

Memorandum

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CouncilRegulating doctors
Ensuring good medical practice**To:** Stephanie McNamara**From:** Code A**Copy:** Press office team**Date:** 11 May 2009**Protocol for filming of GMC hearings****[DRAFT – TO BE AGREED WITH DIRECTORS]****Background**

From time to time the media request to film the proceeding of GMC hearings. Whilst filming an ongoing hearing in the chamber is not allowed, the press are permitted to film in the building from time to time and regularly conduct interviews outside of the London and Manchester offices.

The loss of the 'broadcast' room on the third floor in London and the ongoing high-profile hearing for Code A et al has raised questions about when and if we should grant filming requests. This memo will set out the protocol for allowing journalists to film 'pooled' material before the start of a hearing.

What is a high profile hearing?

A high-profile hearing is one that:

- receives considerable media attention, not only from the print media but broadcast too
- generates a high volume of calls to the press office
- requires cross-directorate working to prepare for the start of the hearing
- attracts the interest of news journalists in addition to the 'usual suspects' (health correspondents and newswires).

Why doesn't the GMC allow direct filming of hearings?

GMC hearing rooms contain large amounts of confidential paper work. Whilst hearings are held in public and the press and public are welcome to attend in the gallery, for reasons of security it would not be appropriate to allow external parties access to the hearing room while the hearing is ongoing.

When does the GMC allow filming?

Broadcast journalists can and do film live 'pieces to camera' outside the GMC offices both in London and Manchester.

Occasionally, journalists are given permission to film inside the Euston Road building on the ground-floor (they like to film with the GMC's logo clearly visible in the background). Because the GMC shares the building with other tenants permission needs to be sought first from Broadgates. Where it is granted and a member of the press team is present, filming on the ground floor will sometimes be allowed, for example if the weather conditions outside are poor.

How will we allow filming?

Filming of the hearing room may be useful for journalists who need background footage of where the event is taking place so that they can use it for future reporting.

Option 1: Allow one broadcast crew into the empty hearing chamber at start of hearing. Crew to share ('pool') the footage with other broadcasters.

PROS

Pooling the footage will mean that filming only happens once and is not disruptive. The BBC has indicated that it might use this once only and keep it as stock footage they can re-use for future hearings.

CONS

Whilst this sort of footage might be useful to international broadcasters (e.g NBC) it would not be of great interest to domestic broadcasters.

Option 2: Allow one broadcast crew into the hearing chamber at start of hearing with the Panel present, people filing into the room etc. Crew to share ('pool') the footage with other broadcasters.

PROS

This would allow the GMC to demonstrate that it is an open, transparent and modern organisation, doing away with misconceptions amongst doctors and the public of how GMC hearings are set out.

CONS

Filming would have to be managed so that proceedings are not filmed, only the filing up of the chamber with people at the start of the hearing. Permission from the Panel would need to be granted. This approach could be difficult to manage from the Manchester office where there is no press team. If filming was allowed for one hearing, it would be difficult to refuse access to film other hearings.

Recommendations

- I would recommend **Option 1**. We could allow the BBC into the empty hearing room (the main GMC chamber in Euston Road) to film during the quieter in-camera sessions for the Code A et al hearing in July 2009 (with no parties present).
- The BBC would then pool the footage ahead of the August 2009 session when we are expecting considerable media interest around the decision on the facts in the case. Broadcasters would also be able to use the footage for the Dr Jane Barton hearing which is due to finish on August 21.
- This would most likely be a 'one off' opportunity – that could be repeated only when the appearance of the hearing room changes significantly and footage needs to be kept up-to-date.

ENDS