continue to drive illegally would presumably be something of interest to the GDC.'*

3. The link referred to in the email was a press release from Northamptonshire Police on 9 November 2023 headed '*Further ban for disqualified driver caught behind the wheel*'. The press release stated:

*'A disqualified driver has been banned for a further three months after being caught behind the wheel just two months after having his licence revoked for speeding.*

*On September 8, Christopher Keith Debono [sic], aged 62, of [...] was disqualified from driving for six months after being detected travelling at 162mph on the A43 Corby bypass in May this year.*

*After pleading guilty at Wellingborough Magistrates' Court, Debono received the maximum driving ban the court can impose for speeding. Despite losing the privilege of holding a licence, Debono thought he was above the law.*

*At 10.45am on Sunday, November 5, Debono's silver Porsche 911 Carrera car activated ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras in Northampton, alerting officers to the fact the registered owner was disqualified from driving.*

*When the officers stopped the vehicle in Bridge Street, Debono provided his brother's details at first, however driving licence checks confirmed his true identity. He was arrested and subsequently charged with driving while disqualified and with no valid third-party insurance.*

*On Monday, November 6, at Northampton Magistrates' Court, Debono pleaded guilty to the two charges and was further disqualified from driving for three months. He was also ordered to pay £114 victim surcharge and £85 court costs.*

*Arresting officer PC Michael Hollowell of the Roads Policing Team said:  
"Christopher Debono thought he was above the law and his actions clearly demonstrated a total disregard for the sanctions imposed by the court.*

*"Debono knew that he was not entitled to be driving yet chose to ignore the fact he had no licence or insurance. This was not just selfish but also dangerous, offering no financial protection to him or other road users if he had been involved in a collision.*

*"Everyone has a right to get home unharmed, and we are committed to improving road safety across our county by taking action against irresponsible drivers who have no right to be [...] roads."*

*Tragically in 2022, after being involved in a road collision in Northamptonshire, 36 people never returned home safely to their loved ones, and 347 required urgent medical assistance for serious and life-changing injuries.'*

4. These documents were included in the bundle prepared by the GDC and were circulated to the Committee to read in advance of the hearing. On 7 April 2026, Ms Shehadeh, on behalf of the GDC, applied for redactions to be made so that the following underlined references would be removed from the informant's email: '*...The individual in question was then caught driving while disqualified **and lied to police when stopped**...*'

5. And from the Northamptonshire Police press release:

*'...After pleading guilty at Wellingborough Magistrates' Court, Debono received the maximum driving ban the court can impose for speeding. Despite losing the privilege of holding a licence, **Debono thought he was above the law**...'*

*'...**When the officers stopped the vehicle in Bridge Street, Debono provided his brother's details at first, however driving licence checks confirmed his true identity. He was arrested and subsequently charged with driving while disqualified and with no valid third-party insurance**...'*

*'...Arresting officer PC Michael Hollowell of the Roads Policing Team said:  
"Christopher Debono **thought he was above the law** and his actions clearly demonstrated a total disregard for the sanctions imposed by the court...'*

6. Ms Shehadeh submitted that an allegation that Mr De Bono had initially given false details to the Police forms no part of the GDC's case against him and that the inclusion of such information is potentially prejudicial to him. She submitted that this information had been included in the bundle as a result of an 'administrative oversight' and should now be redacted. She submitted that the Committee, having already read the unredacted bundle in preparation for the hearing, should put the information out of its

mind. She submitted that the Committee members are highly experienced professional decision makers who would have extensive day-to-day experience of disregarding irrelevant or prejudicial information. By reference to the well-established principles in *Porter and Magill*, she submitted that the threshold for bias is high and that the authorities establish that this threshold would not be met by mere 'judicial discomfort'.

7. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser on the question of redaction and on the law relating to actual and apparent bias.
8. As a preliminary matter, the Committee gave careful consideration to whether it should proceed to hear the case in light of the information which it had already read and which the GDC now seeks to be redacted. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser that such information is prejudicial to Mr De Bono (as opposed to merely 'potentially' prejudicial, as submitted by Ms Shehadeh).
9. The information consists of an official public statement by Northamptonshire Police that Mr De Bono had initially given false details when stopped by the Police. That is a serious allegation of dishonesty but is not one which forms part of the Charge against him and no corroborative evidence or further detail has been provided. It is not a matter which forms part of the Committee's factual inquiry but is prejudicial to Mr De Bono in respect of the dishonesty which the GDC alleges against him for having failed to immediately inform it of his convictions, as it suggests that he had also acted dishonestly towards the Police when being arrested in respect of his latter two convictions.
10. Accordingly, the fact that the Committee had been exposed to such information is capable of giving rise to bias and so consideration must be given to whether the Committee could proceed to hear the case without such information contaminating its decision making.
11. The Committee considered whether it could disregard this information so that it would not be consciously or unconsciously influenced by it. The Committee was confident that it would be able to do so. When reading such information in preparation for the hearing, the Committee had noted that this appeared to be anecdotal and was uncorroborated by other evidence or further detail. Although it was an official public statement by the Police, the Committee recognised that it took the form of a press release as opposed to an official police report, witness statement or other correspondence prepared for evidential (instead of journalistic) purposes. The Committee was able to distinguish the information as being hearsay and irrelevant and so attached no weight to it. The Committee was therefore satisfied that there would be no actual bias in proceeding to hear the case.
12. The Committee also considered whether, in any event, there would be the appearance of bias. It determined that a fair-minded and well-informed observer would not conclude that there was a real risk of bias in this case for the same reasons in relation to actual bias.
13. In the interests of transparency, given Ms Shehadeh's submission that the Committee consists of experienced professional decision makers with extensive day-to-day

experience of disregarding irrelevant or prejudicial information, the Committee puts on record that, whilst the Chair of the Committee has over 10 years' experience as a GDC fitness to practise panellist, both the lay and dentist member of the Committee are newly appointed and that this is their second case. The Committee determined that nothing turns on this in relation to the question of apparent bias. Each member of the Committee is a professional decision maker committed to objectivity and impartiality in their decision making. The lay member is a legally trained senior regulatory professional with quasi-judicial experience of sitting as an Ombudsman and of regulatory decision making in other jurisdictions. The dentist member is a highly experienced clinician who exercises clinical judgment and evidence-based decision making on a day-to-day basis.

14. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the information in question should be redacted on the basis that it is irrelevant and prejudicial (and should therefore form no part of the factual inquiry). The Committee determined that it could safely disregard that information when making its decisions.

#### *Service and absence*

15. The Committee then turned to the question of service and proceeding in absence.
16. Ms Shehadeh submitted that the notification of hearing had been served on Mr De Bono in accordance with the requirements of the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 (the 'Rules') and that the hearing should proceed in his absence.
17. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser on the requirements of service and proceeding in absence.
18. The Committee was satisfied that the notification of hearing dated 6 March 2026 had been sent with sufficient notice to Mr De Bono at this registered address and that it contained the required information under Rule 13 of the Rules, including the time, date and (remote) venue of this hearing. The Committee was satisfied that the notification had been served in accordance with the requirements of Rule 65 by virtue of its being posted to his registered address by both first-class post and Special Delivery.
19. The next consideration for the Committee was whether to proceed with the hearing in Mr De Bono's absence. This is a discretion which must be exercised with great care and caution.
20. The Committee was satisfied that the GDC had made all reasonable efforts to send notice of this hearing to Mr De Bono. He is aware of this hearing, as evidenced in correspondence from Dental Protection Limited, who act for him. By email to the GDC on 20 March 2026, Ms Flowers, Legal Adviser at Dental Protection, stated:

*'...As I confirmed during our meeting, Mr De Bono will not be participating in the proceedings and will not attend the hearing. He will not be represented at the hearing and Dental Protection will not be in attendance. However, I will continue to be a point of contact for you in relation to any developments such as to ensure that Mr De Bono has appropriate support.'*

*I am therefore grateful to you for arranging for the determination to be provided to me as soon as it is handed down and I look forward to receiving confirmation of your instructions with regard to sanction in due course...’.*

21. The Committee was therefore satisfied that Mr De Bono had voluntarily absented himself from this hearing and that he had waived his right to attend or be represented at the hearing. There was nothing to suggest that adjourning the hearing would make his attendance any more likely in the foreseeable future. Having regard to all the circumstances, including the need for the expeditious disposal of proceedings, the Committee determined that it would be fair and in the public interest to proceed with the hearing notwithstanding his absence.

*Privacy and admissibility of evidence*

22. Ms Shehadeh proceeded to make two further applications.

23. The first was that the hearing be held in private under Rule 53 of the Rules in so far as reference is to be made to the difficult personal circumstances on which Mr De Bono relies when explaining the circumstances of driving offences and his failure to have informed the GDC of the convictions. The Committee acceded to this application to protect Mr De Bono’s right to privacy and that of a third party. Parts of the hearing were therefore held in private. This determination, however, shall be announced entirely in public, as it is not necessary to narrate the detail of the difficult personal circumstances.

24. The second application related to the admissibility of evidence. Ms Shehadeh applied for a warning from the Investigating Committee dated 23 September 2009 to be admitted into evidence. The warning reads as follows:

*‘The Investigating Committee (IC) has considered the matter referred to in our letter dated 14 July 2009, together with observations submitted on your behalf by Berrymans Lace Mawer.*

*The Committee decided that, on this occasion, you shall not be summoned to attend an inquiry held by a Practice Committee of the Council. However the Committee has decided to issue you with a written warning.*

*The Investigating Committee was concerned to note that you have been convicted for dangerous driving and that the type of behaviour which led to your conviction is inappropriate and could bring the dental profession into disrepute. Please ensure that you are familiar with and understand the guidance contained in Standards for Dental Professionals and its accompanying documents. As a dental professional you are expected to apply these principles to your work and conduct at all times.*

*The Committee warns you that in future you should always maintain appropriate standards of personal behaviour so as not to bring the profession into disrepute.*

*The IC has directed the Registrar to inform you that the Investigating Committee would not be precluded from reconsidering the decision not to hold an inquiry if they*

*later decide that some other complaint or information concerning you should be referred to a Practise Committee in the future.'*

25. Ms Shehadeh submitted that this warning is relevant to the question of dishonesty which the Committee is to decide, as it is evidence that Mr De Bono would have been aware that driving offences are of interest to his regulatory body and are serious matters which are capable of bringing the profession into disrepute. She submitted that the warning is also relevant to an assessment of his state of mind, as it can give rise to an inference that he may have feared the consequences of informing the GDC that he had now been convicted of further driving offences.
26. Ms Shehadeh submitted that the document is a formal determination of the IC and that there is nothing to suggest that it is wrong or inaccurate. She submitted that the warning is already alluded to in the bundle, where the observations made to the Case Examiners on Mr De Bono's behalf by Dental Protection on 2 May 2024 stated: '*...he would like to reiterate that his failure to self-refer to the GDC was not a decision he took deliberately, nor was there any intention to mislead or avoid scrutiny of his actions by the GDC. That he had been issued with an unpublished warning in September 2009 for a similar offence was something that, regrettably, escaped his mind at the time of these offences, and for which he apologises...*'.
27. Ms Shehadeh submitted that, whilst admitting the document at this fact finding stage would be to Mr De Bono's disadvantage, it is a highly relevant part of his regulatory history and goes squarely to his state of mind. She submitted that the disadvantage is therefore proportionate and fair in relation to the matters he faces.
28. Ms Shehadeh also applied for two witness statements to be admitted as hearsay. Both are production statements of GDC employees which, she submitted, do not appear to be in dispute. The first statement is that of Ms S. Rasul, a fitness to practise caseworker, which exhibits correspondence from the informant and Mr De Bono along with Police and court records obtained as part of the GDC's investigation. Ms Shehadeh stated that Ms Rasul is unexpectedly on leave and is therefore unable to attend the hearing to give evidence. The second statement is from Ms E. Morbin, Interim Senior Casework Manager. Her statement exhibits that of Ms Rasul's in response to the fact that she is on leave. Ms Shehadeh stated that Ms Morbin is available to attend to give evidence but that the GDC does not intend to call her, as it has no questions to put to her given the limited scope of her evidence.
29. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser on the admissibility of evidence.
30. The Committee determined that it would be fair and in the interests of justice to admit the IC warning into evidence. This document was already alluded to in the observations to the Case Examiners made on Mr De Bono's behalf and is relevant to the Committee's factual inquiry.
31. The Committee also determined that there would be no prejudice in admitting the two witness statements as hearsay, as these are production only statements which do not appear to be in dispute.

32. Accordingly, the IC warning was admitted into evidence and the two witness statements were taken as read.
33. The Committee heard the submissions made by Ms Shehadeh in relation to the facts.
34. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser on the factual inquiry.
35. The burden is on the GDC to prove each allegation on the balance of probabilities.

### *Findings*

36. On 24 May 2023, Northamptonshire Police served on Mr De Bono a notice of intended prosecution 'for the alleged offence of Speeding - motor vehicle exceed 70 mph on a dual carriageway - manned equipment (Speed 162 mph) (speed limit 70 mph)' on 19 May 2023. The certificate of conviction from Northamptonshire Magistrates' Court records that he was convicted on 8 September 2023 on his guilty plea and was, among other things, fined £1000 and disqualified from driving for 6 months. The 'Notice of Disqualification from Driving' from the court dated 8 September 2023 stated:

#### **'Warning**

*While you are disqualified it is a serious offence to drive any motor vehicle on a road or anywhere else where the public are allowed to go. If you are convicted of doing this, you could go to prison or detention.'*

37. On 6 November 2023, Mr De Bono was convicted on his guilty plea for driving whilst disqualified and without insurance on 5 November 2023. The certificate of conviction from Northamptonshire Magistrates' Court records that he was sentenced to an unpaid work requirement of 80 hours and was disqualified from driving for 3 months.
38. As already set out above, on 9 November 2023 Northamptonshire Police published a press release discussing these convictions. On 10 November 2023 the informant informed the GDC of these convictions by reference to the Press Release. There is no evidence that Mr De Bono had himself informed the GDC and he appears to admit this in his subsequent correspondence and observations.
39. I will now announce the Committee's findings in relation to each head of charge.

*1. On 8 September 2023, you were convicted at Wellingborough Magistrates' Court of an offence of driving a motor vehicle in excess of 70 miles per hour, contrary to section 89(1) Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.*

#### **40. Proved.**

41. In accordance with Rule 57(5)(a) of the Rules, the Committee accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of the conviction.

2. On 6 November 2023, you were convicted at Northampton Magistrates' Court of:

a) An offence of driving a motor vehicle without a licence whilst disqualified from holding or obtaining such a licence, contrary to section 103(1)(b) Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988; and

42. **Proved.**

43. In accordance with Rule 57(5)(a) of the Rules, the Committee accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of the conviction.

b) An offence of using a motor vehicle on a road or public place without a valid policy of insurance, contrary to section 143 Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

44. **Proved.**

45. In accordance with Rule 57(5)(a) of the Rules, the Committee accepted the certificate of conviction as conclusive proof of the conviction.

3. You failed to inform the General Dental Council, immediately or at all, that on 8 September 2023 you were convicted of the criminal offence set out at 1. above.

46. **Proved.**

47. There is no record of Mr De Bono informing the GDC of this conviction or of the criminal proceedings leading to it. Principle 9.3.1 of the GDC's Standards for the Dental Team (September 2013) states: 'You must inform the GDC immediately if you are subject to any criminal proceedings anywhere in the world'. The Committee was therefore satisfied that he was under a duty to have immediately informed the GDC and that he failed in that duty. It was not until 10 November 2023 that the GDC was informed of the conviction by the informant.

4. You failed to inform the General Dental Council, immediately or at all, that on 6 November 2023 you were convicted of the criminal offences as set out at 2.a) and 2.b) above.

48. **Proved.**

49. There is no record of Mr De Bono informing the GDC of these convictions. Principle 9.3.1 of the GDC's Standards for the Dental Team (September 2013) states: 'You must inform the GDC immediately if you are subject to any criminal proceedings anywhere in the world'. The Committee was therefore satisfied that he was under a duty to have immediately informed the GDC and that he failed in that duty. It was not until 10 November 2023 that the GDC was informed of the conviction by the informant.

5. Your conduct set out at 3 and 4 above, was:

a) misleading; and / or

50. **Proved.**

51. Misleading in this context refers to the objective effect of the conduct, regardless of Mr De Bono's intention. By failing to immediately inform the GDC of each the convictions, the Committee was satisfied that Mr De Bono had caused the GDC to be misled into concluding that he had not been subject to any further criminal proceedings or convictions.

*b) dishonest*

52. **Proved.**

53. The Committee had regard to Mr De Bono's explanation for his failure to have immediately informed the GDC of his convictions. The Committee also had regard to the supportive character references on which he seeks to rely at this factual inquiry stage of proceedings.

54. The Committee first considered Mr De Bono's knowledge or belief in respect of his duty to immediately inform the GDC of any criminal proceedings to which he is subject. The Committee was satisfied that he would have understood this duty at the time. He is a highly experienced dentist and the requirement for a dental professional to inform their regulatory body of any criminal proceedings is an obvious and fundamental requirement of the GDC's standards. The Committee therefore determined that he knew at the time of his convictions that he was under a professional duty to immediately inform the GDC of these. This is even more likely because of the IC warning he had received in 2009, which would have been a significant regulatory event for any practitioner and which would have made clear to him the seriousness with which his regulatory body views criminal convictions. It would also have been clear to him from the IC warning that it was his duty to report such convictions to the GDC so that it can assess his fitness to practise.

55. The Committee was mindful to distinguish between belief and state of mind: although the Committee was satisfied that Mr De Bono knew he was under a duty to immediately inform the GDC of the convictions, the Committee considered whether his state of mind was such that it did not consciously occur to him to do so at the time. The Committee accepted the uncontested account in his observations that he was experiencing considerable stress in his personal life at the time. This is likely to have impacted his thought processes. However, there is no evidence that his difficult personal circumstances were such that, as he asserts, it simply did not cross his mind at the time to inform the GDC. He had been convicted of a total of three offences on two separate occasions. He had pleaded guilty to each offence. He had previously received a warning from the IC in respect of an earlier similar conviction. He continued practising as a dentist and enjoyed the benefits of professional registration. It would have been obvious to him at the time that he was under a duty to have immediately informed the GDC. It would also have been apparent to him that the GDC would be unlikely to learn of the convictions unless he self-referred them.

56. The Committee determined that it is more likely than not that Mr De Bono deliberately did not inform the GDC of his convictions in order to conceal from the GDC the fact that he had been convicted of further driving offences beyond the conviction for dangerous driving for which he had previously received a warning from the IC. His intention in not disclosing the further convictions was to prevent heightened regulatory scrutiny of his fitness to practise. Such conduct would clearly be regarded as dishonest by the standards of ordinary, decent people.

57. We move to Stage Two.

Stage Two 9 April 2026

58. At this stage of the proceedings, the Committee shall decide whether the facts found proved under charges 3-5 amount to misconduct and, if so, whether Mr De Bono's fitness to practise as a dentist is currently impaired by reason of that misconduct. The Committee shall also decide whether his fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of the convictions found proved under charges 1-2. If the Committee finds impairment on either or both grounds, it shall then decide on what action, if any, to take in respect of his registration.

59. Ms Shehadeh confirmed that Mr De Bono has no other fitness to practise history beyond the IC warning adduced at the factual inquiry stage of this hearing.

60. Ms Shehadeh submitted that Mr De Bono's fitness to practise is currently impaired on grounds of both misconduct and conviction. She submitted that the appropriate outcome in this case would be a period of suspension for 9-12 months with a review, She submitted that erasure would be disproportionate in light of the mitigating difficult personal circumstances he was under at the time, which the GDC does not dispute.

61. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

62. The Committee had regard to the GDC's *Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees* (January 2026) (the 'Guidance').

63. Misconduct is a serious departure from the standards reasonably expected of a dental professional. It can be characterised as conduct which would be regarded as 'deplorable' by fellow members of the profession. In considering whether any or all of the facts found proved under charges 3-5 amount to misconduct, the Committee had particular regard to the following principles from *Standards for the Dental Team* (September 2013):

1.3.1 You must justify the trust that patients, the public and your colleagues place in you by always acting honestly and fairly in your dealings with them. This applies to any business or education activities in which you are involved as well as to your professional dealings.

1.3.2 You must make sure you do not bring the profession into disrepute.

9.3.1 You must inform the GDC immediately if you are subject to any criminal proceedings anywhere in the world.

64. The Committee also had regard to paragraph 83 of the Guidance, which reads: *‘Failure to inform the GDC immediately of criminal proceedings or a regulatory finding is a serious matter. That is because failure to declare information about criminal proceedings or regulatory findings deprives the Registrar of the ability to consider the impact of those proceedings on the registrant’s fitness to practise, and whether any action (including on an interim basis) needs to be taken to protect the public or the wider public interest. As a result, failure to declare criminal or regulatory proceedings has the potential to undermine the integrity of the register.’*
65. Mr De Bono’s failure to have immediately informed the GDC of his convictions was a serious breach of his professional duty in the Committee’s view. He continued to enjoy the privilege of professional registration without allowing his regulatory body to exercise its statutory supervisory role in respect of his fitness to practise. His failure to have informed the GDC is made even more serious by the fact that: (i) it was a sustained failure spanning a period of months, the second conviction in November 2023 being for breaching the terms of the sentence imposed in respect of the initial conviction in September 2023; (ii) he had previously received a warning from the IC in relation to an earlier conviction in 2009; and (iii) he deliberately did not inform the GDC in order to dishonestly conceal his subsequent convictions, so as to avoid any further regulatory scrutiny by the GDC to his continued offending.
66. In the Committee’s judgment, these matters represent serious breaches of the above standards and clearly meet the threshold for misconduct.
67. The Committee next considered whether Mr De Bono’s fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of that misconduct. The Committee had regard to whether his misconduct is remediable, whether it had been remedied and the risk of repetition. The Committee also had regard to the wider public interest, which included the need to uphold and declare appropriate standards of conduct and behaviour.
68. The Committee determined that Mr De Bono’s misconduct is particularly serious. By reference to the factors discussed in *Grant*, the Committee determined that he had acted in a way which brought the profession into disrepute and which breached its fundamental tenets of honesty and integrity. Mr De Bono undertook a training course on professionalism in 2024 but otherwise demonstrates no remediation in relation to his misconduct. He has not attended this hearing and his earlier statements and observations at the investigatory and Case Examiner stage of proceedings show no insight beyond a general apology into the seriousness of his actions. He denied that he had deliberately attempted to mislead the GDC. He denied that he had acted dishonestly, asserting that it simply hadn’t crossed his mind to inform the GDC.
69. This lack of insight meant that the Committee could not be satisfied that the risk of repetition is low. In the Committee’s judgment, Mr De Bono remains liable to act in a way again which is capable of bringing the profession into disrepute and he is liable to act dishonestly again towards his regulatory body in relation to disclosure requirements. This is compounded by the fact that he had previously received a

warning from the IC on the seriousness with which the GDC views convictions for driving offences and the importance of adhering to the GDC's corresponding standards.

70. The Committee noted that Mr De Bono has now retired from practice after a long practising career of some 40 years. However, the Committee must assess his fitness to practise on the basis that his registration would allow him to resume practice at any time if he so wished. Whilst there is not a risk of harm to the public in relation to Mr De Bono's professional registration, the wider public interest is clearly engaged in the Committee's judgment. A fair-minded and well-informed member of the public would lose confidence in the profession and its regulation if no finding of impairment were to be made to mark the seriousness of Mr De Bono's dishonesty towards his regulatory body by deliberately not informing it of his convictions, so as to avoid regulatory scrutiny.
71. Accordingly, the Committee determined that Mr De Bono's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of misconduct.
72. The Committee also considered whether Mr De Bono's fitness to practise is impaired by reason of his convictions. As with his misconduct, his criminal offending meant that he had acted in a way which brought the profession into disrepute. He was initially convicted of speeding on a dual carriageway at more than twice the 70mph speed limit. He was then again convicted for driving whilst disqualified, in breach of the sentence which had been imposed by the Court. This showed a complete disregard for the law and for the authority of Court in imposing sentence on him. He also had a prior criminal record, having been convicted of dangerous driving in 2009. That his 2023 convictions were capable of bringing the profession into disrepute is apparent from the corresponding press release issued by Northamptonshire Police, which conveys a sense of outrage. Where a dentist is convicted of an offence, the public rightly would expect him or her to serve their sentence and not to flout it by driving whilst disqualified.
73. Mr De Bono provides reflection and expresses remorse for his offending. His offending also occurred in the context of the difficult personal circumstances to which he referred and which are accepted by the GDC and this Committee as mitigation. However, he has not provided the Committee with evidence of any rehabilitative steps and has not otherwise shown a level of reflection or insight which would satisfy the Committee that this risk of repetition is low. He has demonstrated a sustained pattern of driving offences in breach of a warning from his regulatory body and even in breach of the sentence imposed on him by the courts. The Committee determined that Mr De Bono's fitness to practise is currently impaired on wider public interest grounds by reason of his convictions. A fair-minded and well-informed member of the public would lose confidence in the profession and its regulation if no finding of impairment were to be made to mark the seriousness of these repeated driving offences.
74. The Committee considered what action, if any, to take in respect of Mr De Bono's registration. The purpose of a sanction is not to be punitive, although it may have that effect, but to protect the public and the wider public interest. In assessing sanction, the Committee had regard to the aggravating and mitigating factors present in this case.

75. In mitigation, the Committee recognised that Mr De Bono expresses an apology for his actions (albeit not in relation to his dishonesty, which he denies) and that his criminal offending and dishonesty occurred during difficult personal circumstances, where he was experiencing personal and professional stressors and where he was also concerned for the welfare of loved ones. The Committee noted that there is evidence of good conduct following the events in question and that Mr De Bono, now retired, had taken some remedial steps by attending a course on professionalism in 2024. The Committee also noted the positive character references in support of him.
76. The aggravating factors include: a risk of harm to the public by speeding and by driving whilst disqualified; premeditated misconduct and attempts to cover up wrongdoing, as he had dishonestly failed to inform the GDC of his convictions with the intention of avoiding regulatory scrutiny; a therefore blatant or wilful disregard for the role of the GDC and the systems regulating the profession; a blatant or wilful disregard for the sentence of the court when disqualifying him from driving for six months; and an adverse fitness to practise history in the form of a warning for an earlier driving offence.
77. The Committee considered sanction in ascending order of seriousness.
78. To conclude this case with no further action or a reprimand would be wholly inappropriate in the Committee's judgment, as it would not mark the seriousness of Mr De Bono's misconduct and convictions and would not address the risk of repetition.
79. The Committee next considered whether to direct that Mr De Bono's registration be made conditional on his compliance with conditions for a period of up to 36 months, with or without a review. The Committee could not identify any conditions which could be formulated to be workable, measurable and proportionate. The matters in this case involve dishonesty towards his regulatory and criminal offending. Any conditions to address this would merely require Mr De Bono to adhere to basic professional standards to which he is already subject. Conditions would also not in any event be sufficient to mark the seriousness of his misconduct and convictions, so as to maintain public confidence in the profession and its regulation. As Mr De Bono has retired from practice and is not in attendance at this hearing, the Committee could not be satisfied that he would anyway comply with conditions on his registration.
80. The Committee next considered whether to direct that Mr De Bono's registration be suspended for a period of up to 12 months, with or without a review. The Committee accepted Ms Shehadeh's submission that erasure would be disproportionate in light of Mr De Bono's difficult personal circumstances at the time of his offending and dishonesty, which are not contested and which have a mitigating effect. The Committee also accepted her submission that the convictions do not fall at the upper end of the scale of seriousness. The Committee considered those convictions to be serious but not such that they would in themselves warrant erasure.
81. In the Committee's judgment, suspension for the maximum period of 12 months is sufficient to meet the public interest in this case. It is sufficient and proportionate for the purpose of marking the seriousness of Mr De Bono's further convictions and his dishonest failure to inform the GDC of these. A review hearing shall take place prior to

the expiry of the period of suspension where the reviewing committee will decide whether Mr De Bono's fitness to practise continues to be impaired and, if so, whether to direct any further restriction on his registration. The reviewing committee may be assisted by his attendance and by evidence from him of any further reflection and remedial steps.

82. Accordingly, the Committee directs that Mr De Bono's registration be suspended for a period of 12 months with a review.
83. Ms Shehadeh confirmed that the GDC does not seek an immediate order in this case.
84. The Committee makes no immediate order, impairment having been found on the basis of the wider public interest and not on public protection grounds. The substantive period of suspension is to be made for its declaratory effect and it is not necessary for the Committee also to order that Mr De Bono's registration be suspended immediately.
85. That concludes this determination.