



Case Examiner Decision

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FTPS-23925

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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	
Preliminary outcome	9 March 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed – one year warning
Final outcome	23 March 2026
	Accepted disposal – one year warning

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 1 being found proven by the adjudicators. [REDACTED]
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 1 being found to amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concern 1, 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 warning of one year's duration. The case examiners were subsequently informed that the social worker had agreed to this

proposal, accepting its terms in full. Having again reviewed their decision, the case examiners have concluded that an accepted disposal by way of a warning order of one year's duration remains a fair and proportionate disposal, and the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.

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 [REDACTED] will be redacted only from the published copy of the decision, and will therefore be shared with the complainant in their copy. Text in [REDACTED] will be redacted from both the complainant's and the published copy of the decision.

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by way of a self-referral by the social worker.
Date the complaint was received	24 May 2024.
Complaint summary	<p>It is alleged that, following a school reporting to the social worker that child B had disclosed potential sexual abuse towards them by child A, the social worker failed to respond in a timely manner, thus leaving child B exposed to a continuing risk of harm.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

Regulatory concerns

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

Regulatory concern 1

Whilst registered as a social worker on 29 April 2024 you:

1. Did not take timely action upon receiving a safeguarding disclosure from Child B's school

The matter outlined in regulatory concern 1 amounts to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

[REDACTED]



Preliminary issues

Investigation		
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has been notified of the grounds for investigation?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has had reasonable opportunity to make written representations to the investigators?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 concern 1 being found proven, that the concern could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Regulatory concern 1

Whilst registered as a social worker on 29 April 2024 you:

1. Did not take timely action upon receiving a safeguarding disclosure from Child B's school

The case examiners have carefully considered all of the information provided to them, and have summarised what they consider to be the key points relating to the facts of regulatory concern 1.

The social worker's self-referral to Social Work England (24 May 2024) outlines that:

- They are deeply remorseful for not having responded to a safeguarding issue in respect of a child in a timely way;
- They “*totally accept*” responsibility for failing to respond as required
- No such incident had occurred at any other time in their “24 years” of working as a social worker, and that they had “*always prided (themselves) on being a responsive worker and identifying risks and concerns and acting appropriately throughout (their) career*”.
- While they are unable to provide a reason for not responding in a timely manner to the disclosure relevant to regulatory concern 1, once they realised their omission a few days later, the social worker informed their manager and proceeded to take the required action.
- That at the time the actions occurred, the social work was feeling stressed and overwhelmed by a series of challenging events in their personal life and was also distracted by other case work.

The employer investigation outcome report dated 2 August 2024 records that:

- Child A and child B were already known to social care and allocated to the social worker when the concerns arose.
- On 29 April 2024 a school reported to the social worker that child B had that day made a disclosure indicating potential [REDACTED] abuse towards them by child A [REDACTED]
- On 2 May 2024 the social worker advised their team manager of the disclosure and commenced taking required actions in relation to it.
- The police advised that the delay in informing them of child B’s disclosure adversely impacted on their ability to obtain forensic medical evidence.
- The delay in acting on the disclosure delayed safety planning and potentially left child B exposed to continuing risk of abuse from child A for a period of around 4 days.
- That in the employer interview, the social worker was able to articulate what actions they should have taken as soon as they were made aware of child B’s disclosure, and took responsibility for failing to act as they should have done.

Supervision records for the social worker, dated between February 2023 and March 2024, indicate that:

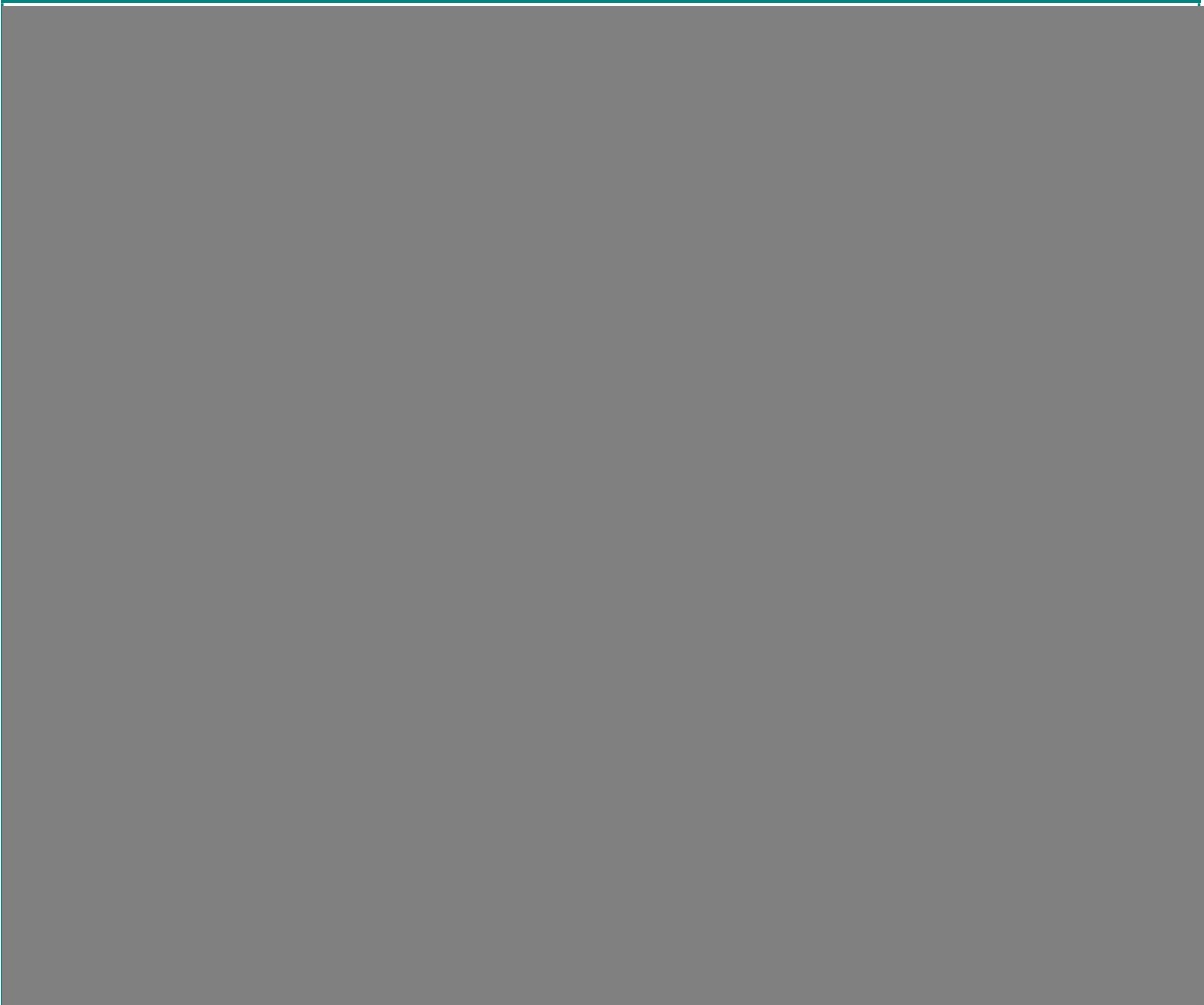
■ The social worker had protracted periods of absence from work due to matters related to health and/or significant personal challenges ■

- In order to support them during this period, the social worker ■
■ as provided with a reduced caseload, which was gradually increased including in the period just prior to regulatory concern 1 arising.

In their submissions, the social worker indicates that they admit regulatory concern 1.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is cogent evidence, as summarised above, to suggest that the social worker failed to take timely actions required to safeguard child B, and prevent child A from engaging in potentially criminal behaviour, upon receiving a disclosure of potential abuse of Child B.

The case examiners are therefore satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 proven in relation to the facts.



The case examiners have been asked to consider the statutory grounds of misconduct in relation to regulatory concern 1.

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, they are of the view that the social worker may have breached the following professional standards:

3.2 I will use information from a range of appropriate sources, including supervision, to inform assessments, to analyse risk, and to make a professional decision.

3.4 Recognise the risk indicators of different forms of abuse and neglect and their impact on people, their families and their support networks.

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.

3.12 I will use my assessment skills to respond quickly to dangerous situations and take any necessary protective action.

Having carefully considered the evidence presented to them, and the standards in place at the relevant time, the case examiners consider there to be evidence to indicate that the social worker's conduct may have fallen significantly short of what would be expected of them as an experienced social worker. The social worker's alleged lack of timely action potentially left a young child in a situation of unassessed risk and/or exposed them to the potential of further serious harm; it also potentially impacted on the police's ability to preserve evidence relevant to any criminal investigation. This indicates to the case examiners that the alleged misconduct was serious.

Social Work England's professional standards guidance 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. It also reminds them that they 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, and when working under pressure. Failing to promptly act on the concerns raised with them in relation to child B's safety, including liaising with the police, the social worker potentially breached standards 3.2; 3.4; 3.9 and 3.12.

The case examiners have noted that the concerns relate to an isolated incident within an otherwise long and unblemished career. However, in light of the immediate and serious risk of continuing or further harm that child B was potentially left exposed to by the social worker's alleged inactions, they do consider the alleged conduct to be sufficiently serious to engage the grounds of misconduct. Further, the alleged perpetrator of abuse on child B in this case was also a child, and failing to take prompt action may have resulted in child A engaging in abusive behaviour that could have been prevented with prompt intervention and support.

Further, the case examiners have also considered the mitigation provided by the social worker with regards to the challenging personal circumstances that they were experiencing at the time the concerns arose, and other work that they believe may have distracted them and contributed to them failing to take the requisite actions required to ensure that child B was safeguarded, and interventions put in place to prevent child A engaging in abusive and criminal behaviour. While there is evidence to support the mitigation presented by the social worker, the case examiners have also noted that the social worker was already on a reduced case-load to assist them in managing their workload, and are of the view that the circumstances faced by the social worker, while clearly challenging, did not justify the social worker failing to fulfil fundamental safeguarding responsibilities towards a child who was clearly at risk of serious harm.

Having considered the evidence available, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find the ground of misconduct engaged.

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

The case examiners do consider that the alleged conduct is remediable, for example through the social worker demonstrating insight and reflection on their alleged acts and/or omissions, together with a consideration of how they might respond differently in future.

Insight and remediation

The case examiners consider that the social worker has shown good and early insight, both during their employer's investigation and in their engagement with Social Work England, and has engaged in some remediation, including reflection. For example, the social worker has accessed [REDACTED] support to assist in them addressing their responses to personal challenges, which they consider contributed to them acting as alleged. The social worker has demonstrated that they understand what immediate safeguarding actions they should have taken when informed by the school with the disclosure made by child B, and the potential impact that their alleged actions had on child B, including exposing them to risk of serious harm.

The case examiners note, however, that the social worker has not been in a social work role since the concerns arose, and as such has not yet been exposed to the more challenging demands of social work practice; as such they have not been able to demonstrate that they can hold a full case load as a social worker and not repeat the actions that led to regulatory concern 1 arising. As such, the case examiners do not consider remediation, while clearly being developed by the social worker, and subject to positive comments from other professionals [REDACTED] to yet be complete.

Risk of repetition

While the case examiners have identified that remediation on the part of the social worker may not yet be complete, they are satisfied, due to clear evidence of insight and the reflections presented by the social worker, that the risk of repetition is low.

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.

Having carefully considered all of the information presented to them, the case examiners are of the view that a fully informed and reasonable member of the public, while likely to be reassured by the finding of a low risk of repetition and sympathetic to the difficult personal challenges that the social worker faced at the time the concern arose, would still be concerned that a vulnerable child was not safeguarded appropriately and was potentially exposed to a continuing risk of serious harm.

The case examiners consider that a finding of impairment and an appropriate sanction would be expected by the public to maintain public confidence in the profession and maintaining professional standards.

Accordingly, the case examiners have concluded there is a realistic prospect that a finding of current impairment would be made by adjudicators, should the regulatory concern be found proven.

The public interest

Decision summary

Is there a public interest in referring the case to a hearing?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Referral criteria

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

Additional reasoning

The case examiners have considered whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest, and have noted the following:

There is no conflict in the evidence in this case and the social worker accepts the facts of the concern.

While the social worker has indicated that they do not consider themselves to be currently impaired, the case examiners' decision and proposal will allow the social worker to review the case examiners' reasoning on facts and impairment and consider whether they do accept the case examiners' findings. It is open to the social worker to reject any accepted disposal proposal and request a hearing if they disagree with the case examiner's findings, including on impairment.

The case examiners are therefore of the view that the public would be satisfied to see the regulator take prompt, firm action in this case, with the publication of an accepted disposal decision providing a steer to the public and the profession on the

importance of adhering to the professional standards expected of social workers in England.

Interim order

An interim order may be necessary for protection of members of the public	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An interim order may be necessary in the best interests of the social worker	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

Proposed outcome	No further action	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Advice	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Warning order	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of practice order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Suspension order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Removal order	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed duration	1 year	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England’s Sanctions Guidance (2022) and reminded themselves that the purpose of a 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. Before doing this, they also noted the key mitigating and aggravating factors relevant to this case:

Mitigating factors:

Strong insight and developing remediation;

Absence of previous fitness to practise history;

Isolated incident;

Personal and professional challenges impacting on the social worker’s wellbeing at the time the concerns arose.

Aggravating factors:

Significant risk of serious harm to a child.

The case examiners commenced by considering whether it may be appropriate to reach a finding of impairment, with no requirement for any further action (a no further action outcome). The case examiners were satisfied that in this case, given the potential significant risk of harm to a child posed by the social worker's alleged conduct, a finding of no further action would be insufficient to protect public confidence.

The case examiners have next considered whether offering advice would be sufficient in this case. Advice will normally set out the steps a social worker should take to address the behaviour that led to the regulatory proceedings. The case examiners consider that whilst they could offer advice to prevent this situation arising again, this would also not be sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they viewed the social worker's conduct.

The case examiners went on to consider a warning order, which would provide a clearer expression of disapproval of the social worker's conduct than an advice order, and which is intended to signal that the social worker is highly likely to receive a more severe sanction if they repeat the behaviour.

Their guidance also reminds case examiners that a warning order is likely to be appropriate where (all of the following):

- the fitness to practise issue is isolated or limited
- there is a low risk of repetition
- the social worker has demonstrated insight

Decision makers should consider issuing a warning order where (both of the following apply):

- they cannot formulate any appropriate or proportionate conditions of practice
- a suspension order would be disproportionate

The case examiners concluded that, in light of the mitigating factors identified by them in this case, that a warning order is the most appropriate and proportionate outcome, and represents the minimum sanction necessary to adequately address the public's confidence in the profession.

The case examiners also considered that a warning order would sufficiently mark the seriousness with which the case examiners view the social worker's conduct, and

would appropriately safeguard public confidence in the social work profession, and in the regulator's maintenance of professional standards for social workers.

In reaching this conclusion, the case examiners also considered that higher sanctions, i.e., a conditions of practice order or a suspension order, would be disproportionate in the circumstances of this case. The concerns appear to have arisen at a time when the social worker faced specific personal and professional challenges, and there is evidence that the social worker has already taken appropriate steps to mitigate the impact of such challenges in the future. The case examiners are therefore satisfied that conditions of practice are not required, and would be disproportionate in the circumstances of this case. Further, this is not a case which has fallen only marginally short of requiring removal from practise, so a suspension order is not considered appropriate.

The case examiners therefore moved on to consider the length of the warning order, with reference to the regulator's sanctions guidance. Warning orders can be imposed for one, three or five years. The case examiners are satisfied that in this case a one year warning order would be sufficient to mark the seriousness of the conduct in question. In reaching this conclusion, the case examiners referred to their sanctions guidance, and noted that the guidance states that such a period may be appropriate for an isolated incident of relatively low seriousness. In these cases, the primary objective of the warning is to highlight the professional standards expected of social workers. The case examiners were of the view that, although they do not consider this case to be one of 'low seriousness', this should be weighed against the mitigating factors relevant at the time. In light of evidence of good insight and developing remediation, and that the social worker's alleged conduct was isolated and appears to have occurred at a particularly challenging time, the case examiners are satisfied that a one year warning is sufficient to protect the public, and to safeguard public confidence.

To test this position, the case examiners considered the guidance in respect of a three-year order, which may be appropriate for more serious concerns, or a five-year order, for where a case has fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction of practice. The case examiners gave consideration to a longer order, but are of the view that, in light of the mitigating features and their impact on an otherwise unblemished career, a one year order was sufficient to protect the public, and to safeguard public confidence; as such a longer order would be disproportionate. The case examiners are also not of the view that this is a case that has fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction to practice.

The case examiners have therefore decided to propose to the social worker a warning order of one year's duration. They will now notify the social worker of their intention

and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly. The social worker will be offered 14 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.

Content of the warning

The case examiners formally warn the social worker as follows:

Your conduct in this case was a significant breach of a fundamental tenet of social work with regards to failing to safeguard a vulnerable child, and potentially preventing another child from engaging in serious criminal behaviour; it placed them at risk of harm, as well as having an adverse impact on public confidence in you as a social worker and the social work profession.

The case examiners warn that as a social worker, it is of paramount importance that you are able to work to the required professional standards even when under pressure, and that if you are not able to do so, that you inform your manager promptly and continue to seek support.

The case examiners specifically remind you of the following Social Work England professional standards (2019):

As a social worker, I will:

3.2 Use information from a range of appropriate sources, including supervision, to inform assessments, to analyse risk, and to make a professional decision.

3.4 Recognise the risk indicators of different forms of abuse and neglect and their impact on people, their families and their support networks.

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.

3.12 Use my assessment skills to respond quickly to dangerous situations and take any necessary protective action.

The conduct that led to this complaint should not be repeated. Any similar conduct or matters brought to the attention of the regulator are likely to result in a more serious outcome.

Response from the social worker

On 22 March 2026 the social worker accepted the proposed disposal, confirming that they had:

- read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide;
- admitted the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, and that their fitness to practise is impaired;
- understood the terms of the proposed disposal of their fitness to practise case and accepted them in full.

Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners concluded that the social worker's fitness to practise was likely to be found impaired, but that the public interest could be met through a prompt conclusion, published decision and warning, rather than through a public hearing. They proposed a warning with a duration of one year and the social worker accepted in full the terms of this proposal.

In light of the social worker's acceptance of the warning, the case examiners have considered again whether there would be a public interest in referring this matter to a public hearing. They remain of the view that this is unnecessary for the reasons set out earlier in the decision.

Having been advised of the social worker's response, the case examiners have again turned their minds as to whether a warning remains the most appropriate means of disposal for this case. They have reviewed their decision, paying particular regard to the overarching objectives of Social Work England, i.e., protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the social work profession, and the maintenance of proper standards. Having done so, they remain of the view that an accepted disposal by way of a warning order of one year duration is a fair and proportionate disposal, and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.