Request:

How many cases, regardless of outcome, has the GDC used Private Investigators to gather evidence for Fitness to practise investigations since 2013?

How much has it cost the GDC to engage the services of all Private Investigators listed in the response to the above question?

Response

Thank you for your email dated 13 December 2019 requesting information regarding the GDC’s use of private investigators.

This request is being handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act)

How many cases, regardless of outcome, has the GDC used Private Investigators to gather evidence for Fitness to practise investigations since 2013?

We carried out searches of our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and finance system and have identified we do not routinely record or report the number of fitness to practise case where the General Dental Council has instructed/used private investigators when conducting investigations of registrants.

We can confirm through our searches of the information within our records systems from 2013, of the 16,402 fitness to practise complaints the GDC has received since 2013, 45 involved private investigators for in-guise visits in cases involving registrants.

How much has it cost the GDC to engage the services of all Private Investigators listed in the response to the above question?

We carried out a search on our finance system to try and identify how much was spent on private investigators in fitness to practice cases since 2013. Unfortunately, the GDC changed its finance system in 2016 and data was not migrated across.

For the period January 2014-January 2016, we estimate there would be approximately 9000 hard copy invoices relating to goods or services supplied to the GDC by all GDC suppliers stored in our offsite archival storage that we would need to search through to locate the relevant invoices from the private investigators. If we were to review 5 invoices a minute, we estimate it would take a minimum of 28 hours. This does not include the time it would take (i.e. cost) to identify the relevant boxes held in archive and transporting them to our Birmingham Office for review.

If we tried to access our old finance system for the figures for 2013-2016, we have been advised by our IT department that it would take more time than the 28 hour figure referred to above as various sterilisations would be needed and the data would need reformatting to allow review.

Nevertheless, where we identified through our CRM search the fitness to practice cases where there was involvement by private investigators, we carried out additional searches of those files to locate any actual invoices or cost estimates from the private investigators for under guise visits. Therefore the "spend" figures given for 2013 to 16 below are made up of mostly actual costs (where invoices were stored on the case file) and some estimated costs (where only cost estimates were found on the case file). In addition, we should explain that
some costs estimates for the include not only time for carrying out in guise visits, but also
time for preparing witness statements and for attending Practise Committee hearings to give
evidence for the GDC in cases which may, ultimately, have been resolved without a hearing.
In such cases, the GDC may have paid for the preparation of witness statements or the
investigator’s attendance at the hearing (if the hearing was cancelled with sufficient notice),
or if cancelled at short notice, lower “cancellation” fee then a “hearing” fee, may have been
paid. Therefore, it is possible that the actual spend by the GDC was lower than the figures
given in the table. We have endeavoured to ensure the information the 2013 to 16 is as
accurate as possible, but some caution is needed when reviewing the figures to account for
potential human error in the manual searches of the case files.

Please also note that the actual costs for 2017 to 2019 given below include the costs of
private investigators preparing witness statements in their attendance at Practise Committee
hearings to give evidence and are not limited to the cost of the under-guise visits only.

From our current finance system, I confirm that between 2017 and 2019 GDC actually spent
a total of 17,208.85 on private investigators in investigations of registrants.

I provide a year by year breakdown of the approximate (2013 to 2016), and the actual (2017
to 2019), costs in the table below.

**GDC total annual “spend” on private investigators for in guise visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount £</th>
<th>Approximate/actual costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>11,910.00</td>
<td>Approximate costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>11,800.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>11,230.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>7,110.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,050.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>15,416.99</td>
<td>Actual costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,647.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>144.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,208.85</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total (approximate)</strong></td>
<td><strong>59,258.85</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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