

27 October 2021

Mr Keith McBride
Clerk
NI Assembly Health Committee

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By email only

Dear Mr McBride,

Ahead of our evidence to the Committee on 4 November, I am writing to update you on the case of Dr Watt. We were extremely disappointed that the Medical Practitioners Tribunal allowed Dr Watt's application for voluntary erasure. We felt it was in the public interest for the allegations to be heard by the tribunal in an open and transparent way.

As we do not have a statutory right of appeal against decisions by a tribunal to grant an application for voluntary erasure, we have been carefully considering what, if any, further steps we could take. This included seeking views from external specialist leading counsel on the possibility of challenging the tribunal's decision, by way of judicial review.

This afternoon we will contact former patients of Dr Watt to let them know that we've reluctantly concluded that there is no realistic prospect that we could bring a successful challenge. We know this news will be incredibly disappointing and distressing for all those involved. In our communication to them, we have offered a meeting to explain our decision and answer any questions they might have.

We will also issue a statement to the media in Northern Ireland to provide an update on our position.

About this decision

We have carefully considered the tribunal's decision and the advice we've received from an external specialist leading Counsel.

To be successful in challenging the tribunal's decision, we would need to be able to demonstrate not only that this specific tribunal should have reached a different conclusion, but that no tribunal could have reasonably reached the same conclusion based on the evidence it had before it. That is a very high threshold, and we've been advised that it is not met in this case.

In advance of our evidence session to the Health Committee on 4 November, it will be helpful for you to note that Charlie Massey and Anthony Omo will be unable to provide any further detail on this decision and the advice that informed it. If you have any queries in the meantime, please contact our NI National Head Jane.Kennedy@gmc-uk.org.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J Kennedy".

Jane Kennedy
Head of GMC Northern Ireland