

Case Examiner Decision
Nicholas Ian Barker – SW20594
FTPS-22478

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The role of the case examiners

The case examiners perform a filtering function in the fitness to practise process, and their primary role is to determine whether the case ought to be considered by adjudicators at a formal hearing. The wider purpose of the fitness to practise process is not to discipline the social worker for past conduct, but rather to consider whether the social worker's current fitness to practise might be impaired because of the issues highlighted. In reaching their decisions, case examiners are mindful that Social Work England's primary objective is to protect the public.

Case examiners apply the 'realistic prospect' test. As part of their role, the case examiners will consider whether there is a realistic prospect:

- the facts alleged could be found proven by adjudicators
- adjudicators could find that one of the statutory grounds for impairment is engaged
- adjudicators could find the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired

If the case examiners find a realistic prospect of impairment, they consider whether there is a public interest in referring the case to a hearing. If there is no public interest in a hearing, the case examiners can propose an outcome to the social worker. We call this accepted disposal and a case can only be resolved in this way if the social worker agrees with the case examiners' proposal.

Case examiners review cases on the papers only. The case examiners are limited, in that, they are unable to hear and test live evidence, and therefore they are unable to make findings of fact.

Decision summary

Decision summary	
1 st Preliminary outcome	12 November 2024
	Information requested Submissions requested
2 nd Preliminary outcome	31 January 2025
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	11 March 2025
	Accepted disposal - removal order

Executive summary

The case examiners initially paused their consideration of this case to request the addition of a further regulatory concern, together with submissions from the social worker.

The case examiners have subsequently reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, & 1.4), 2 & 3 being found proven by the adjudicators. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, & 1.4), 2 & 3 being found to amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.

3. For regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, & 1.4), 2 & 3, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

The case examiners did not consider it to be in the public interest for the matter to be referred to a final hearing and determined that the case could be concluded by way of accepted disposal.

As such, the case examiners requested that the social worker was notified of their intention to resolve the case with a removal order; the social worker subsequently accepted this proposed disposal.

The case examiners have considered all of the documents made available within the evidence bundle. Key evidence is referred to throughout their decision and the case examiners' full reasoning is set out below.

Anonymity and redaction

Elements of this decision have been marked for redaction in line with our Fitness to Practise Publications Policy. Text in blue will be redacted only from the published copy of the decision, and will therefore be shared with the complainant in their copy. Text in red will be redacted from both the complainant's and the published copy of the decision.

In accordance with Social Work England's fitness to practise proceedings and registration appeals publications policy, the case examiners have anonymised the names of individuals to maintain privacy. A schedule of anonymity is provided below for the social worker and complainant, and will be redacted if this decision is published.

Professional A



Professional B



PA A



Personal Assistant

PA B



ersonal Assistant

PAC	Personal Assistant
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The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer.
Date the complaint was received	26 July 2023
Complaint summary	The concerns raised by the social worker's former employer allege that the social worker had misrepresented the completion of casework supervision; failed to conduct supervision and team meetings with their staff; failed to update, authorise and/or sign off case summaries and requisite plans; [REDACTED]

Regulatory concerns and concerns recommended for closure

Regulatory Concerns:

(As amended following the case examiner's requests in their preliminary observations):

Regulatory concerns are clearly identified issues that are a concern to the regulator. The regulatory concerns for this case are as follows:

Whilst registered as a social worker from on or around January 2022 you:

1. Failed to have an adequate management oversight with your team and/or on cases in that you:
 - 1.1. Failed to conduct supervision meetings
 - 1.2. Failed to conduct team meetings
 - 1.3. Failed to update case summaries
 - 1.4. Failed authorise and/or sign off Pathway Plans

2. On or around 6 December 2022, you falsely assured your manager that you had completed supervisions, when this was not the case.

3. Your actions at concern 2, were dishonest.

Grounds of impairment:

The matters outlined at regulatory concern 1.1,1.2,1.3, 1.4, 2 & 3 amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.

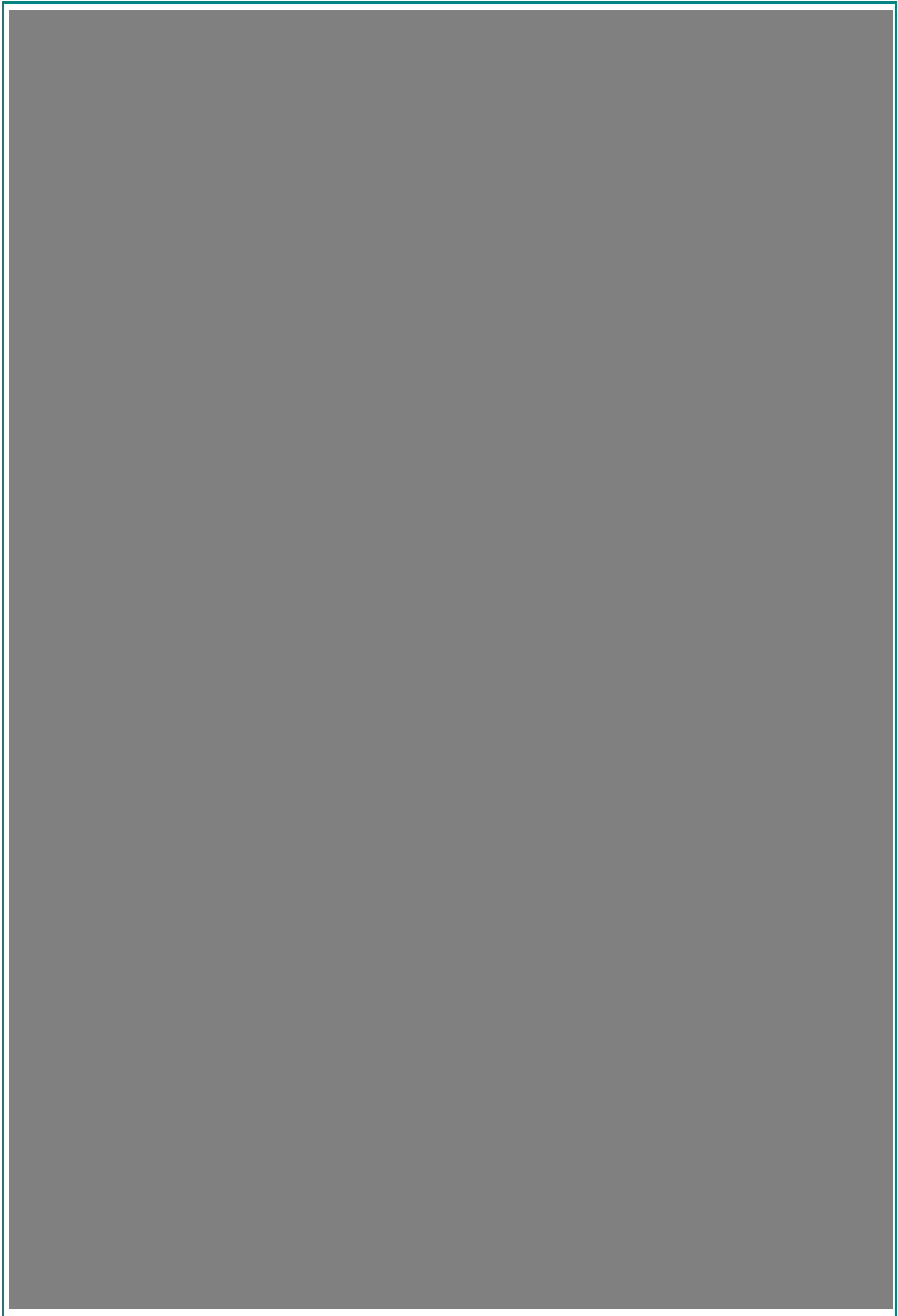
By reason of your misconduct your fitness to practice is impaired.

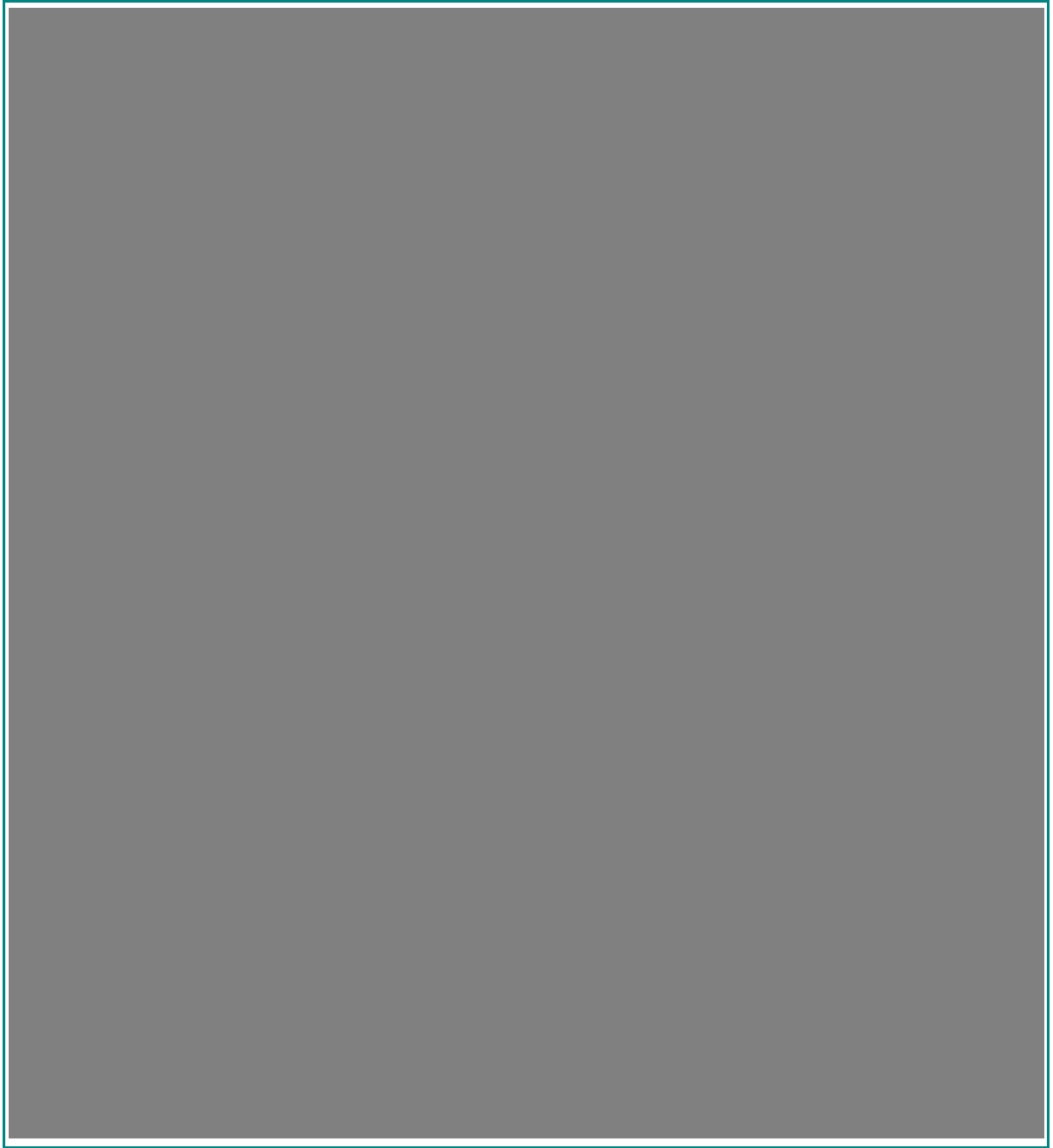


Preliminary issues

Investigation		
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has been notified of the grounds for investigation?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has had reasonable opportunity to make written representations to the investigators?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that they have all relevant evidence available to them, or that adequate attempts have been made to obtain evidence that is not available?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that it was not proportionate or necessary to offer the complainant the opportunity to provide final written representations; or that they were provided a reasonable opportunity to do so where required.	Yes	☒
	No	☐

Requests for further information or submissions, or any other preliminary issues that have arisen





The realistic prospect test

Fitness to practise history

The case examiners have been informed that there is no previous fitness to practise history.

Decision summary

Is there a realistic prospect of the adjudicators finding the social worker's fitness to practise is impaired?

Yes



No



The case examiners have determined that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, & 1.4), 2 & 3 being found proven, that those concerns could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst registered as a social worker from on or around January 2022 you:

1. Failed to have an adequate management oversight with your team and/or on cases in that you:
 - 1.1. Failed to conduct supervision meetings
 - 1.2. Failed to conduct team meetings
 - 1.3. Failed to update case summaries
 - 1.4. Failed to authorise and/or sign off Pathway Plans

The case examiners have carefully considered all of the evidence presented to them in relation to concern 1 (1.1 - 1.4), and have noted the following key points:

During the period relating to the concerns raised, which the evidence indicates was between January 2022 and March 2023, the social worker was the team manager of an 18+ care leaving service, a role they had been in since July 2021. The social worker

was an experienced social worker, and had management responsibility for a team of six care leaver personal advisors (PAs).

Supervision records with the social worker indicate that issues regarding their performance were raised with them. For example:

- 1 November 2022 supervision record: It is recorded that the social worker's performance had been significantly impacted by them taking on the case load of a PA who was off sick. The social worker is advised that case work supervision needs to be addressed, and that they are to reallocate the absent PA's workload and *"focus on authorising the pathway plans and complete the individual case work supervision."*
- 6 December 2022 supervision record: It is recorded that there remain plans to be authorised, and that a number of case supervisions need to be recorded and undertaken. An action is recorded for the social worker to have an *"assertive focus on case work supervision, assured that this will be address by 23rd Dec (sic)."*
- 17 January 2023 supervision record: Records that despite previous assurances from the social worker to focus on completing supervisions, only four case work supervisions are in date, out of a case load of 127.

Information from interviews conducted by the local authority with PAs supervised by the social worker also indicates that the social worker failed to carry out supervisions with them as required. For example:

- PA A advised that they could not recall more than one or two formal supervisions during a two-year period, and described is approach to formal supervision as *"hit and miss"*. PA A also stated that team meetings were not held regularly; they had asked the social worker to provide dates to them for team meetings, but they did not respond. The PA was concerned that important information was not being filtered down to the PA team by the social worker.
- PA B stated that they did not have regular supervisions with the social worker, but was confident that the social worker knew about their cases and that the social worker did not leave them feeling professionally vulnerable. They understood that the social worker was busy through having taken on the caseload of an absent PA. However, PA B was concerned about what they would disclose about their supervisions with the social worker, if asked about them during an OFSTED inspection. PA B also advised that due to a lack of

team meetings being organised by the social worker, members of the team generally picked up information through conversations with other teams.

- PA C advised that they were not aware of the social worker having held any team meetings for many months, and that team members were expressing their concerns in group messages to each other. PA C was of the view that the social worker, in not holding team meetings, was failing to share important information that the social worker became aware of in their own weekly management meeting, with the wider team.

During an interview with their employer, dated 9 May 2023, the social worker acknowledges:

- that they did not complete case work supervision, stating that this was due to their workload at that time, and in particular taking calls from young people, which distracted them from their role as a team manager.
- that supervisions with their team members should have taken place monthly, and stated that even though they did not complete supervision meetings, they did maintain regular contact with their team.
- that Pathway Plans had drifted and that they did not hold regular team meetings. The social worker stated that they did, however, have regular contact with their team and did not feel that their conduct had had any significant impact on the health and safety of their team, or on the safeguarding of service users.
- that case summaries should have been completed every three months, and put forward mitigation that they had been “*swamped with casework*”.

The social worker’s employer submits that there is no evidence to indicate that during the period of January 2022 to March 2023, when the concerns came to light, that the social worker raised any issues with their local authority regarding managing their workload, or requested any support to conduct their role.

In their submissions to Social Work England, the social worker has accepted that there had been a lack of supervisions (held by them), and put forward mitigation relating to increased workload, and an absence of appropriate business support. They also accepted that had been “drift” with Pathway Plans, in terms of their role in quality assuring these and authorising them within a reasonable timeframe. They advise that, “*This was in no way intentional but a consequence of the additional work pressures that were being experienced at the time as described above. I worked*

additional hours to try and compensate for this alongside other tasks which were not able to be completed during regular hours”.

Having considered the information presented to them, as summarised above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is some evidence to support each of the sub-particulars of concern 1, i.e., that the social worker did fail to conduct both supervision and team meetings, case summaries, and authorise and/or sign off Pathway Plans. The case examiners are also of the view that these omissions, if subsequently proven would indicate that the social worker had not provided adequate management oversight to their team and/or to the cases for which they and their team were responsible.

The case examiners therefore consider there to be a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding concern 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3 & 1.4) proven in relation to the facts.

2. On or around 6 December 2022, you falsely assured your manager that you had completed supervisions, when this was not the case.

The case examiners have carefully considered all of the evidence presented to them in relation to concern 2, and have noted the following key points:

- The employer’s ‘notes for investigation meeting’ dated 27 April 2023, held with Professional A [REDACTED] records Professional A stating that *“an assurance had given to him by (the social worker) in respect of case work supervision that he was told by (the social worker) that supervisions had been written up but not uploaded to Eclipse. (Professional A) states there is no evidence to support the work was ever completed by (the social worker).”*
- Records of a 1:1 meeting between the social worker and Professional A also record the social worker providing Professional A with *“an assurance ... that case work supervision had all been undertaken but they had yet to be recorded in Eclipse. (The social worker) was advised that set in the context of an imminent ... inspection this needed to be addressed asap which he assured will be done by 23rd December 2023.*

This assurance was accepted in the context of the previous performance management concerns that had been addressed successfully”.

- The employer’s ‘notes for investigation meeting’ dated 2 May 2023, held with the social worker, record the social worker as having admitted that they had provided misrepresentations to Professional A when advising that case work supervision had been complete and was awaiting upload to eclipse. The notes record the social worker as agreeing that *“he did misrepresent what was*

happening at that time. He confirmed he had not completed case work supervision and was therefore not able to upload data to the Eclipse system ... He stated that when he was asked about the supervision, he felt professionally embarrassed and for reasons he cannot explain, he told his manager they had been completed as he thought this would buy him enough time in which to at least complete December's supervision and upload them to Eclipse".

The investigation meeting notes also record that the social worker "accepts it was wrong to give false information to his manager", and was "sorry for his actions which he describes as 'stupidity.'"

- In their final submissions to Social Work England the social worker admits the concern. They state that they "fully admit that I was dishonest to (Professional A), and did admit this in my statement".

The case examiners therefore consider there to be a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding concern 2 proven in relation to the facts.

3. Your actions at concern 2, were dishonest.

When considering whether alleged conduct is dishonest, the case examiners are required to apply the legal test for establishing dishonesty. This test requires the case examiners to first ascertain the actual state of the social worker's knowledge or belief as to the facts (this is known as the subjective element of the test). The case examiners must then decide whether the social worker's conduct was honest or dishonest (considering what their knowledge or belief as to the facts was, at the time of the events in question), by applying the standards of ordinary, decent people (this is known as the objective element of the test).

In assessing the social worker's actual state of mind at the time, the case examiners consider that the evidence they have outlined above indicates that the social worker was aware when they assured their manager (Professional A) that supervisions with their staff had been completed but had just not yet been recorded, that the supervisions had in fact not been completed at that time. The evidence also indicates that at the time of making this assurance, the social worker was made aware of the importance of completing supervisions and recording them. They would also have been aware of the negative impact any failure on their part to have conducted such supervisions may have on their manager's view of their performance and on a forthcoming inspection.

The case examiners further note that the social worker admitted to their employer that the information they had given to Professional A was "false", and that doing so

was an act of “stupidity”. The social worker, in their submissions to the regulator, also admit that they acted dishonestly in relation to concern 2.

In applying the objective test, the case examiners are of the view that in the circumstances of this case, an ordinary, decent member of the public would consider that a professional informing a manager in the course of a formal supervision meeting that they had completed actions required of them, when they knew they had not completed such actions, would be dishonest.

The case examiners therefore consider there to be a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding concern 3 proven.





Grounds

The case examiners have been asked to consider the grounds of misconduct in relation to this case. The case examiners are aware that misconduct is generally considered to consist of serious acts or omissions, which suggest a significant departure from what would be expected of the social worker in the circumstances. This can include conduct that takes place in the exercise of professional practice, and also conduct which occurs outside the exercise of professional practice, but calls into question the suitability of the person to work as a social worker.

To help them decide if the evidence suggests a significant departure from what would be expected in the circumstances, the case examiners have considered Social Work England's professional standards for social workers, which were applicable at the time of the concerns. Having done so, the case examiners are of the view that there may have been a significant breach of the following standards by the social worker:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

3.1 Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately.

3.9 Make sure that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about identified risks and the outcomes and implications of assessments and decisions I make.

3.11 Maintain clear, accurate, legible and up to date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions.

5.2 Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker while at work, or outside of work.

With regards to concerns 1 (1.1 – 1.4), all of which it is proposed amounted to providing inadequate management oversight to their team and/or to cases, the case examiners note that that the allegations relate to a period of over 12 months. The case examiners are of the view that failing to provide such management oversight

over such an extended period was highly likely to have impacted on the ability of their team to provide an effective and safe service to vulnerable service users. For example, any professional omissions, mistakes, or professional development requirements by their team were more likely to remain unnoticed and unaddressed, and suggests a significant deviation from standards 3.1, 3.6, 3.9, and 3.11.

Guidance on the professional standards, for example, reminds social workers that they have a responsibility to stay alert to and investigate suspected harm, neglect or abuse and, where risk has been identified, agree plans to address it urgently. Social workers will need to cooperate closely with relevant colleagues and agencies to consider options for action. They will maintain a focus on the person at risk, whatever other demands or issues come to light. All of this must be done within the law, and often under pressure. The concerns regarding the social worker's lack of management oversight, if found subsequently found proven, had the potential to adversely impact on the quality of casework conducted by their team members.

With regards to record-keeping, social workers are required to maintain accurate, clear, objective, accurate and up-to-date records; this is an essential part of social work. Documenting decisions and actions provides a clear record of work with people. These records are open to scrutiny and help to provide a continuity of support if people are transferred between social workers. They can help to protect people and social workers. If, as alleged, the social worker failed to hold formal supervisions with their staff, and document case supervision decisions, then this would be likely to represent a significant breach of standard, 3.11.

With regards to concerns 2 and 3, the allegations include dishonesty which, if subsequently found proven, is likely to be considered particularly serious. Social workers are required to be open and honest with people, including when something goes wrong. Where they are not open and honest, it can put people at risk and may damage confidence in them as a social worker and the social work profession. If these concerns are subsequently found proven, they are likely to be considered a significant breach of standards 2.1 and 5.2.

The case examiners have considered information presented to them which does suggest that the social worker had a workload which they considered to impact on their ability to effectively conduct all of the actions required of them as a supervisor. This included trying to cover the workload of an absent PA, and also demanding administrative tasks. The social worker has also indicated that at the time the concerns arose, they were also facing a number of personal challenges. However, while there is no evidence that the social worker intended for their actions or omissions to place service users at risk, as a supervisor they should have been aware of the need to clearly seek support if they felt unable to perform their role to the

standard expected. In addition, the case examiners are not of the view that the mitigation put forward by the social worker is such as to justify making dishonest statements to Professional A, which provided an assurance that actions required of them were being completed when that not the case. As well as potentially being dishonest, the actions of the social worker in this regard demonstrate that rather than seek support for tasks they felt unable to complete, they instead provided false information about what they had achieved.

The case examiners therefore consider there to be a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the grounds of misconduct proven.

Impairment

Assessment of impairment consists of two elements:

1. The personal element, established via an assessment of the risk of repetition.
2. The public element, established through consideration of whether a finding of impairment might be required to maintain public confidence in the social work profession, or in the maintenance of proper standards for social workers.

Personal element

With regards to the concerns before the regulator, the case examiners have given thought to their guidance, and they note that they should give consideration to whether the matters before the regulator are easily remediable, and whether the social worker has demonstrated insight and/or conducted remediation to the effect that the risk of repetition is highly unlikely.

Whether the conduct can be easily remedied

In relation to concern 1 (1.1-1.4) the case examiners are of the view that the conduct can be remediated. For example, this could be achieved through evidence of good insight by the social worker into their alleged failings; an understanding of the potential for harm and adverse impact on the profession and public confidence; and evidence of reflection and further training, to a degree that reassures case examiners that future repetition is highly unlikely.

Cases involving dishonesty can be more difficult to remediate, as they relate to a social worker's character. However, the case examiners are aware that every case must be treated on its own merits, and that a finding of dishonesty need not inexorably lead to a finding of impaired fitness to practise. This may be the case, for

example, where dishonest actions are isolated in nature, and there is evidence of early insight and remediation.

Insight and remediation

The case examiners are of the view that the social worker has shown some insight into the alleged concern at 1 (1.1-1.4); they have accepted the concerns and shown an understanding of, and have reflected on, how the situation arose.

For example, the social worker advises that they “*know that I did not fulfil the duties of a Team Manager to the expectations expected and I have admitted this*”. They also submit that, on reflection, “*the mix of reduced staffing, increased workload, ... (personal issues) impacted on me but it is evident that this did have a negative impact on my [REDACTED] health as well as confidence and a feeling of not being able to undertake the role to the best of my abilities. I did try to rectify the situation but can see now that I was completely overwhelmed*”.

However, the case examiners do not consider that the social worker’s insight is full, and they have not presented any evidence of how they remediated or how they would respond differently in future to avoid any risk of repetition. For example, the social worker states that they “*did not have the right support in place to assist me at this time*”, whereas the supervision records do not indicate that the social worker sought specific support, or made it clear to their managers that they were facing difficulties that they could not address themselves.

With regards to the allegation of dishonesty, the social workers admissions are isolated to an acceptance that were dishonest, but they do not provide any insight into the seriousness of their actions and the potential impact on public confidence. Again, the social worker does not provide any evidence of remediation, such as to reassure the case examiners that they would not act in the same way in future.

Risk of repetition

In the absence of clear insight and remediation, the case examiners are of the view that there is a risk of repetition.

Public element

The case examiners have next considered whether the social worker’s actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in the social work profession, or the maintenance of proper standards for social workers.

The case examiners have reminded themselves that the public interest includes responding proportionately to regulatory concerns. They note from their guidance that

concerns involving dishonesty are *“likely to be viewed particularly seriously given the access social workers have to people’s homes and lives”*; and that *“it is essential to the effective delivery of social work that the public can trust social workers implicitly”*.

With regards to this case, the evidence presented to the case examiners indicates that the social worker failed to provide management oversight to their team, and was then dishonest when challenged about holding supervision meetings with them. The case examiners consider that a fully informed member of the public would be concerned by the alleged conduct in this case.

In the case examiners’ view, a finding of impairment is required to maintain public confidence in both the social work profession, and in the regulator’s maintenance of proper standards for social workers.

Accordingly, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators making a finding of current impairment.

The public interest

Decision summary

Is there a public interest in referring the case to a hearing?	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Referral criteria

Is there a conflict in the evidence that must be resolved at a hearing?	Yes	☐
	No	☒
Does the social worker dispute any or all of the key facts of the case?	Yes	☐
	No	☒
Is a hearing necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession, and/or to uphold the professional standards of social workers?	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Additional reasoning

The case examiners have given careful consideration to whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. The case examiners have noted the following:

- The case examiners guidance reminds them that “wherever possible and appropriate, case examiners will seek to resolve cases through accepted disposal. This is quicker and more efficient than preparing and presenting a case to a fitness to practise panel”.
- The social worker’s submissions, while accepting the facts of the concerns, do not indicate whether they also accept that they are currently impaired. The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker with the opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on grounds and impairment, and reflect on whether they accept a finding of impairment.
- It is open to the social worker to reject any accepted disposal proposal and request a hearing if they wish to reject the case examiners finding on the facts and grounds, or explore the question of impairment in more detail.

- The case examiners are aware that a case cannot be concluded through an accepted disposal process where a social worker does not indicate that they are currently impaired. At this stage, however, the case examiners' proposal for an accepted disposal process does not mark the conclusion of the case, as that would require a response from the social worker for the case examiners' consideration. It is also subject to a final review of the case by the case examiners, who may determine to send the matter to a hearing following any response received.

Interim order

An interim order may be necessary for protection of members of the public	Yes	☐
	No	☒
An interim order may be necessary in the best interests of the social worker	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☐
	Conditions of practice order	☐
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☒
Proposed duration	Where a social worker is removed from the register, there is no defined end to the finding of impairment. A social worker that has been removed from the register may only apply to be restored to the register 5 years after the date the removal order took effect. The adjudicators will decide whether to restore a person to the register.	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners have had regard to Social Work England's impairment and sanctions guidance (December 2022) and reminded themselves that the purpose of sanction is not to punish the social worker but to protect the public and the wider public interest.

In determining the most appropriate and proportionate outcome in this case, the case examiners considered the available options in ascending order of seriousness.

The case examiners determined that taking no further action was not appropriate in a case where it has been alleged that the social worker has failed to provide management oversight, has been dishonest when challenged about their performance, and has not subsequently demonstrated insight and remediation, such as would suggest no future risk of repetition. Taking no further action is not sufficient to mark the seriousness with which the case examiners view the social worker's alleged conduct, and fails to safeguard the wider public interest.

The case examiners have considered offering advice or a warning to the social worker, but they note the sanctions guidance which states these outcomes do not directly

restrict practice. Further, the guidance makes it clear that this outcome is unlikely to be appropriate where there is a continuing risk of repetition, which the case examiners believe is applicable in this case due to their findings of limited insight and an absence of remediation to date.

Next, the case examiners turned their minds to conditions of practice. The primary purpose of a conditions of practice order is to protect the public whilst the social worker takes any necessary steps to remediate their fitness to practise. Conditions are most commonly applied in cases of lack of competence or ill health. The sanctions guidance states that conditions are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitudinal or behavioural failings. As allegations of dishonesty may indicate a potential character flaw, the case examiners do not consider conditions of practice to be appropriate or workable in this case. Further, conditions appear to be potentially unworkable as the social worker does not appear to currently be employed as a social worker. The case examiners consider that in the circumstances of this case, conditions would not protect the public and wider public confidence, and also would not reflect the seriousness of the alleged concerns.

As such, the case examiners went on to consider suspension. The sanctions guidance states that suspension is appropriate where no workable conditions can be formulated that can protect the public or the wider public interest, but where the case falls short of requiring removal from the register. The case examiners gave careful consideration to whether suspension would be an appropriate sanction; however, they specifically noted the following points from their guidance.

Suspension may be appropriate where (all of the following):

- *the concerns represent a serious breach of the professional standards*
- *the social worker has demonstrated some insight*
- *there is evidence to suggest the social worker is willing and able to resolve or remediate their failings*

When a suspension order may not be appropriate

Suspension is likely to be unsuitable in circumstances where (both of the following):

- *the social worker has not demonstrated any insight and remediation*
- *there is limited evidence to suggest they are willing (or able) to resolve or remediate their failings*

Having done so, the case examiners were of the view that as the social worker has shown limited insight and remediation, and has not provided sufficient evidence to

suggest that they are able to remediate such serious concerns, then suspension is not appropriate in this case.

The case examiners then turned their minds to removal. In light of the serious nature of the allegations, which include dishonesty and a risk of repetition, the case examiners are of the view that no other outcome than a removal order is sufficient to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession, and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

To conclude, the case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a removal order. They request that the social worker is notified of their proposal, and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly. The social worker will be offered 28 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

Response from the social worker

On 6 March 2025 the social worker responded to the proposed accepted disposal as follows:

"I have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide. I admit the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, and that my fitness to practise is impaired. I understand the terms of the proposed disposal of my fitness to practise case and accept them in full".

Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners have reviewed their decision, paying particular regard to the overarching objectives of Social Work England:

- The protection of the public
- Maintaining confidence in the social work profession
- The maintenance of professional standards.

The case examiners remain satisfied that an accepted disposal removal order is a fair and proportionate way to conclude this matter, and is the minimum sanction required to protect the public and the wider public interest.