

Marion Scott
Chief Reporter
Sunday Post
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14th June 2024

Dear Ms Scott

Thank you for your emails and for the opportunity to respond to your queries. I should point out that we only became aware of your interest in this case on Thursday 13th June and today that it was an urgent request, there can be no suggestion that we have not responded entirely properly and transparently to your inquiry. We were not and are not aware that any question had been raised in the Scottish Parliament or indeed elsewhere about the involvement of the Academy for Healthcare Science in this issue. Had we been made so aware we would of course have responded promptly, accurately and transparently. So, thank you for making me aware of that and I will follow that up.

The Academy for Healthcare Science takes the care and safety of patients and the public very seriously and maintains a public register of Healthcare Science practitioners accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). It is a voluntary not a statutory register.

As an accredited but voluntary register we are reliant upon employers to support and mandate registration in their employment criteria, and for any contracts with 3rd parties. Were we a statutory register all practitioners would need to be registered with us and would be subject to the standards and criteria for the profession; no one could then be employed if they were not on the register.

If all employers mandated registration, it would enable PSA accredited registers to have a greater opportunity to support patients and the public and, as you point out, have a greater impact on standards. However, that is not the case.

The AHCS operates a defined procedure for handling concerns and complaints raised about its registrants, and investigating the circumstances where the fitness to practise of a registrant could be impaired. The case you refer to was dealt with according to the Fitness to Practise FTP procedure which is supported by a very strong statement relating to transparency and an awareness of the importance of ensuring that those individuals raising a complaint or issue are made aware of decisions taken in respect of Registrants which may affect patient safety.

It is not unusual for the investigation of a case and determination of the outcome to take several months. In this case, due to the serious nature of the allegations, the registrant, Dawn Lamerton, was subject to an immediate interim suspension from the register pending the investigation, during which Ms Lamerton stated:

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'I will not return to any clinical position in healthcare and can confirm that has not changed. I can also reassure you I do not wish and have no intention in returning to audiology or any other clinical position, privately or within the NHS in this country or any country of this world. As I have no intention of working in any clinical capacity, I do not and will not require any voluntary registration at any time in the future and therefore withdraw myself from any case raised against me. There are no further sanctions that can apply to me that I have not already applied to myself.'

Nevertheless, it is not acceptable for a registrant who is subject of a Fitness to Practise allegation to simply withdraw from a case raised against them and the FTP procedure continued; subsequently the Assessment Committee found Ms Lamerton's practise to be impaired and recommended that her name should be struck from the register.

Consensual Disposal is a procedure by which a Registrant and the Academy agree that a matter will be resolved without the need for a contested hearing. The Academy must be satisfied that it is appropriate for a concern to be dealt with under the Consensual Disposal process, taking into account the Academy's role in protecting the public, declaring and upholding proper professional standards and upholding public confidence in the profession. The procedure will only apply where the Registrant accepts the facts of the allegation(s) and that their fitness to practise is currently impaired, and the Panel dealing with the request will have the full range of sanctions available to it, as they would in a full fitness to practise hearing and will decide what sanction it considers to be appropriate.

Ms Lamerton accepted the facts of the allegations against her and that her Fitness to Practise was impaired and agreed to a Consensual Discharge of her voluntary registration with AHCS.

The outcome of Fitness to Practise cases where a registrant is removed from the register is published on the AHCS website, here <https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/raise-a-concern/hearing-decisions/> which we are in the process of doing in relation to this case. It is also my intention to place a copy of this letter on our website.

PSA are an independent body appointed by UK Parliament and who are able to undertake assessment of the risk of a profession, <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/home>

Please do let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



JANET MONKMAN
CEO