

Case Examiner Decision
Sarah Alohan – SW140487
FTPS-23524

Contents

The role of the case examiners	3
Decision summary	4
The complaint and our regulatory concerns	6
Preliminary issues.....	8
The realistic prospect test	10
The public interest	19
Accepted disposal	21

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	06 May 2025
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	05 June 2025
	Accepted disposal - removal order

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1, 2, and 3 being found proven by the adjudicators. [REDACTED]
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1, 2, and 3 being found to amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1, 2, and 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

confirmed that they accepted the terms of the proposed disposal in full. Having reviewed their determination and the public interest in the case, the case examiners considered that an accepted disposal removal order remained an appropriate outcome.

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.

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.

Child A

Child B

Child C

Child D

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	18 April 2024
Complaint summary	The social worker's former employer raised concerns with regards to their professional conduct. The regulatory concerns are set out in full below.

Regulatory concerns and concerns recommended for closure

Whilst registered as a social worker

RC1. You recorded a visit to Child A on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

RC2. You recorded a visit to Child B on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

RC3. Your actions in concerns (1) and (2) above were dishonest.

Grounds of impairment

The matters outlined in regulatory concerns (1), (2) and (3) amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct.



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 case examiners have made the following amendments to the regulatory concerns:

The case examiners noted initials had been used in the original regulatory concerns to identify the children. To ensure complete anonymity, the case examiners have changed this to non-specific alphabetised identifiers. They consider this an administrative change only.

The case examiners have changed the wording in regulatory concern 1 and 2 to make clear the concerns. They are of the view that as 'falsification' implies dishonesty, that aspect of the concern should be addressed by concern 3, while concern 1 should focus on the alleged act of making a recording. They do not consider this a material change and are of the view that it does not prejudice the social worker.

Original drafted regulatory concerns:

RC1. You falsified a record of a visit to Child A on the 15th of June 2023.

RC2. You falsified a record of a visit to Child B on the 15th of June 2023.

Amended regulatory concerns:

RC1. You recorded a visit to Child A on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

RC2. You recorded a visit to Child B on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

The case examiners are aware of the need to consider cases expeditiously and the need to ensure fairness to all parties. They have also noted the case examiner guidance, which states they should only request further information if it would not be possible to reach a decision without it.

The case examiners are satisfied that the amendments they have made are minor, and they therefore considered it to be unnecessary and disproportionate to delay consideration of the case further by seeking additional submissions from the social worker. They are satisfied that their chosen course of action is consistent with their guidance.

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, 2, and 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

RC1. You recorded a visit to Child A on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

RC2. You recorded a visit to Child B on the 15th of June 2023 which did not take place.

The case examiners have carefully reviewed the available evidence and noted that both Child A and Child B were children in the care of the local authority. They both

resided in the same residential children's home in the timeframe covered by the regulatory concerns.

It is not in dispute that the social worker was the allocated social worker for Child A and Child B during the time covered in the regulatory concerns.

The case examiners have had sight of the case recording, identified by the complainant as detailing a visit completed to Child B on 15 June 2023. They note that a deletion request was received from the social worker in respect of this case record on or around 06 September 2023.

Whilst the case examiners note that the case recording for Child A has not been able to be recovered by the complainant, they are satisfied that they have had sight of the deletion request for the case record dated 06 September 2023, and the social worker does not dispute making an entry dated 15 June 2023 detailing a visit to Child A.

The residential children's home for Child A and Child B hold a record of all visitors to the establishment. The case examiners have had sight of information shared by the residential children's home with the regulator which confirms that no visit was recorded as being undertaken to Child A and Child B on 15 June 2023 by the social worker. The children's residential home has a record of the social worker visiting the establishment on 14 June 2023 to drop laptops off, but state that both Child A and Child B were out at the time. The next visit by the social worker to the children is recorded as 26 July 2023.

The social worker was interviewed during the former employer's internal investigation and stated that the visits were recorded under the wrong date. The social worker, at that time, stated that the visit took place on 22 June 2023 not the 15 June 2023 as detailed on the case record. They state that they visited another child who lived nearby on 22 June 2023, but records indicate that that other child was visited 'virtually', rather than in person. In a subsequent interview with their employer, the social worker is recorded as stating that a visit did not occur to Child A or Child B on 22 June 2023 either, but that the visit took place on 26 July 2023.

The social worker, in their submissions to the regulator, accepts they recorded a visit to Child A and Child B on the computer database, dated 15 June 2023. They state: *'On the 15th of June 2023, I inaccurately documented visits to two children, (Child A and Child B). These actions were unintentional.'*

In light of the above, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concerns 1 and 2 being found proven.

RC3. Your actions in concerns (1) and (2) above were dishonest.

In considering regulatory concern 3, the case examiners have applied the test for dishonesty, which consists of two parts – the subjective test and the objective test.

The subjective test

The subjective test requires the case examiners to assess the evidence to ascertain the social worker's actual knowledge or belief as to the facts. The question is not whether the social worker's beliefs are reasonable, but whether they were genuinely held at that time.

The case examiners have set out at the facts stage the social worker's account in respect of their visit to Child A and Child B detailed in regulatory concern 1 and 2. In broad terms, the social worker's position is that:

For both Child A and Child B, they accept that there was no visit on 15 June 2023, but that this was a case record entry made, documenting the wrong date. They state during the internal investigation that the visit for both children actually took place on 22 June 2023 but that these visits were not recorded. In a subsequent interview, they state that the visit took place on 26 July 2023.

The case examiners note that the complainant states that the social worker made a request for the deletion of the case notes dated 15 June 2023 on or around 06 September 2023.

The case examiners are open to the possibility that there is a plausible explanation for the matters before the regulator. However, they nevertheless take the view that adjudicators could, potentially, find that the social worker's account is not an accurate reflection of events. This may indicate that the social worker knew that the record indicating a visit on 15 June 2023 was inaccurate when they made it and provided further inaccurate accounts as to when this visit occurred when questioned.

In reaching this view, the case examiners note the evidence before them from the residential children's home of both Child A and Child B, which states that their internal records show that the social worker visited the establishment on 14 June 2023 but did not see Child A or Child B. The records show the social worker did not complete a visit to either child in June 2023.

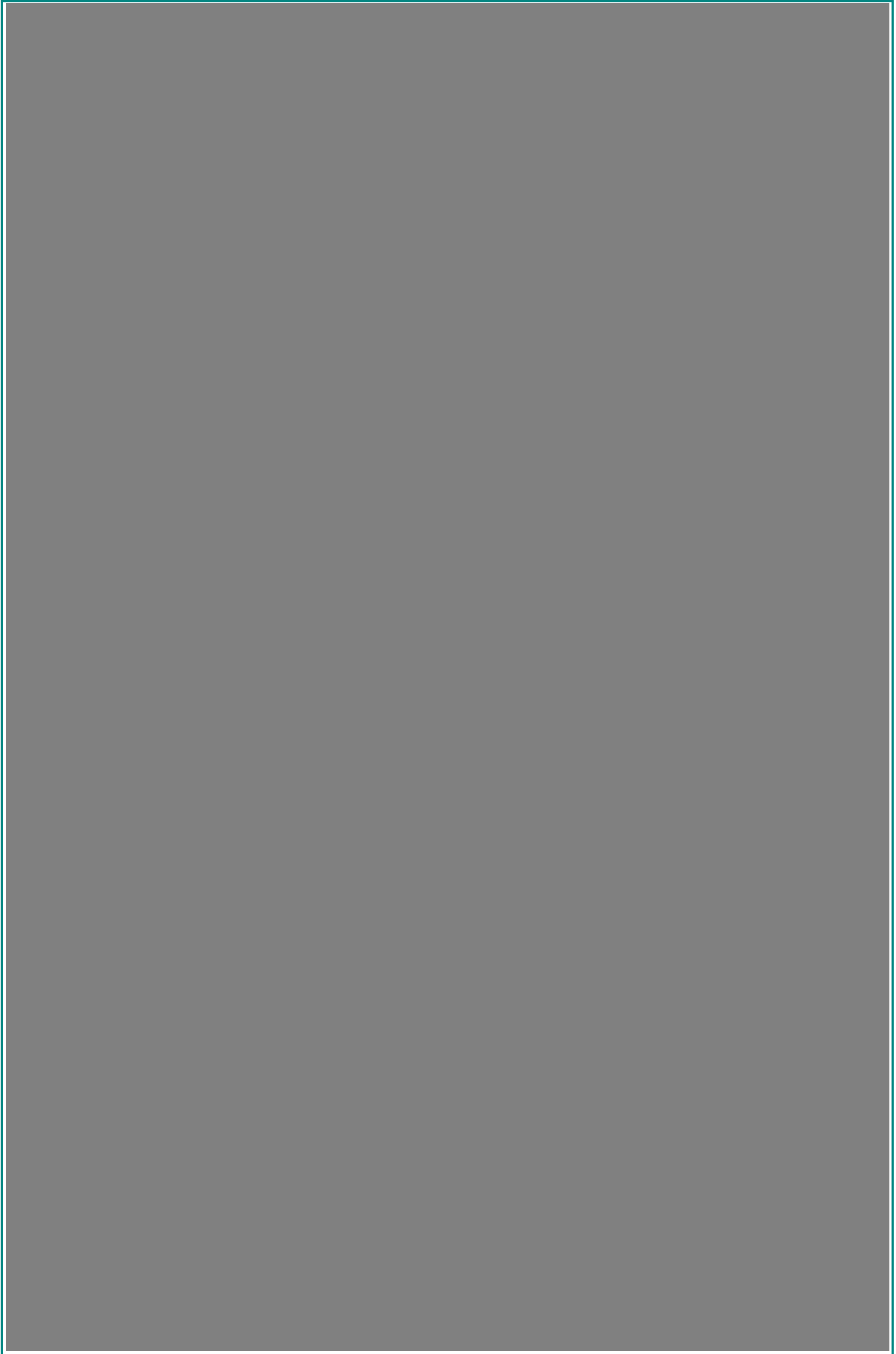
The case examiners do note that the records in question, whilst affecting two case records do cover one day of the social worker's practice. They have not been presented with evidence of similar conduct or any alleged pattern of inaccurate case recordings.

The objective test

The objective test requires the case examiners to consider whether the social worker's alleged conduct may be considered dishonest by the objective standards of ordinary decent people. There is no requirement for the social worker to appreciate that their conduct is, by the objective standards of ordinary decent people, dishonest.

The case examiners are satisfied that if it were to be determined that the social worker did not conduct visits and then recorded that a visit had taken place knowing that it had not, ordinary decent people might consider this to dishonestly represent the work that had been completed.

Accordingly, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 3 being found proven.





Grounds

The case examiners are aware that there is no legal definition of misconduct, but it generally would 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 the following standards, which were applicable at the time of the concerns.

Social Work England: Professional Standards (2019)

Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people

As a social worker, I will:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

Be accountable for the quality of my practice and the decisions I make

As a social worker, I will:

3.8 Clarify where the accountability lies for delegated work and fulfil that responsibility when it lies with me.

Act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity

As a social worker, I will not:

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.

5.3 Falsify records or condone this by others.

In this case, it is alleged that the social worker has falsified records, effectively covering up visits that have not been undertaken. The case examiners are mindful that honesty is key to good social work practice. Social workers are routinely trusted with access to private spaces (such as people's homes), and highly sensitive and confidential information (such as case notes).

The case examiners' guidance is clear that the most serious instances of dishonesty in professional practice include those which have the potential to put service users at risk. The guidance is explicitly clear that this includes the falsification of records (such as falsely recording that a statutory visit has been carried out). The case examiners consider dishonesty, if proven, to significantly exacerbate the severity of the matters before the regulator and to represent a significant departure from the professional standards.

In light of the above, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the statutory grounds of misconduct are 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 are mindful that their decision-making guidance is clear that concerns that raise questions of character (such as dishonesty) may be harder to remediate. This is because it is more difficult to produce objective evidence of reformed character. That is not to say that remediation is insurmountable, but the case examiners would expect to see evidence of significant and sustained reflection and remediation in order to be assured that the risk of repetition is reduced.

Insight and remediation

The case examiners have carefully reviewed the social worker's submissions and note that they deny all concerns before the regulator. The social worker has offered limited commentary on the facts alleged, stating briefly that they inputted an incorrect date on the two records in question.

The social worker has stated, in their submissions to the regulator: *'The period surrounding these events was exceptionally challenging for me personally and professionally, which contributed to my poor responds (sic). While these factors do not excuse my actions, I believe they offer some context to why they happened.'*

The social worker has stated they have developed a personal action plan '*focussed on being more mindful of my workload and proactively seeking help when necessary.*' They also state they have completed a personal reflection as part of their CPD. The social worker has not presented any evidence of the action plan or reflection during the fitness to practice process.

Risk of repetition

In light of the social worker's limited submissions, the case examiners can only conclude that if the concerns in this case were to be found proven, a risk of repetition would remain.

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.

In considering the public element, the case examiners reminded themselves that their guidance is clear that the most serious instances of dishonesty in professional practice include those which have the potential to put service users at risk. The guidance is explicitly clear that this includes the falsification of records (such as falsely recording that a statutory visit has been carried out).

The case examiners consider that a failure to find impairment in such cases would pose a real risk of substantially undermining public confidence in the social work profession, and the maintenance of proper professional standards for social workers.

In light of the above, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is impaired.

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 noted that the social worker does not accept dishonesty and has indicated to the regulator that they do not consider their fitness to practise to be currently impaired. Where a social worker does not accept impairment, case examiner guidance suggests that a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest.

However, the case examiners note that the guidance states the social worker must accept the regulatory concerns and the matter of impairment at the point of *concluding* the case and are of the view that this does not prevent them offering accepted disposal prior to this. The case examiners have noted the following:

- The case examiners are of the view that there is a high risk of repetition, however, they consider that this can be managed through the sanctions available to them.

- The case examiners recognise that not all professionals will have an innate understanding of how and when the public interest may be engaged, or how exactly this might impact upon findings concerning current fitness to practise.
- The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker an opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on dishonesty and impairment and reflect on whether they are able to accept a finding. It is open to the social worker to reject any accepted disposal proposal and request a hearing if they wish.
- The case examiners are also of the view that the public would be satisfied to see the regulator take prompt, fair and just 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	☐
	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
Having found that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired, the case examiners then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case. The case examiners have taken into account the Sanctions Guidance published by Social Work England. They are reminded that a sanction is not intended to be punitive but may have a punitive effect and have borne in mind the principle of proportionality and fairness in determining the appropriate sanction. The case examiners are also mindful that the purpose of any sanction is to protect the public which includes maintaining public confidence in the profession and Social Work England as its regulator and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour. The case examiners have taken into account the principle of proportionality by weighing the social worker's interests with the public interest when considering each available sanction in ascending order of severity.

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

No further action

The case examiners conclude that in view of the nature and seriousness of the social worker's misconduct which led to a finding of impairment, which has not been remediated and in the absence of exceptional circumstances, it would be inappropriate to take no action. Furthermore, it would be insufficient to protect the public, maintain public confidence and uphold the reputation of the profession.

Advice or warning

The case examiners have then considered whether to issue advice or a warning. They note that neither of these sanctions would restrict the social worker's ability to practise and, therefore, it is not appropriate where there is a current risk to public safety.

Conditions of practice order

Conditions of practice may be appropriate in cases where (all of the following):

- *the social worker has demonstrated insight*
- *the failure or deficiency in practice is capable of being remedied*
- *appropriate, proportionate, and workable conditions can be put in place*
- *decision makers are confident the social worker can and will comply with the conditions*
- *the social worker does not pose a risk of harm to the public by being in restricted practice*

The social worker has not demonstrated insight, and the nature of dishonesty is such that it provides a significant challenge to remediation. The case examiners note the guidance states that conditions of practice *are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitude or behavioural failings*, for example dishonesty.

The case examiners have determined that they cannot formulate conditions that would adequately address the risk posed by the social worker that would protect the public.

Suspension order

The case examiners went on to consider whether a suspension order might be an appropriate sanction. The case examiners have considered the guidance, which states:

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*

The case examiners do not consider that the social worker has demonstrated they are 'willing and able to resolve or remediate their failings'. The case examiners have taken note of the social worker's lack of insight and remediation with regards to the current practice related concerns. In addition, there is alleged dishonesty present in this case which would present a significant challenge to remediation. Consequently, the case examiners have concluded that this case cannot be concluded by way of a suspension order.

Removal order

The case examiners therefore went on to consider whether a removal order may be the only outcome sufficient to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession, and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

The case examiners consider that in light of the social worker's alleged conduct, there is no other outcome available to them that would provide the level of assurance needed in respect of these criteria.

The case examiners took into account the sanctions guidance. In particular they noted the examples given where a removal may be appropriate and identified that (two) were applicable in this case. Specifically:

- dishonesty, especially where persistent and/or concealed
- persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of their actions or consequences

The case examiners are of the view, considering all the circumstances of this case, that a removal order is the only sanction available that will protect the public and safeguard public confidence.

To conclude, the case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a removal order. 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 28 days to respond.

If the social worker does not agree with the proposed outcome, 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 4 June 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.