

PUBLIC HEARING

Type of Committee Initial Hearing

1 – 2 April 2026

Name: FERNANDES, Serenidade

Registration number: 292903

Case number: CAS-210928-Q4H2J9

General Dental Council: Miss Laura Stockdale, counsel.
Instructed by Sarah Barker, IHLPS

Registrant: Present on day 1, not present on day 2
UnRepresented

Fitness to practise: Impaired by reason of misconduct and conviction

Outcome: Suspended with immediate suspension (with a review)

Duration: 4 months

Immediate order: Immediate suspension order

Committee members: Anthony Mole (Chair and Lay)
Rebecca Northover (Dentist)
Joshua Kelly (Dental Care Professional)

Legal adviser: Trevor Jones (day 1)
William Hoskins (day 2)

Committee Secretary: Sarah Crewe

At this hearing the Committee made a determination that includes some private information. That information shall be omitted from any public version of this determination and the document marked to show where private material is removed.

That being a registered dental care professional:

1. *On 14 February 2023, you were convicted at Manchester City Magistrates' Court of:*
 - a. *assaulting an emergency worker acting in the exercise of her functions, namely Person A, by beating her on 22 May 2022, contrary to section 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and section 1 of the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018; and*
 - b. *assaulting an emergency worker acting in the exercise of her functions, namely Person B, by beating her on 22 May 2022, contrary to section 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and section 1 of the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018.*
2. *You failed to immediately inform the General Dental Council that:*
 - a. *on or around 25 October 2022, you were charged with the offences at paragraph 1; and/or*
 - b. *on 14 February 2023, you were convicted of the offences at paragraph 1.*

AND that by reason of the matters alleged above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your conviction and/or misconduct.

Miss Fernandes,

1. This is a hearing before the Professional Conduct Committee (PCC). The hearing is being held remotely using Microsoft Teams.
2. You are present and unrepresented. Miss Laura Stockdale, appears for the GDC.

Application for Hearing to be held in Private – 1 April 2026

3. At the beginning of the hearing, Miss Stockdale made an application for the hearing to take place partly in private pursuant to Rule 53(1) and (2) of the GDC (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2006 (the Rules). Miss Stockdale submitted that the reason for the application was because there may be references to your health and personal life.
4. You stated that you agreed with Miss Stockdale's application.
5. 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.
6. The Committee bore in mind that, as a starting point, hearings should be conducted in public session as there is a clear public interest in the transparency of regulatory proceedings. However, the Committee noted that this needed to be balanced with the need to protect your private life, including matters relating to your health. The Committee concluded that any references to your health and personal life should be heard in private, but the rest of the hearing will remain in public. It also considered that a suitably redacted determination would be produced, which would include the Committee's reasons for its decision without disclosing

any matters regarding your health, and that this would satisfy the public interest for transparency.

7. The Committee therefore acceded to the application and determined that the hearing should be conducted in private when referencing your health and private life.

Case background

8. On 22 May 2022 police had cause to attend your home address. You were arrested and taken into custody. Whilst in police custody you were uncooperative. The police sought to take you to a cell to complete a search of your person. When Person B placed a hand on your back to guide you to the cell you swung at her face, your hand connecting with the back of Person B's head.
9. A restraint then took place which you resisted and, whilst doing so, you scratched Person A's face in the left eye.
10. You were then arrested for assault on the police officers.
11. Later that same day you were interviewed by the police. During the interview, you admitted to assaulting the police officers. You stated that you wished to apologise for what happened to them and that you did not mean to hurt them.
12. On 25 October 2022, you were charged with two offences of assault by beating of an emergency worker, contrary to s 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, said to have been committed on 22 May 2022.
13. On 14 February 2023, you pleaded guilty and were convicted at Greater Manchester Magistrates' Court of two offences of assault by beating of an emergency worker, contrary to s 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, committed on 22 May 2022. For the first offence you were sentenced to a fine of £184; you received no separate penalty for the second offence. You were also ordered to pay costs of £85 and a victim surcharge of £34.
14. On 5 February 2024, you made a self-referral to the Fitness to Practice team at the GDC. You informed them that you had a criminal conviction and provided a copy of your basic DBS Certificate.

Admissions – 1 April 2026

15. You made admissions to all of the heads of charge. The Committee, having assured itself that you had full and proper understanding of what you were making admissions to, and having accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser, determined and announced that the facts alleged at those heads and sub-heads of charge were proved on the basis of your admissions in accordance with Rule 17 (4) of the Rules.

Application to proceed with the hearing in the absence of the registrant – 2 April 2026

16. While the panel was in camera making its decision on stage 2 of these proceedings it was made aware that Miss Fernandes no longer wished to engage in these proceedings in person. She sent an email asking that the outcome be sent to her via email. Clarification was sought from Miss Fernandes if she would be attending when the hearing resumed. She confirmed that she would not. A further email was sent to Miss Fernandes encouraging her to attend, but no response was forthcoming. A telephone call was also made to Miss Fernandes, but there was no answer.
17. In response to this development Miss Stockdale made an application pursuant to Rule 54 of the *GDC (Fitness to Practise) Rules Order of Council 2006* ('the Rules'), to proceed with the hearing notwithstanding Miss Fernandes's absence.
18. Miss Stockdale submitted that the Committee can rightly conclude from her communications with the GDC that Miss Fernandes does not wish to continue her attendance at this hearing. In all the circumstances, Miss Stockdale submitted that all reasonable efforts have been made to contact Miss Fernandes and encourage her continued attendance, and she invited the Committee to continue in Miss Fernandes's absence.
19. The Committee took account of Miss Stockdale's submissions. It accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

Decision on whether to proceed with the hearing in the absence of the registrant

20. The Committee considered whether to exercise its discretion under Rule 54 to proceed with the hearing in the absence of Miss Fernandes. It approached this issue with the utmost care and caution.
21. The Committee bore in mind that fairness to Miss Fernandes is an important consideration. It was also mindful of the need to be fair to the GDC, and of the public interest in the expeditious disposal of this case given that a decision has been made by the panel and is ready to hand down.
22. The Committee was satisfied that Miss Fernandes had been engaging and was aware that the panel would be handing down its decision this morning and has chosen to absent herself. In all the circumstances, it was the view of the Committee that adjourning the hearing would serve no meaningful purpose. Miss Fernandes has not requested an adjournment.
23. The Committee also considered fairness to the GDC. It also considered its duty to act expeditiously in the public interest. The Committee concluded that without good reason for deferring the matters, the hearing should proceed as scheduled. It determined that it was fair and in the public interest to proceed with the hearing in Miss Fernandes's absence.

Decision and reasons on fitness to practise – 2 April 2026

24. Having announced its decision on the facts, the Committee then moved on to consider whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct and, if so, whether your practice is currently impaired. Should the Committee find there is current impairment, it can then move on to consider what sanction, if any, to impose.

25. In accordance with Rule 20 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2006, the Committee heard submissions from Miss Stockdale on behalf of the GDC and from you in relation to the matters of misconduct, impairment and sanction.

Evidence

26. You gave evidence to the Committee and outlined how your personal circumstances impacted your behaviour at the time. You explained how you were facing difficulties and that you have since worked hard to put this behind you and to be able to learn from your mistakes and move forward.

27. You told the Committee that you have sought support for your situation and you regret what happened. You apologised and stated that you are doing everything possible to be able to be strong and to continue to work and provide for your family. You told the Committee that you accept that your behaviour was inappropriate and you have come a long way and are now in a much better place, you regret what happened but you have forgiven yourself and have asked for forgiveness from those that you hurt by your actions.

28. You referred the Committee to the letters that you have written and asked the Committee to read them and to take them into account as part of your evidence.

29. In response to questions you informed the Committee that you are currently working as a dental nurse, that they are aware of your conviction but you have not informed them about the GDC case. You explained that you were waiting for the outcome of this hearing before informing them.

30. You told the Committee that you did not inform the GDC when you were charged and when you were convicted as your health and personal circumstances impacted on your decision making. [PRIVATE]. You explained that you understood your responsibility to inform the GDC about being charged and subsequently convicted but your priorities were your health and personal circumstances.

31. You stated that you were unsure about your intentions for the future and outlined your current personal circumstances and what you have learned since the incidents.

Submissions

32. Miss Stockdale addressed the Committee on the matters of misconduct, impairment, and sanction. She informed the Committee that you have no previous FtP findings against you.

33. On the matter of misconduct, Miss Stockdale reminded the Committee that there is no burden or standard of proof when looking at misconduct, but rather it is for the judgment of the Committee.

34. Miss Stockdale invited the Committee to find that your actions had breached the Standards, particularly standard 9.3. Furthermore, you accepted that you were aware of your duty to inform the GDC of being charged and ultimately convicted. Not doing so denied the GDC the opportunity to make a decision about any fitness to practise concerns expeditiously. For those reasons, Miss Stockdale invited the Committee to conclude that the facts found proved at charge 2 do amount to misconduct.

35. On the matter of impairment, Miss Stockdale invited the Committee to consider circumstances around your conviction for assaulting 2 officers. She submitted that you have provided context for the circumstances of the situation and the highly specific circumstances the Committee may

find that you are unlikely to repeat the conduct and therefore, in relation to public protection, the GDC does not positively seek to suggest that you present a risk to members the public in your current role by reason of your conviction.

36. However, Miss Stockdale submitted that the question of risk to the public is not the only consideration and there are public interest factors to be considered as well.
37. In relation to public interest, Miss Stockdale submitted that a finding of current impairment is required in the public interest, in order to declare and uphold proper professional standards and to maintain public confidence in the profession, by sending a clear message that standards of conduct will be taken seriously by the GDC as a regulatory body. Furthermore, Miss Stockdale submitted that your insight is currently limited and there is no evidence before the Committee of any remediation and a limited understanding of the importance of informing the GDC about any charges and convictions. The lack of understanding and consequentially your insight is demonstrated in the evidence that you gave that you have not informed your current employer about these proceedings.
38. On the matter of sanction, Miss Stockdale referred the Committee to the relevant guidance and outlined the aggravating and mitigating factors that the GDC say are present in your case.
39. Miss Stockdale submitted that given the serious nature of the conviction, being for violent offending, a suspension for six months would be the only proportionate sanction and would be sufficient to address the public interest and allow you to be able to fully develop your insight.
40. You told the Committee that you had nothing to add to what you had already said to the Committee.
41. The Committee heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

Misconduct

42. The Committee acknowledged that misconduct was defined, in the case of *Roylance (No. 2) v General Medical Council [2000] AC 311* as, "...a word of general effect, involving some act or omission, which falls short of what would be proper in the circumstances with the standard of propriety often being found by reference to the rules and standards ordinarily required to be followed by a [registrant] in the particular circumstances."
43. In considering whether any or all of the facts found proved amount to misconduct, the Committee considered the following principles from the Standards, in particular:

Standard 9.3

You must inform the GDC if you are subject to criminal proceedings or a regulatory finding is made against you, anywhere in the world

44. The Committee took into account that a breach, or breaches, of the relevant Standards does not automatically result in a finding of misconduct.
45. The Committee considered that failing to inform the GDC when you were charged and subsequently when you were convicted is a serious failure. The role of the regulator in maintaining the integrity of the register is vital to ensuring that the public is both protected and that public confidence is maintained in the profession. Failing to inform of a criminal conviction undermines the GDC's ability to carry out this effectively.

46. Therefore, the Committee determined that your conduct was a sufficiently serious departure from the Standards as a dental professional to amount to misconduct.

Impairment

47. In its consideration of impairment, the Committee bore in mind the advice of the Legal Adviser who reminded the Committee that it must find current impairment of fitness to practise. It took into account that it is not sufficient to find that your fitness to practise was impaired at the time that the matters found proved took place, but that it must be found that your fitness to practise is impaired as of today.

48. The Committee first considered whether your conduct was likely to be repeated in the future and whether your misconduct is remediable; whether it had been remedied; and whether there is a risk of repetition. The Committee also had regard to the wider public interest, which includes the need to uphold and declare proper standards of conduct and behaviour to maintain public confidence in the profession and this regulatory process.

49. The Committee considered that the misconduct in this case is capable of remediation, and it therefore considered what actions you have taken since the concerns came to light. It had regard to your submissions and the documentation that you have provided for the Committee to consider. You have demonstrated limited insight to this Committee in relation to the failure to inform the GDC. In particular the Committee was concerned that you had not informed your current employer of these proceedings. This demonstrated to the Committee that whilst you had acknowledged your duties, demonstrating some insight, this has not been embedded into your behaviour as of today. You have acknowledged your failings and the poor behaviour that led to your conviction, you have offered an apology and an expression of remorse and outlined the steps that you have taken to ensure that the behaviour is not repeated. The circumstances around the conviction were very specific and the Committee concluded that the risk of repetition is minimal due to the very specific personal circumstances you were facing at the time, which have been resolved.

50. The Committee next considered whether your fitness to practise is impaired on public protection grounds by reason of your misconduct. It was concerned that you had not informed your employer about these proceedings and was of the view that this demonstrates a lack of insight. Further, you were unable to provide any evidence or clear explanation of what, if any, steps you have taken to remediate this misconduct. The Committee concluded that you have demonstrated a lack of understanding of the fundamental requirements of your regulator and the impact that this behaviour could have on public safety. Based on this the Committee could not be satisfied that the risk of repetition is low if you were to find yourself in a similar situation where there is a requirement to report to your regulator.

51. The Committee concluded based on all the information before it that a finding of impairment is necessary on the ground of public protection in relation to your misconduct alone, there is no finding of impairment on public protection grounds by reason of your conviction.

52. In its consideration of the wider public interest, the Committee referred to the case of *CHRE v NMC and Grant* and whether public confidence in the profession would be undermined if a finding of impairment were not made in the particular circumstances.

53. The Committee bore in mind that the conviction in this case is serious and involved violence against emergency workers. Although it was considered at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness it was sufficiently serious to be capable of eroding the trust that the public places in Dental Care Professionals and the GDC as a regulator.

54. The Committee concluded that, given the fundamental importance of the role of the regulator in ensuring that those on the register are appropriately monitored, an informed member of the public would be surprised to learn that a finding of impairment was not made in this case.

55. Therefore, the Committee concluded that a finding of impairment is required on the ground of public interest for both the conviction and the misconduct.

Decision and reasons on sanction

56. In reaching its decision regarding sanction, the Committee carefully considered what action, if any, should be taken in relation to your registration. It had regard to the General Dental Council's (GDC) document Guidance for the Practice Committees, including Indicative Sanctions Guidance 2016 (December 2026). The Committee reminded itself that any sanction imposed must be proportionate and appropriate. While sanctions are not intended to be punitive, they may have that effect.

57. Having reviewed the guidance, the Committee identified the following mitigating factors in this case:

- A history of previous good character;
- Demonstrated remorse, and an apology;
- Steps taken to prevent recurrence of the behaviour that led to the conviction;
- Personal challenging circumstances leading to the criminal behaviour;
- No repetition of the criminal behaviour.

58. In accordance with the guidance, the Committee also noted the following aggravating factor:

- Significant delay in informing the GDC of your charge and subsequent conviction;
- Lack of insight ;
- a disregard for the GDC and the systems for regulating dental professionals.

59. The Committee took into account its earlier findings on misconduct and impairment and considered each available sanction in ascending order of severity.

60. The Committee first considered taking no further action. However, given its findings of impairment, it concluded that such an approach would not adequately reflect the seriousness of the misconduct.

61. The Committee therefore considered whether to issue a reprimand. It concluded however, that the matters in this case are too serious for a reprimand, and that it has identified an ongoing risk to the public and the wider public interest. Further, a reprimand would not impose any restrictions on your registration. In the circumstances, the Committee determined that a reprimand would not be sufficient, appropriate or proportionate.

62. The Committee next considered whether to impose a conditions of practice order. It decided that conditions would not address the concerns in this case, which are not related to your clinical practice. Accordingly, the Committee concluded that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate or proportionate.

63. The Committee went on to consider whether to suspend your registration for a specified period. In doing so, it had regard to the Guidance which highlights the factors to consider when determining if a suspension order is appropriate.
64. The Committee had regard to the GDC's submissions and carefully considered whether a period of suspension would be sufficient in all the circumstances and concluded that this would be the proportionate sanction in this case and give you the time to properly reflect and demonstrate your insight and remediation.
65. Whilst the Committee considered whether erasure would be appropriate in this case, it considered given your remorse and the beginnings of insight erasure would not be proportionate. The Committee was not of the view that you hold deep seated personal or professional attitudinal issues and the Committee was satisfied that a suspension would be both proportionate to its findings and sufficient to protect the public and maintain the public interest.
66. Having taken all the matters in this case into account, including your personal circumstances, it was the conclusion of the Committee that a suspension, for a period of 4 months, with a review would be sufficient to protect the public and the wider public interest and give you the time to properly reflect on these findings and to demonstrate to the reviewing Committee appropriate insight and remediation in relation to your failure to inform the GDC about your charge and subsequent conviction.
67. The Committee considered that this order is necessary to mark the importance of maintaining public confidence in the profession, and to send to the public and the profession a clear message about the standards of conduct required of a registered dental professional at all times.
68. The Committee was aware that the effect of this order is that you will be prevented from working as a registered dental care professional using a GDC registration. This could result in financial hardship. However, in applying the principle of proportionality, the Committee determined that your interests in this regard are outweighed by the need for protection of the wider public interest.
69. A reviewing Committee may be assisted by written reflection on the importance of complying with your duties to your regulator and the impact that failing to do so could have on the profession and the public. Targeted CPD in relation to the relevant standards highlighted in this case and your reflection on any learning.

Decision on Immediate Order – 2 April 2026

70. Having directed that Miss Fernandes's name be suspended from the register for a period of 4 months, the Committee had to consider, in accordance with rule 22(2), whether to impose an immediate order to cover the appeal period, or until any appeal against the outcome is heard.
71. The Committee has considered the submissions made by Miss Stockdale that an immediate order should be made on the grounds that it is necessary for the protection of the public and is otherwise in the public interest. She applied for this order to cover any possible appeal period and submitted that this would be compatible with the Committee's findings.
72. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

73. The Committee was satisfied that an immediate order of suspension was necessary for the protection of the public and otherwise in the public interest. The Committee concluded that given its findings and reasons for the substantive order of suspension to direct otherwise would be wholly inconsistent.
74. If, at the end of the appeal period of 28 days, Miss Fernandes has not lodged an appeal, this immediate order will lapse and will be replaced by the substantive direction of suspension. If Miss Fernandes does lodge an appeal, this immediate order will continue in effect until that appeal is determined.
75. Unless Miss Fernandes exercises her right of appeal, her name will be suspended from the register, for a period of 4 months, 28 days from the date when notice of this determination is deemed to have been served upon her.

That concludes this case.