

# How we will deal with hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic

This guidance note sets out how we plan to deal with our hearings in the immediate and medium term as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the daily national position and response has changed dramatically in the last few days, we feel there is now a better level of certainty on which to base our approach.

We have taken into account the decreasing likelihood of panel members, advisors, registrants, witnesses and GPhC staff being able to attend a physical hearing. We also want to minimise any risk involved in such attendance.

## Prioritisation plan

Public protection and public safety are our overriding objective. With this in mind, there are some hearings that are more critical than others.

On that basis we have decided to prioritise interim order applications, interim order reviews and principal hearing reviews whilst postponing principal hearings.

Both interim order applications and interim order reviews are capable of proceeding, on papers by agreement, and therefore we will seek to gain agreement to proceed on that basis.

Principal hearing reviews are often contested and therefore necessitate a formal hearing. We have a handful of cases in this category in the coming months and where these are contested, we will look to deal with each matter on a case by case basis.

Our prioritisation plan will result in the postponement of principal hearings listed for the next two months.

All Investigating Committee meetings will proceed remotely.

We will begin the process of contacting individuals involved in cases immediately as we finalise the plan for each individual case.

## Practicalities

The vast majority of GPhC staff are now working from home without any access to printing facilities.

We will therefore be contacting parties involved in fitness to practise cases, to advise that we will only be serving documentation on them electronically. We will also only be providing bundles and other documentation electronically.