

## PRIVATE HEARING

### Professional Conduct Committee Initial Hearing

23 - 25 February 2026

**Name:** CLACK, Deborah Jane

**Registration number:** 147055

**Case number:** CAS-210199-L9W1H3

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**General Dental Council:** Mr Joe O'Leary, Counsel/Case Presenter.  
Instructed by Carla Marie Clough, IHLPS

**Registrant:** Present  
Not Represented

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

**Outcome:** Fitness to Practise Impaired. Reprimand Issued

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**Committee members:** Andy Waite (Lay)(Chair)  
Smita Rajani (Dentist)  
Alexandra Ward (Dental Care Professional)

**Legal adviser:** Valerie Paterson

**Committee Secretary:** Andrew Keeling

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## CHARGE

CLACK, Deborah Jane, a dentist, National Certificate NEBDSA 1993 is summoned to appear before the Professional Conduct Committee on 23 February 2026 for an inquiry into the following charge:

*'That being registered as a Dental Care Professional Deborah Jane Clack's (147055) fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct. In that:*

1. [PRIVATE]

a. [PRIVATE]

2. [PRIVATE]

a. [PRIVATE]

b. [PRIVATE]

3. *Your conduct in relation to charges 1 and/or 2 was:*

a. *Misleading and/or;*

b. *Dishonest'*

Mrs Clack,

1. This was a Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) inquiry into the facts which formed the basis of the allegation against you that your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.
2. You were present at the hearing and you were assisted by a family member, Mrs Donna Barnham. Mr Joe O’Leary, Counsel, appeared on behalf of the General Dental Council (GDC).
3. The hearing was held remotely on Microsoft Teams.

### **Preliminary Matter**

#### **Application for the Hearing to take place in Private (23 February 2026)**

4. At the beginning of the hearing, Mr O’Leary made an application for the hearing to take place entirely in private pursuant to Rule 53(1) and (2) of the GDC (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 (the Rules). Mr O’Leary submitted that the allegations in this case are inextricably linked to matters in your personal life. You supported this application. The Committee heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser as to the provisions of the Rules and the approach it should take to its decision.
5. The Committee bore in mind that, as a starting point, hearings should be conducted in public session. However, having regard to the particular circumstances of your case, the Committee determined that all of the hearing should be held in private to protect your private and family life. The Committee was satisfied that this outweighed the public interest in open hearings. It therefore acceded to the application.

### **Your Admissions**

6. You informed the Committee that you admitted charges 1(a), 2(a) and 2(b). You stated that you denied charges 3(a) and 3(b).
7. The Committee heard and accepted the legal advice. Before the Committee made its decision as to whether to accept your admissions to charges 1(a), 2(a) and 2(b) and mindful that you were not legally represented, it considered that it would be assisted if it first heard the factual basis for those admissions. The Committee, therefore, invited Mr O’Leary to open the GDC’s case in respect of those charges.

### **Background**

8. Mr O’Leary referred the Committee to your self-declaration form, dated 18 March 2008, and your accompanying statement, dated 19 March 2008, which was submitted as part of your application for registration with the GDC. [PRIVATE].

## Decision on Admissions (23 February 2026)

9. The Committee noted your admissions and the background to the matters alleged as outlined by Mr O’Leary above. The Committee also had regard to the GDC’s *‘Guidance on Admissions made at the Preliminary Stage of Fitness to Practise Proceedings’* (issued on 1 December 2025).
10. The Committee was satisfied that you understood the basis for your admissions and accepted the GDC’s narrative regarding charges 1(a), 2(a) and 2(b). Accordingly, it found those charges proved.
11. The hearing then moved on to the factual inquiry stage in respect of charges 3(a) and 3(b).

## Evidence

12. By way of factual evidence from the GDC, the Committee was provided with signed witness statements and associated exhibits from the following:
  - A Registration Manager at the GDC, dated 4 December 2025;
  - A Paralegal at the GDC’s In-House Legal Presentations Service, dated 5 February 2026
13. These witness statements were agreed by you and the Committee had no questions for the witnesses and therefore they were not required to attend the hearing to give live evidence.
14. The GDC also provided the following documents:
  - [PRIVATE]
  - [PRIVATE]
  - [PRIVATE]
15. As part of your case, the Committee was provided with your letter, which was undated, regarding the background to the matters in this case, and your Police Commendation certificate, dated 6 November 2024. You also gave oral evidence.

## The Committee’s Findings of Fact

16. The Committee has considered all the documentary evidence presented to it. It took account of the submissions made by Mr O’Leary, on behalf of the GDC, and your oral evidence and submissions. The Committee heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser. In accordance with that advice, it has considered each head of charge separately, bearing in mind that the burden of proof rests with the GDC and that the standard of proof is the civil standard, that is, whether the alleged matters are found proved on the balance of probabilities.

17. The Committee's findings in relation to each head of charge are as follows:

1.	<p>[PRIVATE]</p> <p><b>Admitted and Found Proved (see above)</b></p>
2.	<p>[PRIVATE]</p> <p>a. [PRIVATE]</p> <p>b. [PRIVATE]</p> <p><b>Admitted and Found Proved (see above)</b></p>
3.	<p><i>Your conduct in relation to charges 1 and/or 2 was:</i></p> <p>a. misleading and/or</p> <p><b>Found Proved</b></p> <p>The Committee noted that during your oral evidence you accepted that you had misled the GDC in respect of charges 1 and 2.</p> <p>[PRIVATE.] The Committee determined, therefore, that your actions objectively misled the GDC at a time when it was considering your application for registration as a Dental Nurse.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Committee found this charge proved.</p> <p>b. dishonest;</p> <p><b>Found Proved</b></p> <p>When considering this charge, the Committee referred to the test set out in the case of <i>Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd. t/a Crockfords</i> [2017]</p>

*UKSC 67*. It first considered the actual state of your knowledge or belief as to the facts at the time. The Committee then considered whether your conduct would be viewed as dishonest by the objective standards of ordinary and decent people.

[PRIVATE].

[PRIVATE]

[PRIVATE.]

[PRIVATE]

The Committee determined that this conduct would be viewed as dishonest by the objective standards of ordinary and decent people.

Accordingly, the Committee found this charge proved.

18. We move on to Stage 2.

## Stage 2

19. Following its announcement of its decision on the facts, the hearing moved to Stage 2. At Stage 2, the Committee would consider whether the facts found proved amounted to misconduct and, if so, whether your fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of your misconduct, and if so, what sanction, if any, should be imposed.

## Documents

20. The Committee had regard to further documents which you submitted for this stage of the proceedings. [PRIVATE]. The Committee also had regard to the Police Commendation certificate, dated November 2024, that you submitted at Stage 1 of the hearing.

21. The Committee also heard oral evidence from you. In your oral evidence at Stage 2, you also referred to your oral evidence you gave at Stage 1 of the hearing. At Stage 1, you stated how sorry and ashamed you were of your actions in the past. [PRIVATE]. You stated that you are a person of good character and asked the Committee not to punish you further.

22. [PRIVATE]

23. You stated that you are not the same person today that you were in 2008. You told the Committee that telling a lie 20 years ago does not make a person dishonest but human. You accepted that your actions were misleading and dishonest at the time and that your actions fell short of the professional standards expected. You explained that you would have admitted to the charge at the outset of the hearing, but did not fully understand the consequences of doing so. Although you made a mistake in 2008, you said that you are a different person now.
24. [PRIVATE]
25. You stated that you are not a risk to the public. [PRIVATE]
26. [PRIVATE] You said that you would love to return to Dental Nursing as it is a job that you are good at and that you are passionate about. You also stated that you are currently mentoring a student with special needs who is working in your Tea Rooms and that you display the characteristics of honesty and integrity every day. You also said that your integrity has never previously been questioned. You explained that anyone applying for GDC registration should be honest, but that you hoped that the GDC would look at each case individually and with compassion.
27. In answer to a question from the Committee, you explained about your plans to return to Dental Nursing. You stated that you were unsure when you would be ready to return to dental nursing and the special challenges that that job presents. However, you confirmed that you have kept up-to-date with all your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training since you have stopped working.
28. The Committee then went on to hear submissions from Mr O’Leary and from you in relation to the matters of misconduct, impairment and sanction. Mr O’Leary provided the Committee and you with his submissions in writing.

## Submissions

29. Mr O’Leary firstly addressed the Committee in respect of your fitness to practise history. [PRIVATE.]
30. With regard to misconduct, Mr O’Leary referred the Committee to the relevant case law and the GDC’s *Standards for the Dental Team (2013)*. He submitted that your conduct was in breach of Standards 1.3, 9.3 and 9.4. He submitted that your conduct can be properly judged as misconduct [PRIVATE]. Furthermore, he submitted that you had acted in a manner that fell seriously below the standards expected.
31. Mr O’Leary then moved on to the issue of current impairment. He referred to the relevant case law, and submitted that impairment can be considered in two parts: the public protection component and the public interest component. [PRIVATE].

32. In respect of the public interest component, Mr O’Leary submitted that dishonesty regarding [PRIVATE] in the context of an application to the register plainly engage concerns around maintaining the public interest. He submitted that the misconduct in this case, is of significantly serious calibre that the public would be necessarily concerned as to their ability to place trust in registered professionals and would have sufficient concern for the reputation of the profession.
33. Mr O’Leary lastly addressed the Committee on the matter of sanction. He submitted that the appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case is one of suspension of six to nine months without a review. He submitted that it would not be appropriate to take no action in this case, and neither a reprimand nor conditions would be sufficient.
34. In your submissions to the Committee, [PRIVATE] You submitted that you would not be going through this process if you did not love your job as a Dental Nurse.

### Committee’s Decision

35. The Committee has borne in mind that its decisions on misconduct, impairment and sanction are matters for its own independent judgment. There is no burden or standard of proof at this stage of the proceedings. The Committee had regard to the GDC’s Guidance document, *‘Fitness to Practise: Guidance for the practice committees’* (6 January 2026) (the GDC’s Guidance) and the relevant case law. The Committee also received advice from the Legal Adviser which it accepted.

### Misconduct

36. The Committee first considered whether the facts found proved amounted to misconduct. In doing so, the Committee had regard to the GDC’s publication, *Standards for Dental Professionals Standards* (2005) which were in force at the relevant time. The Committee, therefore, considered that you had breached the following of the 2005 Standards:

- 6.1 *Justify the trust that your patients, the public and your colleagues have in you by always acting honestly and fairly.*
- 6.2 *Apply these principles to clinical and professional relationships, and any business or educational activities you are involved in.*
- 6.3 *Maintain appropriate standards of personal behaviour in all walks of life so that patients have confidence in you and the public have confidence in the dental profession.*

37. [PRIVATE]. The Committee considered that your misleading and dishonest behaviour was serious and clearly met the threshold for misconduct.

38. Accordingly, the Committee determined that your actions amounted to misconduct.

### Impairment

39. The Committee then considered whether your fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of your misconduct. In respect of the personal component and public protection, the sole matters under consideration are your misleading and dishonest behaviour. The Committee noted that no concerns have been raised about your clinical practice and that you have kept up-to-date with your CPD training.

40. The Committee went on to consider whether you have shown sufficient insight into your misleading and dishonest behaviour and have remediated the concerns to such an extent that they are unlikely to be repeated. The Committee first considered the circumstances in which your misconduct took place. [PRIVATE]

41. [PRIVATE].

42. Accordingly, the Committee determined that your fitness to practise is not currently impaired on public protection grounds.

43. The Committee then went on to consider the public interest component of impairment. [PRIVATE] It was satisfied that this would undermine public confidence in the dental professions and the GDC as a regulator if a finding of impairment were not made. Therefore, the Committee determined that a finding of impairment is necessary in the wider public interest, to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold proper standards of conduct. The Committee has concluded that a reasonable and informed member of the public would have their confidence in the profession and the regulator undermined if a finding of impairment were not made in a case where you had been dishonest to your regulator.

44. The Committee therefore determined that your fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of your misconduct on public interest grounds only.

### Sanction

45. The Committee next considered what sanction, if any, to impose on your registration. It recognised that the purpose of a sanction is not to be punitive although it may have that effect. The Committee applied the principle of proportionality balancing your interest with the public interest. It also took into account the *GDC's Guidance*.

46. The Committee considered the mitigating and aggravating factors in this case and took into consideration the relevant paragraphs in the *GDC's Guidance* on these matters.

47. The Committee considered that the mitigating factors in this case included:

- No previous fitness to practise history (**PRIVATE**);
- Time elapsed since the incident (**PRIVATE**);
- Evidence of good conduct following the incident in question, including that you have kept up-to-date with your CPD training since you have stopped working as a Dental Nurse in 2021;
- Evidence of remorse shown, insight and apology given;
- Your **PRIVATE** personal circumstances at the time of the misconduct (as outlined above).
- The fact that the incident was a single, isolated incident;

48. The Committee considered that the only aggravating factor in this case was the blatant and wilful disregard of the role of the GDC and the systems regulating the professions.

49. The Committee decided that it would be inappropriate to conclude this case with no further action. It would not satisfy the public interest given the seriousness of your dishonest conduct.

50. The Committee next considered whether it would be appropriate to conclude the case with a reprimand. The Committee had regard to the GDC's Guidance and noted that a reprimand may be suitable where the following factors were present:

- b. There is no evidence to suggest the dental professional poses any risk to the public.*
- c. The dental professional has shown insight into their failings.*
- d. The behaviour was an isolated incident.*
- f. The dental professional has genuinely expressed remorse.*
- g. There is evidence the dental professional has taken rehabilitative/corrective steps.*
- h. The dental professional has no adverse fitness to practise history with the GDC.*

51. The Committee considered that all these factors were present in this case.

52. Having given the matter careful consideration, the Committee has determined that a reprimand is the appropriate sanction to impose in the exceptional circumstances of this case. **PRIVATE**

53. In all the circumstances the Committee considered that the issuing of a reprimand was sufficient to mark the seriousness of your misleading and dishonest behaviour. A reprimand meets the public interest considerations to maintain trust and confidence in the profession and to declare and uphold proper professional standards. The Committee was satisfied that a reasonable informed observer, fully aware of the

exceptional circumstances of the case, would consider that the sanction of a reprimand represents a suitable and proportionate disposal.

54. The Committee also considered whether a conditions of Practice Order should be imposed. However, it determined that this would not be appropriate or workable for a case solely involving misleading and dishonest behaviour.
55. For this reason and for completeness, the Committee considered a sanction of suspension. The Committee had regard to the relevant paragraphs on suspension in the GDC's Guidance. It considered that suspension would be disproportionate in this case. Although the Committee acknowledged the seriousness of your dishonesty, it considered that this was outweighed by the fact that it took place some time ago and the remediation and insight you have shown since then. The Committee determined that, given the particular and exceptional circumstances of your case, a well informed member of the public would consider a sanction of suspension to be unnecessarily punitive and disproportionate.
56. The Committee has therefore determined that a reprimand should be recorded against your name in the Register. The fact of this reprimand, and a copy of this determination, will appear alongside your name in the Register for a period of 12 months. The reprimand forms part of your fitness to practise history and is disclosable to prospective employers and prospective registrars in other jurisdictions.
57. That concludes this hearing.