



Case Examiner Decision
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FTPS-24583

Contents

The role of the case examiners	3
Decision summary	4
The complaint and our regulatory concerns.....	6
Preliminary issues	7
The realistic prospect test.....	10
The public interest.....	17
Accepted disposal	19

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	2 March 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	25 March 2026
	Accepted disposal - removal order

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1.1, 1.2 and 2 being found proven by the adjudicators.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1.1, 1.2 and 2 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1.1, 1.2 and 2, 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 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 responded and accepted the case examiners' proposal.

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 the social worker's former employer, Oldham Council.
Date the complaint was received	20 March 2025
Complaint summary	The local authority stated that a safeguarding concern was received on 7 March 2025 from a GP regarding a child who was subject to a child protection plan. The concerns raised were that, whilst the social worker took some action outlined by the complainant, they did not follow the due process and did not make their manager aware of the concern, thereby leaving the child at risk of harm.

Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker from the 5 March 2025 to the 7 March 2025:

1. You did not respond appropriately to a safeguarding concern raised in relation to child A in that you:
 - 1.1. Did not inform your manager of this safeguarding concern.
 - 1.2. Did not visit child A when this safeguarding concern was raised.
2. You failed to keep accurate and/or up to date recordings in that you failed to make any case recordings about the safeguarding concern mentioned above at regulatory concern 1.

The matters outlined at regulatory concern 1 and 2 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

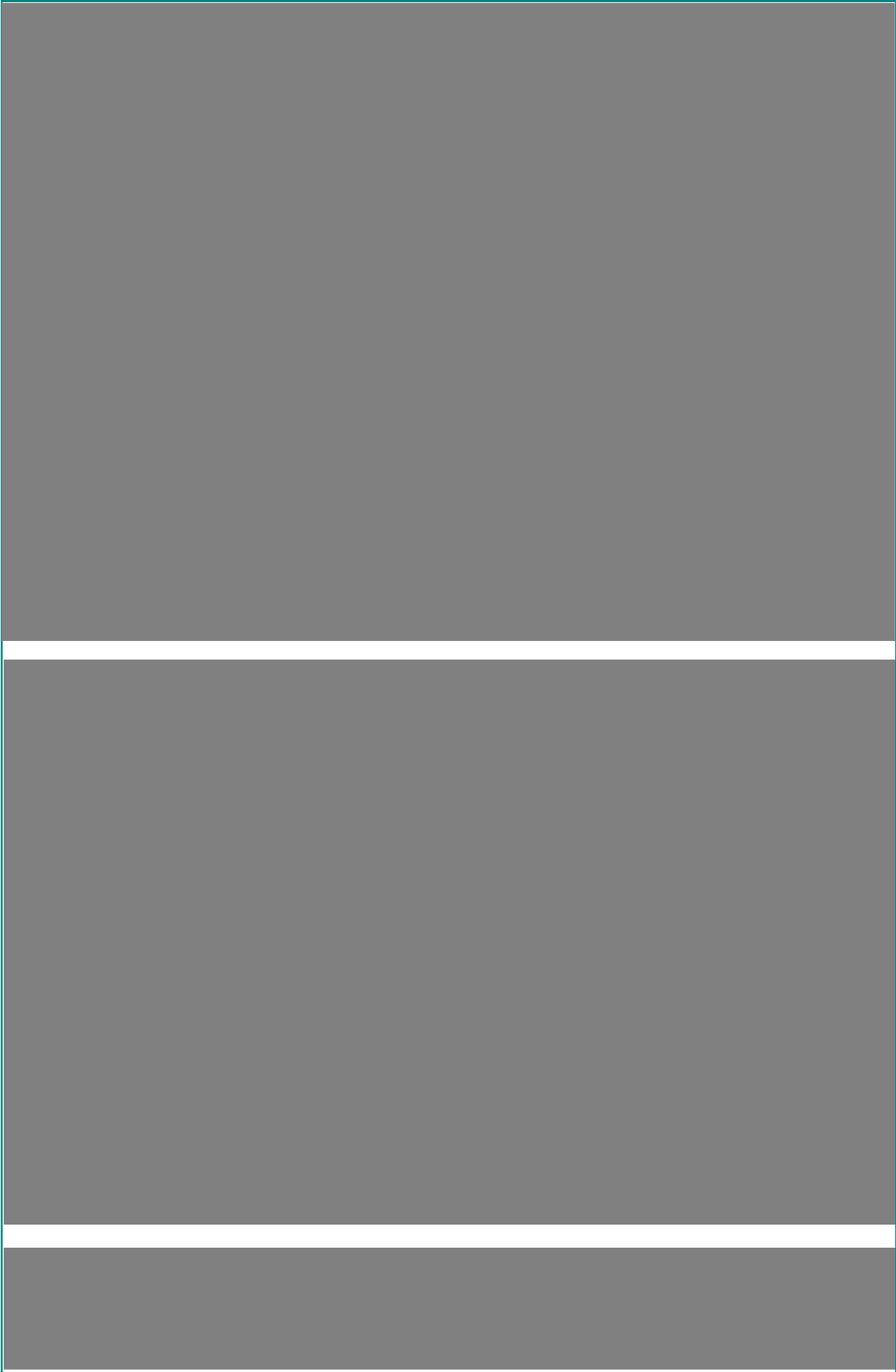
By reason of your misconduct your fitness to practice is impaired.

Preliminary issues

Investigation

Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has been notified of the grounds for investigation?	Yes	<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"/>

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, 1.2 and 2 being found proven, that those concerns could amount to the statutory ground of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst register as a social worker from the 5 March 2025 to the 7 March 2025:

1. You did not respond appropriately to a safeguarding concern raised in relation to child A in that you:

1.1. Did not inform your manager of this safeguarding concern.

1.2. Did not visit child A when this safeguarding concern was raised.

The case examiners have looked at what action the social worker took in this case. The case examiners have seen that a GP submitted a referral for Child A and the referral states that they spoke to the social worker, however there is no time stamp as to when this took place. The case examiners have seen an email from the GP to the social worker dated 5 March 2025 at 17:20, in which they outline their concerns about a bruise on Child A's ear, which they were concerned was a non-accidental injury. They state that Dad of Child A brought the child to the surgery and school told Dad that they

thought the child had a bite to the ear yesterday and there were no concerns regarding the bruise and the father was sure this had not happened at home. The GP ended their email stating, *'I think this needs fairly urgently discussed [sic] with the school to try to find out more about how this bruise happened'*.

An email trail the same day, shows that the social worker emailed the school at 17:23 with a copy of the email from the GP, asking if the school could shed any light on the situation.

The school responded on 6 March 2025 at 08:29, stating that Dad had come into school in the morning of 5 March 2025 with some antihistamine requesting that school give this to Child A, as they had a bite on their ear, no bruising was mentioned. School were unable to administer this and requested that Dad returned to school in the lunchbreak. School further explained in the same email, that another professional in the school saw a small red lump which they suspected was an insect bite. However, the email also states that on 5 March 2025 when Child A came into school it was now big and bruised. The case examiners note that the accounts in terms of times are inconsistent in terms of the progression of the bite and the bruise.

The social worker responded shortly afterwards stating, *'well just keep an eye of on it. I'm happy that it happened in school'*. A further email from school on 6 March 2025, stated that they had just seen Child A and, *'I observed Child A constantly pulling on his earlobe, so I suspect this is how the bruising occurred...I'm happy that nothing untoward has happened and that the bruising is from Child A pulling on his ear'*. The social worker responded explaining the GP's rationale for referring and requested the school keep an eye on it.

There is no evidence of the social worker seeing the child at any location.

As the regulatory concern cites that the social worker did not respond appropriately, the case examiners have considered what would be expected in the circumstances.

The case examiners have seen an email dated 23 April 2025 from the social worker's manager which sets out that the social worker would have been expected to alert the team manager on receipt of the information, or another manager if the person in question is not available. Further, it would be expected that the child would be seen without delay upon receipt of this information.

In an email dated 31 August 2025, the manager states that the social worker did not make the manager aware of this information. This is also recorded in an email dated 11 March 2025, summarising the conversation held with the social worker to discuss the concerns, stating the manager only became aware when there was a follow-up safeguarding referral from the GP on 7 March 2025.

The case examiners note that they have not been provided with any policy guidance in respect of safeguarding and non-accidental bruising. However, they consider that this is a fundamental core task within social work that social workers would be expected to be familiar with, and they consider the manager's email to be clear in terms of local expectations of the social worker.

The case examiners note an email from the manager dated 31 August 2025, in which they state that the social worker's judgement was that this was not a safeguarding concern and therefore they did not follow the process. The social worker within a note of their meeting with the head of service and their manager dated 11 March 2025 is recorded as acknowledging the concerns and '*did not disagree with them*'.

The case examiners have no submissions from the social worker.

The case examiners consider that it is likely to be found that the social worker did not respond appropriately as the evidence suggests that the social worker did not inform their manager or visit the child upon receipt of the information as expected.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding this concern proven.

2. You failed to keep accurate and/or up to date recordings in that you failed to make any case recordings about the safeguarding concern mentioned above at regulatory concern 1.

The case examiners have seen the email trail between the social worker, and the school dated 5 and 6 March 2025 of the actions that the social worker took following becoming aware of the GP information.

The case examiners have seen an email from the manager dated 31 August 2025, stating that there were no case notes on the file from the social worker. The manager has provided a copy of the case notes that were recorded on Child A's file subsequent to the social worker's involvement.

As the regulatory concern cites a failure on the part of the social worker, the case examiners have considered what would be expected in the circumstances. They note an email from the manager dated 31 August 2025, who quotes Working Together 2023 which states that safeguarding concerns are to be clearly recorded promptly. The manager further states that the local case recording policy states that records must be completed no later than the next working day.

The case examiners note that the evidence suggests that the social worker did not record or upload any of the actions which they had taken on 5 or 6 March 2025 and as such, this would suggest that their records were not accurate or up to date.

The case examiners note the manager's commentary in their email of 31 August 2025 that the social worker did not consider this was a safeguarding concern. Despite this, the evidence suggests that the social worker was expected to record any actions that they took in relation to a case the following day. Such notes would have helped inform professionals of the social worker's involvement and decision making and help inform future decision making in respect of the child should further information come to light. The evidence suggests that there are no case notes at all completed by the social worker on the system, which is therefore likely to be considered a failure on the part of the social worker

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding this concern proven.

Grounds

Misconduct

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, namely Social Work England Professional Standards (2019). The case examiners consider the following standards may be relevant:

As a social worker I will:

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

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

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

The case examiners are aware that falling short of the standards may not always amount to misconduct. However, adjudicators in this instance may consider the alleged conduct to be a significant departure from the expected standards. The case examiners note the adjudicators may be concerned that the social worker is alleged to have failed to keep accurate records and not taken action in respect of a safeguarding concern regarding a vulnerable child, which was raised by another professional.

The evidence suggests that the social worker's alleged actions created a real risk of harm as the lack of intervention led to a vulnerable child being left unsupervised with an unexplained injury overnight, with the person who may have potentially caused the identified injury.

In respect of the record keeping, the social worker's alleged lack of accurate recording, means that other professionals had no current information in respect of any risks identified and what, if any, action had been taken in respect of these risks.

Where it is alleged that a social worker has not taken actions to safeguard a vulnerable child, this would not align with Social Work England standards 3.4, and 3.12.

Where a social worker has not recorded accurate, clear case notes and actions taken, this would not align with 3.11.

If the matters were to be found proven, the case examiners conclude the conduct described is likely to suggest a significant departure from the professional standards detailed above.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the conduct outlined in regulatory concerns 1.1, 1.2, and 2 would engage the statutory ground of misconduct.

Impairment

Personal element of impairment

In considering the personal element of impairment, the case examiners have considered the test set out in the case examiner guidance (2022), namely whether the conduct is easily remediable; whether the social worker has undergone remediation

and demonstrated insight; and whether there is a high likelihood the matters alleged will be repeated.

The case examiners consider that it is possible to remediate the alleged concerns, in this case, through training and reflection and insight into how they may act differently in the future.

In this instance, the social worker is alleged to have not taken appropriate action on a case of a non-accidental injury to vulnerable child, nor maintained accurate records.

The case examiners note that the social worker did not dispute the concerns raised by their employer and in their correspondence to the regulator, they have stated that they noted the complaint. The case examiners note the email dated 31 August 2025 from the social worker's manager, in which they state that the social worker did not view this as a safeguarding concern and as such, did not follow the correct procedure. However, the social worker themselves has not provided any commentary. The case examiners note the extensive attempts of investigators to gather comments from the social worker. The case examiners consider that the social worker has not provided any evidence of insight.

The case examiners have been presented with no evidence of any remediation from the social worker, and the social worker has indicated on more than one occasion, that they have no wish to practise social work in the future.

On 12 August 2025, the social worker records their status as '*now retired*'. On 6 August 2025, they state, they '*have retired from all social work practice due to reaching state pension age.... I have no intention of resuming my former career*'. They also state that they have stopped payment of their social work registration. On 1 September 2025, they state, '*I am currently retired as you have noted from my previous email. I am not practicing [sic] nor intend to practice [sic] in the future.*'

In light of the above, the case examiners consider the social worker has not provided any evidence of insight and there is no evidence of remediation. Further, in the absence of any intention to practise again, the prospect of being able to remediate is low. As such, the case examiners conclude that the risk of repetition is high.

Public element of impairment

The case examiners next considered whether the social worker's actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in social workers and whether this is a case where adjudicators may determine that the public interest requires a finding of impairment. Public interest includes the need to uphold proper standards of conduct

and behaviour and the need to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the profession.

The case examiners have reminded themselves that the public interest includes responding proportionately to regulatory concerns. However, they consider that the adjudicators may determine that a member of the public would be concerned where a social worker is alleged to have not taken safeguarding action where a concern has been raised about a vulnerable child, and furthermore they are alleged to have not kept clear records. There is evidence that the social worker's lack of action may have left a child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding and accurate record keeping are fundamental tenets of the social work profession. Where found proven, a social worker facing allegations of this nature, has the potential to undermine public trust in social workers and to damage the reputation of the profession.

The case examiners are of the view that in these circumstances, members of the public would expect a finding of impairment.

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	<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 carefully considered whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. The case examiners have noted that the social worker has not indicated to the regulator if they accept the key facts, or whether their fitness to practise is currently impaired. However, the social worker appeared to broadly accept the concerns that were highlighted to them by their employer at the time.

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. 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 appears to accept that there were some concerns about their practice at the time. Therefore, the case examiners are of the view that the social

worker should be afforded the opportunity of an accepted disposal proposal to consider the case examiners' assessment of the evidence presented to them and reflect on whether they accept their findings in relation to the realistic prospect of the facts and statutory ground being found proven/being engaged.

- The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker an opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on impairment and reflect on whether they are able to 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 explore the question of impairment in more detail.

- The case examiners are of the view that the risk of repetition can be managed, and they have a number of sanctions available to them in order to satisfy the public that this risk is being managed without the need for this to be examined within a public hearing.

- The case examiners are also 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.

The case examiners are aware that a case cannot be concluded through an accepted disposal process where a social worker does not agree that they are currently impaired. At this stage, 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, and 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	<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 type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of practice order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Suspension order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Removal order	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Proposed duration	<p>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.</p>	

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 sanction is not to punish the social worker, but to protect the public and the wider public interest.

The case examiners have identified the following mitigating and aggravating factors:

Mitigating:

- There are no previous fitness to practise concerns.

Aggravating:

- The social worker has not provided any evidence of insight.
- There is no evidence of remediation.
- The social worker on more than one occasion has indicated that they are retired and they do not intend to practise again in the future.

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

No further action, advice, or warning:

With reference to the regulator's sanctions guidance (December 2022), the case examiners noted that in cases where a risk of repetition remains, the outcomes of no further action, advice or warning are not appropriate as they will not restrict the social worker's practice. The case examiners assessed that a risk of repetition remains, and due to the seriousness of the alleged conduct in this case, the case examiners are satisfied that such outcomes are inappropriate.

Conditions of practice order:

The case examiners next considered a condition of practice order. The case examiners considered paragraph 114 of the guidance which states:

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 case examiners are of the view that the social worker has not provided any evidence of insight in this instance, but that it may still be possible to formulate conditions to address the alleged conduct. However, given the social worker's comments that they are not intending to return to social work, and they have retired, the case examiners are not confident that the social worker can and will comply with any conditions.

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.

In this instance, the social worker has not provided any evidence of insight to the regulator, and their correspondence suggests that the social worker is not willing to remediate their failings. The case examiners therefore consider that a suspension order would not be appropriate in this instance.

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 it would be possible to remediate the alleged conduct, however in light of the social worker's inability to address and remediate the concerns due to retirement, there is no other outcome available to them that would provide the level of assurance needed in respect of these three criteria. In the case examiners' view, a removal order is the only sanction available that will safeguard public confidence, protect the public 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 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, 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

The social worker responded on 22 March 2026 to the proposed accepted disposal stating: *“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 considered the public interest in this matter and, as they have not been presented with any new evidence that might change their previous assessment, they are satisfied that it remains to be the case that the public interest in this case may be fulfilled through the accepted disposal process.

The case examiners therefore direct that the regulator impose a removal order.