

PUBLIC HEARING**Professional Conduct Committee
Review Hearing****5 August 2026****Name:** FERNANDES, Serenidade**Registration number:** 292903**Case number:** CAS-210928-Q4H2J9

General Dental Council: Mr Matthew Kerruish-Jones, counsel
Instructed by Sarah Barker, IHLPS**Registrant:** Not Present
Not represented

Fitness to practise: Impaired by reason of misconduct**Outcome:** Suspension extended (with a review)**Duration:** 4 months

Committee members: Adrian Smith (Lay member, Chair)
Rose Thomas (Dentist member)
Lynn Chalinder (Dental Care Professional member)**Legal adviser:** Nicola Gordelier**Committee Secretary:** Sarah Crewe

Purpose of hearing

1. The purpose of this hearing is to carry out a statutory review of an order suspending Miss Fernandes's registration. The hearing is being held in accordance with section 36Q of the Dentists Act 1984 (as amended) ('the Act').

Application for Hearing to be held in Private – 5 August 2026

2. At the beginning of the hearing, Mr Kerruish-Jones 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). Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that the reason for the application was because there may be references to Miss Fernandes's health and personal life. He further submitted that this would be in line with the initial Committee's decision to hold the substantive hearing partly in private.
3. 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.
4. 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 Miss Fernandes's private life, including matters relating to her health. The Committee concluded that any references to Miss Fernandes's 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 health, and that this would satisfy the public interest for transparency.
5. The Committee therefore acceded to the application and determined that the hearing should be conducted in private when referencing Miss Fernandes's health and private life.

Service of Notice of Hearing

6. The Committee was informed at the start of this hearing that Miss Fernandes was not in attendance nor was she represented. In her absence, the Committee first considered whether the notice of this hearing had been served in accordance with rules 28 and 65 of *the General Dental Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules Order of Council 2006 (the Rules)*.
7. The Committee received a copy of the Notification of Resumed Hearing which was dated as sent to Miss Fernandes's registered address via Special Delivery on 29 June 2026. The notice was also sent via first class post and secure email.
8. In all the circumstances, the Committee was satisfied that the notice had been served in compliance with the Rules.

Proceeding in the absence of Miss Fernandes:

9. The Committee then considered whether to exercise its discretion under Rule 54 to proceed in the absence of Miss Fernandes. The Committee heard the submissions made by Mr Kerruish-Jones on behalf of the General Dental Council (GDC). It accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser. The Committee bore in mind that it must exercise the utmost care and caution when considering whether to exercise its discretion to proceed in Miss Fernandes's absence. It has also borne in mind the overall fairness of the proceedings to both parties, as well as the public interest in the timely review of this case.
10. Mr Kerruish-Jones outlined the correspondence between the GDC and Miss Fernandes. Initially Miss Fernandes had indicated, during a telephone conversation on 20 July 2026, that she would be attending this hearing. Following this an email was received from Miss

Fernandes, dated 5 August 2026, explaining that after further consideration she would not be in attendance for the hearing due to her health.

11. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that, having regard to the information before the Committee, it would be appropriate to proceed in the absence of Miss Fernandes. He submitted that Miss Fernandes has voluntarily absented herself and made no request for an adjournment. He informed the Committee that the current order is due to expire in the next few weeks, and as such it would need to be reviewed before that expiry date.
12. The Committee weighed Miss Fernandes's interests against the need to protect the public and uphold the public interest. Miss Fernandes has not provided any medical evidence of her health concerns or made any request for an adjournment. The Committee considered that it was essential to review the existing order before it lapsed to ensure that the public remain protected. The current suspension order is due to expire on 7 September 2026.
13. The Committee was satisfied that the public interest in this respect outweighed Miss Fernandes's interests and determined to proceed in her absence.

Factual background

14. The background as outlined by the April 2026 Committee was as follows:
15. *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.*
16. *A restraint then took place which you resisted and, whilst doing so, you scratched Person A's face in the left eye.*
17. *You were then arrested for assault on the police officers.*
18. *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.*
19. *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.*
20. *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.*
21. *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.*
22. Miss Fernandes made full admissions to the charges.
23. The April 2026 PCC found that the facts found proved did amount to misconduct and that Miss Fernandes's fitness to practise was impaired by reason of her misconduct and conviction. It imposed a 4 month suspension with a review.
24. Miss Fernandes was in attendance for the first day of the April 2026 hearing, but was not in attendance for day 2 of that hearing.

Current review hearing

25. This Committee has comprehensively reviewed the suspension order. In so doing, it has had regard to the GDC's bundle of documents as well as the submissions from Mr Kerruish-Jones. Miss Fernandes has engaged with the GDC but has not provided any information for this Committee to consider as part of the review.

Submissions

26. Mr Kerruish-Jones outlined the background of this case and summarised the previous decisions made at the initial PCC hearing. He submitted that Miss Fernandes has engaged with the GDC but has not provided any evidence of remediation or insight as recommended by the April 2026 Committee.
27. The GDC's position is that Miss Fernandes's fitness to practise remains impaired by reason of misconduct and her conviction, and that a further period of suspended registration for 4 months would be the appropriate and proportionate sanction.
28. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that the lack of information from Miss Fernandes for this Committee to consider demonstrates a lack of insight and there is no information of any attempts to remediate her misconduct. He submitted that in the absence of this there remains a real risk to the public based on the misconduct found by the previous Committee.
29. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that the public's confidence would be undermined if a finding of impairment were not made in the circumstances of this case. He submitted that given the absence of any new information Miss Fernandes's fitness to practise remains impaired on public interest grounds for both the misconduct and the conviction.
30. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser.

Current Impairment

31. The Committee was mindful that there is a persuasive burden on the registrant to demonstrate that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. The Committee considered that there has been no material change of circumstances since the last hearing in April 2026. Miss Fernandes has not produced evidence of any insight or remediation. Despite recommendations made by the initial Committee for Miss Fernandes to be able to demonstrate that she is no longer impaired, and a reminder given to Miss Fernandes by the GDC, she has chosen not to provide anything for this Committee to review. Therefore, the Committee concluded that Miss Fernandes continues to pose a risk to the public.
32. The Committee had no evidence before it to be able to assess Miss Fernandes's level of insight since the substantive hearing and no evidence of any remediation.
33. As a result of the above, the Committee concluded that Miss Fernandes's fitness to practise remains currently impaired on public protection grounds in respect of the misconduct found.
34. The Committee also considers that a finding of impairment is required to declare and uphold proper professional standards of conduct and behaviour, and to maintain public trust and confidence in the profession and in the regulatory process. The conviction was for serious matters that bring the profession into disrepute and failing to notify the GDC prevents it from taking the necessary steps in order to maintain the integrity of the register. In the absence of any meaningful engagement from Miss Fernandes, the Committee concluded that a finding of impairment remains in the public interest.

Sanction

35. The Committee then considered what, if any, sanction to impose in this case. The Committee was aware of the range of sanctions available to it and that it must consider the sanctions in order from the least serious.
36. The Committee was aware that it should have regard to the principle of proportionality, balancing the public interest against Miss Fernandes's own interests. The public interest includes the protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the

profession; and declaring and upholding standards of conduct and performance within the profession.

37. The Committee noted its powers outlined in the Act. The Committee had the power to extend the current order for a maximum period of 12 months. Alternatively, it could revoke the suspension order or allow it to lapse upon expiry, or it could replace the order with a conditions of practice order for up to 3 years.
38. The Committee first considered whether it would be appropriate to allow the current order to lapse at its expiry or to revoke it with immediate effect. The Committee considered that given all of the information before it, it would not be appropriate to revoke the current order or to allow it to lapse, as this would not protect the public nor would it be in the public interest.
39. The Committee then considered whether a conditions of practice order would be an appropriate order in this case. Given Miss Fernandes's lack of positive engagement with this review, the lack of any current evidence of steps taken to address the misconduct and the lack of any demonstration of insight, the Committee considered that this would not be an appropriate order. The Committee considered that workable and appropriate conditions would not be possible to formulate in the circumstances, given there is no indication that Miss Fernandes would comply. Further, as the matters in this case relate to attitude and behaviour rather than clinical failings the Committee was not satisfied that any conditions could be formulated to address the issues.
40. The Committee considered that to extend the period of suspension was the appropriate and proportionate response in this case. The Committee considered that in the intervening months since the suspension order was imposed Miss Fernandes has not demonstrated that she is willing to undertake the necessary steps to address the misconduct or to meaningfully engage with her professional regulator. The Committee concluded that in the absence of any current evidence of willingness on her part to address the misconduct and engage with the GDC (beyond an email stating that her health is such that she felt unable to attend the hearing), a further period of suspension is required to allow her the time to reengage with the process.
41. The Committee therefore determined that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case is that at the expiry of the current order Miss Fernandes's registration will be made subject to a further period of 4 months suspension with a review. The Committee concluded that this would protect the public and uphold the public interest and give Miss Fernandes sufficient time to reengage with the FtP process and provide the necessary evidence for the next review Committee.
42. The 4 month extension of the suspension will be reviewed by another Committee before the expiry, at which point they will review all new information provided by Miss Fernandes in respect of her insight and remediation. That Committee will then determine whether to extend the suspension for a further period, allow it to lapse on expiry, revoke it or replace it with conditions of practice. The current extended period of 4 months will not expire automatically.
43. The Committee adopted the initial PCC's recommendations that it considered might be helpful for the next reviewing Committee to receive the following from Miss Fernandes:
 - Written reflections on the importance of complying with her duties to her regulator and the impact that failing to do so could have on the profession and the public.
 - Targeted CPD in relation to standard 9.3* which was highlighted in this case and her reflection on any learning.
 - Testimonials or character references.

44. The Committee considered that the next reviewing Committee may find it beneficial in order to assess her level of insight and remediation that Miss Fernandes engages positively with the GDC and this Committee would encourage her to attend the next review hearing.
45. The Committee was aware that the effect of this order is that Miss Fernandes will be prevented from working as a registered dental care professional in the UK. This could result in financial hardship, though the Committee received no direct information about that matter. However, in applying the principle of proportionality, the Committee determined that Miss Fernandes's interests in this regard are significantly outweighed by the need for public protection and protection of the wider public interest.
46. The Committee therefore directs that Miss Fernandes's registration be suspended for a further 4 months. Section 36W(3) of the Act comes into operation to cover any period between the expiry of the current suspension and the date when the direction ordered by this Committee comes into force.
47. That concludes this determination.

***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