

Case Examiner Decision
Natalie Loughlin – SW104939
FTPS-23507

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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	01 October 2025
	Accepted disposal proposed - warning order (three years' duration)
Final outcome	05 November 2025
	Accepted disposal - warning order (three years' duration)

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5) and 4 (4.2 and 4.3) being found proven by the adjudicators [REDACTED]
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) and 4 (4.2 and 4.3) being found to amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) and 4 (4.2 and 4.3), there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.
4. 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 be notified of their intention to resolve the case with warning order of three years' duration.

The case examiners have considered all 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.


On 04 November 2025, the social worker accepted this proposal and the terms in full.

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.

Previous team manager	[REDACTED]
Team manager	[REDACTED]
Service user A	[REDACTED]
Service user B	[REDACTED]
Service user C	[REDACTED]
Service user D	[REDACTED]
Service user E	[REDACTED]
Service user F	[REDACTED]
Service user G	[REDACTED]
Service user H	[REDACTED]
Service user I	[REDACTED]
Service user J	[REDACTED]
Service user K	[REDACTED]

Service user L	
Service user M	

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer [REDACTED] (thereafter, referred to as 'the local authority'.)
Date the complaint was received	29 April 2024
Complaint summary	<p>The local authority raised concerns that the social worker did not satisfactorily complete statutory casework and ensure case recordings were documented in a timely manner.</p> <p>The regulatory concerns as drafted accurately reflect the alleged conduct.</p>

Regulatory concerns

As amended

Regulatory Concerns:

Whilst registered as a social worker from around July to August 2023 you:

1. Failed to carry out work that was required of you in that you:

- 1.1 Failed to complete statutory visits within the required timeframes and/or not at all for service users A, D, E, F, and G.
- 1.2 Did not complete Social Care assessments within the required timeframes, or not at all, for service users B, [REDACTED] E, and L.
- 1.3 Did not maintain accurate and/or up to date case notes relating to service use [REDACTED] L [REDACTED]
- 1.4 Did not complete a court appointed Social Circumstances report for service user J.

1.5 Did not update a risk management plan and/or support plan and/or Care Act assessment for service user K.

2.

3.

You did not follow management direction in that you:

4.1

4.2 Did not contact service user I and confirm whether they had spoken with their GP.

4.3 Did not notify the Initial Response Service (IRS) if the GP had not spoken to service user I.

4.4

Grounds of impairment:

The matters outlined at regulatory concerns 1 and 4 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

2. Preliminary issue

The case examiners have made the following amendment to the regulatory concerns, as documented in **Bold:**

Whilst registered as a social worker from around July to August 2023 you:

1. **Failed to carry out work that was required of you in that you:**

- 1.1 Failed to complete statutory visits **were not completed** within the required timeframes **and/or** not at all for service users [REDACTED], **D, E, F and G.**
- 1.2 Did not complete Social Care assessments **were not completed** within the required timeframes, **and/or** not at all, for service users [REDACTED] **B, [REDACTED] E and L.**
- 1.3 Did not maintain accurate and/or up to date case notes relating to service users [REDACTED] **L [REDACTED]**
- 1.4 Did not complete a court appointed Social Circumstances report for service user [REDACTED] .
- 1.5 Did not update a risk management plan and/or support plan and/or Care Act assessment for service user [REDACTED] **K.**

4. You did not follow management direction in that you:

- 4.2 Did not contact service user [REDACTED] and confirm whether they had spoken with their GP.
- 4.3 Did not notify [REDACTED] the Initial Response Service (IRS) if the GP had not spoken to service user [REDACTED] I.

The case examiners are of the view that the amendments are necessary to better ensure the anonymity of service users and to rectify clerical errors.

The case examiners are satisfied that the amendments they have made are minor, and they, therefore, consider it to be unnecessary and disproportionate to delay consideration of the case further by seeking additional submissions from the social worker.

The case examiners have noted the case examiner guidance and are satisfied that their chosen course of action is consistent with the 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 (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) and 4 (4.2 and 4.3) 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 around July to August 2023 you:

Failed to carry out work that was required of you in that you:

- 1.1 Failed to complete statutory visits were not completed within the required timeframes or not at all for service users A, D, E, F, and G.
- 1.2 Did not complete Social Care assessments within the required timeframes, or not at all, for service users B,  E, and L.
- 1.3 Did not maintain accurate and/or up to date case notes relating to service use  L 
- 1.4 Did not complete a court appointed Social Circumstances report for service user J.
- 1.5 Did not update a risk management plan and/or support plan and/or Care Act assessment for service user K.

From 26 June 2017, the social worker was employed within an adult social care mental health team that provides support for vulnerable adults with mental health conditions. In April 2023, the social worker returned to work following a period of prolonged [REDACTED] leave. In August 2023, during a phased return to work, the social worker handed in their notice after practise concerns were raised with HR and service managers.

The local authority commenced an internal investigation relating to concerns that the social worker was not satisfactorily undertaking statutory duties or following managerial instructions, as would be expected of a social worker.

The case examiners have considered the local authority's evidence, which includes the investigation report and witness statements from previous and current team managers, case audit and service users case notes and miscellaneous supporting documentation. The case examiners have also carefully considered the social worker's observations and supporting evidence.

In relation to 1.1, the local authority confirms there was no written policy regarding visits, however, a service user's current presentation and presenting risk would determine whether contact be established within two working days for urgent referrals or 10 working days for more routine referrals.

Service user A was discharged from hospital on 18 April 2023. The case was allocated to the social worker on 27 April 2023 to undertake a social care assessment.

Case notes and the caseload audit document that, on 02 May 2023, service user A's sister raised concerns of self-neglect and a reablement worker informed the social worker that their contract of support for the service user would end on 23 May 2023.

There is evidence that on 11 July 2023, service user A contacted the social worker with concerns that they would lose their home; the social worker arranged a visit for the 19 July 2023 but then rearranged this for the 28 July 2023, which they undertook and recorded in case notes.

The social worker's response to the investigation states that they intended to review service user A once the reablement's involvement ended. However, the local authority is clear that the social worker should have undertaken a 7-day follow up post discharge, which did not happen.

The case examiners note that initial visit was made three months after service user A was discharged from hospital; this is significantly outside of reasonable timescales.

Service user D was allocated to the social worker, on 18 May 2023, for a social care assessment. There had been a recent mental health act assessment, but no application was made to detain the service user in hospital. On 26 May 2023, the social care assessment was completed by another worker where safeguarding concerns relating to safety and abuse were identified.

An allocation case note, dated 18 May 2023, documents that the social worker should make contact regarding the care assessment and/or make a carer referral. The case examiners note that there is no timeframe given on this instruction; however, the local authority confirm that given the circumstances and potential risk to this service user they would have expected the social worker to contact service user D within two working days.

The social worker documents unsuccessful attempts to contact service user D, on 05 June 2023 and 05 July 2023. On 12 July 2023, the social worker attempts a cold call visit with no answer. On 31 July 2023, the social worker tries to phone again.

The case examiners are satisfied that the evidence indicates that, beyond the 31 July 2023, there is no evidence of the social worker attempting to make further contact to arrange a visit, or of the social worker escalating or discussing any concerns to their manager or a senior practitioner regarding the lack of contact. The team manager contacts the service user on 11 August 2023, who reports that they are struggling and accepts a social care assessment.

Service user E was allocated to the social worker on 01 June 2023 for assessment. Case notes show that social worker first attempted to telephone service user E on 07 July 2023 and then sent a letter on 17 July asking the service user to contact duty. There is no evidence of the social worker further attempting or making contact until a contact letter was sent on 17 July 2023.

The social worker argues that they made several attempts to speak with the care coordinator; case notes confirm this to be the case. The social worker states that they recall doing a 'cold call' visit to the house of service user E but acknowledges that they may not have documented this.

The case examiners have considered what the social worker should have done when unable to contact service user E. The local authority confirms that they would have expected the social worker to have either sent a letter prior to going on leave with an appointment date and time for when they returned or escalated the difficulties in making contact with the manager.

The case examiners are satisfied that the social worker did not complete a visit to complete the social care assessment, nor did they take the appropriate steps to raise their difficulties in contacting service user E with their team manager.

Service user F was allocated to the social worker on the 19 June 2023 for them to complete a social care assessment. This was completed by another professional on 26 June 2023, where concerns of self-neglect were identified. A safeguarding referral was received on 03 July 2023 after service user F was admitted to hospital following a fall.

There is no recorded evidence of the social worker contacting service user F from the point of allocation on 19 June 2023 until 07 July 2023, although there is an introductory email, dated 05 July 2023, to the care coordinator informing them of the allocation and some evidence of discussions by the social worker with F's mother. On 07 July 2023, the social worker records an attempt to contact the service user, stating *"attempted to contact with [service user F] again. No answer gained on mobile."*

In their responses, the social worker considers that they had made satisfactory attempts to contact service F. However, they accept that they may not have adequately recorded the case activity undertaken. The social worker asserts that they had worked on the case but upon reflection, they should have recorded their own notes in addition to those of the other professionals involved.

The team manager confirms that given the initial referral details self-neglect and poor physical health, the social worker should have contacted the service user within two days of returning from leave on 26 June 2023. This was not done and the social worker's first contact with service user F was on 10 July 2023, 14 days following their return from leave.

Service user G was allocated to the social worker on 26 June 2023. The referral was considered routine and as such, the local authority considers that initial contact within 10 working days would have been acceptable.

Case notes record the social worker attempting to make contact on 07 July 2023, but the telephone number was not recognised. On 26 July, a letter was sent and a further telephone attempt made on 31 July 2023 without success. There is no evidence to demonstrate the social worker successfully contacted the service user. The social worker does not recall service user G's case.

The evidence suggests that the social worker did not visit service user G, despite the social worker recording a plan to explore other ways of contact.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 (1.1) proven in relation to service users A, D, F and G.

In relation to 1.2, the local authority allege that the social worker failed to complete assessments within the required timeframes, or not at all, for the following service users:

Service user B was allocated to the social worker on 31 May 2023 for a social care assessment. On 30 June 2023, an introductory letter was sent and a further letter sent on 06 July 2023 arranging for an appointment on 12 July 2023, which the social worker attended, but as they were late, they were unable to gain access to the service user.

The social worker's case note, dated 13 July 2023, documents a delay in completing the assessment due to a lack of contact. The social worker sets out a plan to arrange another home visit and attempts to contact service user B on 18 July 2023 but receives no answer; a letter was sent to the service user on the 24 July 2023.

There is no further evidence of contact being made with service user B, and the local authority confirm that the social worker did not complete the social care assessment.

Service user E was allocated to the social worker for assessment on 01 June 2023. Case notes show that between 30 June 2023 to 14 July 2023 the social worker documents several attempts to liaise with the professionals involved in service user E's care. A contact letter is sent requesting service user E contact duty, however, there is no evidence that further contacts were attempted or made by the social worker.

The local authority states that the lack of contact with service user E until 14 July 2023, some 6 weeks after allocation, is outside of timescales and is not acceptable for a first contact. The case examiners note that the social worker was on annual leave from 08-23 June 2023; however, the local authority state they would have expected for the social worker to either send a letter prior to leave to arrange an appointment or escalate any difficulties making contact.

The social worker considers that they had proactively made attempts to contact service user E, and they attempted to liaise with the supporting mental health team who were often out of the office or on leave. They recall making a 'cold call' to the service user's house but accepts they may not have documented this.

The evidence indicates that the social care assessment was not completed.

Service user L was allocated to the social worker on 11 April 2023, for a social care assessment. There is case note evidence that the social worker attempted to make contact throughout April 2023; on 04 May 2023, the social worker did speak to the service user and gathered information for the assessment. A home visit was agreed for 11 May 2023 and a case entry, dated 31 May 2023, documents a home visit, with other visits arranged and then rearranged in July 2023.

The case examiners note the case records indicate that whilst the assessment had commenced, there is no information within case notes that the social worker completed the social care assessment.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 (1.2) proven in relation to service users B, E and L.

In relation to 1.3, the concerns relate to the social worker not maintaining accurate and/or up to date case notes. The social worker acknowledges that they did not always document their case work activity, but they do not consider that they left service users unsupported.

The case examiners have had sight of the “mental health service: good recording guidance” that states case records should be completed as soon as possible – within two working days of an event or observation.

The caseload audit relating to service user L, records that the social worker arranged a home visit for the 11 May 2023, but there is no documented evidence that this took place. In addition, in a case entry, dated 11 July 2023, the social worker records a home visit taking place on 31 May 2023; the case examiners note this is not contemporaneous recording.

In relation to service user C, who was allocated to the social worker on 26 June 2023, the case examiners note that the social worker contacted the inpatient ward on 03 July 2023 to arrange for the assessment the next day. There is no case entry recorded to evidence that this visit took place.

The case examiners have had sight of a reference within a post-employment safeguarding meeting letter, dated 05 April 2024, along with supervision notes, dated 18 October 2022. and a current employer’s reference. All these documents identified issues with the social worker keeping case records up to date, following managerial instruction, or rescheduling supervisions, which could impact on cases being progressed.

Accordingly, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 (1.3) proven.

In relation to 1.4, the caseload audit indicates that on 05 July 2023, the social worker was tasked to complete a social circumstance report for service user J.

There is limited evidence to demonstrate that the social worker either contacted the service user, inpatient ward or previous placement to gather information to inform the report or successfully liaised with other agencies. The report was due to be submitted to the Tribunal service on 07 August 2023; the social worker requested an extension to the 08 August 2023 at 12 noon. The report was never received.

The social worker explains that service user J was placed out of area, and they had difficulty getting to see the patient. The social worker acknowledges that they had agreed to complete the report before they went on leave on the 04 August 2023, but that although they had completed the report, they did not submit it.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 (1.4) proven.

In relation to 1.5, service user K was a vulnerable adult who was at high risk of serious harm due to their complex mental health needs and personality issues.

The social worker was tasked with updating the care and risk plans following a change in service user K's presentation. In an email response, dated 24 July 2024, the social worker confirms that they will contact the frequent attenders' team and update the relevant risk documentation. There is no documented evidence regarding what actions the social worker took did following this email.

The social worker's response to the internal investigation is that they did not complete the updates due to the service user's fluctuating clinical presentation and risks. The social worker states that they were working collaboratively with involved parties to gather information with a view to informing the current risk review. They state, *"I needed to find out more about what had gone on."* The social worker accepts that their casework activity may not have been reflected on the electronic system.

The local authority confirm that the risk management and support plans updates were not completed by the social worker.

Therefore, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 (1.5) proven.



4.You did not follow management direction in that you:

4.2 Did not contact service user I and confirm whether they had spoken with their GP.

4.3 Did not notify the Initial Response Service (IRS) if the GP had not spoken to service user I.

Regulatory concern 4 (4.2 and 4.3) will be addressed collectively as they relate to the same concern.

There were concerns raised about a deterioration in service user I's mental health. On 01 August 2023, the social worker was tasked with contacting the service user to ascertain whether they had spoken to the GP. The social worker was also asked to notify the initial response service (IRS) if this was not the case.

The case examiners have had sight of an email request replying to the managerial request, but there is no evidence that the social worker completed either of the tasks.

The social worker does not recall this instruction or whether they completed any contact, however they comment that the last duty day at work, 02 August 2023, was very busy.

The case examiners are, therefore, satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the matters at regulatory concern 4 (4.2 and 4.3), 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.

As a social worker, I will:

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

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

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

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 overarching concerns relate to the social worker failing to satisfactorily complete statutory visits and assessments within timescales or maintain contemporaneous case recordings.

In relation to regulatory concern 1 (and sub-parts), the local authority has provided evidence that indicates the social worker struggled to meet the statutory requirements and expectations of the safeguarding role when working with vulnerable adults with mental health conditions.

In relation to regulatory concern 4, (4.2 and 4.3) regarding service user I, there is evidence to demonstrate that duty tasks were not completed as per managerial instructions.

The case examiners consider that the alleged conduct is serious; they note the mitigating factors of the social worker facing [REDACTED] challenges to their wellbeing at the time, which appear to have impacted upon the social worker's confidence and conduct. However, the case examiners take the view that safeguarding is an essential tenet of social work and social workers are expected to adhere to managerial instruction and ensure that case activity is undertaken within

requisite timescales and recorded contemporaneously; this ensures that vulnerable adults receive appropriate support, and risk is identified and managed. The case examiners are concerned that the alleged conduct may have left service users without the necessary support leading to potential unmanaged risk.

The case examiners are satisfied that adjudicators may determine that the alleged conduct to be a significant departure from the standards expected of a social worker.

Accordingly, the case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the statutory ground of misconduct is engaged in relation to regulatory concerns 1 and 4.

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 consider the alleged conduct to be remediable by the social worker demonstrating evidence of appropriate insight, training and continuing professional development. The social worker could also demonstrate insight and reflection on their conduct, together with a clear plan of how they would respond differently in future.

The case examiners note there is no previous fitness to practise history.

Insight and remediation

The social worker does not accept their fitness to practise is currently impaired and states that due to the passage of time and a lack of case documentation, which

would have better facilitated their recollection, they have struggled to remember some specific actions they took at the time.

The social worker has provided mitigation relating to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] that detrimentally impacted upon their [REDACTED] performance. Positively, there is evidence that these issues have now been resolved, [REDACTED]

The social worker mitigates that they took time away from work to reflect and remediate. Since then, they have completed training with their current employer and completed research to keep abreast of learning and development. In addition, the case examiners note that the social worker has made a career change from a community adult mental health team to an older adults' hospital discharge team. The social worker informs that they have had learning opportunities from shadowing peers.

The social worker has provided positive feedback from colleagues and a current employer reference.

The case examiners have taken into consideration the above and are reassured that the social worker has demonstrated good insight into the factors that brought about the deficits in their performance. However, the case examiners are concerned that the undated current employer's reference indicates that issues with case recordings and time management have also been observed. In addition, for insight to be complete, the case examiners would have expected to have seen a deeper reflection from the social worker into how the alleged conduct may have impacted upon the vulnerable adults they were tasked to support.

Risk of repetition

The case examiners acknowledge the social worker's submissions and consider these to demonstrate some developing insight; however, they take the view that the social worker does not demonstrate a clear appreciation of the potential and far-reaching impact of the safeguarding/safety implications by not completing the requisite case work and case recordings or failing to follow managerial instruction in order to safeguard vulnerable service users. As such, the case examiners consider that there remains some 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 consider that members of the public may lack confidence in a social worker who has allegedly not satisfactorily performed their statutory role by failing to complete required visits and assessments, together with evidence of poor recording keeping and failing to review safe care and risk plans. The case examiners of the view that, in all the circumstances of this case, a member of the public would be concerned that some risk of repetition had been found by the case examiners.

Further, public confidence in the social work profession and the regulator may be undermined if a finding of impairment was not made.

Having considered both the personal and public elements, the case examiners have concluded there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find the social worker's fitness to practice being currently impaired.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input 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 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*”.
- While the social worker does not fully accept the concerns and does not consider their current fitness to practise to be currently impaired, 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 to reflect on whether they do accept the case examiners’ findings in relation to the facts.

- The accepted disposal process will also provide the social worker with the opportunity to review the case examiners' reasoning on grounds and impairment and reflect on whether they do 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 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 accept the facts and does not agree 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 requires 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 still determine to send the matter to a public 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of practice order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Suspension order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Removal order	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed duration	Warning order – three years	

Reasoning

Having found a realistic prospect that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired, the case examiners then considered what, if any, sanction they should propose 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 considered 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.

The case examiners have also considered what they consider to be the aggravating and mitigating factors in this case.

Aggravating factors:

- Remediation is incomplete

- There is a risk of repetition

Mitigating factors:

- There is remorse and developing insight
- The social worker appears to have been facing a number of personal challenges [REDACTED] uring the period the concerns arose
- There have been no further concerns of a similar nature raised, and the social worker is of previous good character.

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 have determined that a risk of repetition remains and that due to the seriousness of the alleged conduct in this case, it would be inappropriate to take no further action.

Advice

The case examiners next considered whether offering advice would be appropriate. An advice order will normally set out the steps a social worker should take to address the behaviour that led to the regulatory proceedings. The case examiners believe that issuing advice is not sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they view the social worker's alleged conduct. Furthermore, it would be insufficient to protect the public, maintain public confidence and uphold the reputation of the profession.

Warning

The case examiners then considered a warning order. The case examiners had regard to their guidance, which states a warning order is likely to be appropriate where (all of the following):

- The fitness to practise issues is isolated or limited
- There is a low risk of repetition
- The social worker has demonstrated insight

While the concerns span several cases and a period of time, the case examiners note there is no previous adverse history, and the concerns raised are limited to a period when the social worker was employed within a local authority's adult mental health

team, and appears to have faced a number of personal challenges [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The case examiners acknowledge the passage of time since the concerns were first raised, and the reference provided by the employer. To date, there is no known repeat of the alleged conduct.

The case examiners are encouraged to see that the social worker has demonstrated some insight and remediation. However, the case examiners are concerned that the social worker's observations do not address their alleged conduct may have had on the vulnerable adults concerned. While the case examiners have determined there to be some risk of repetition, they do not, however, consider it to be high.

A warning order implies a clear expression of disapproval of the social worker's conduct, and the case examiners conclude that considering the mitigating factors identified, a warning order is the appropriate and proportionate outcome in this case. The case examiners also consider that it represents the minimum sanction necessary to uphold public confidence.

Having concluded that a warning order is the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners went on to consider the length of time for the order. When considering a warning order, case examiners can direct that a warning order will stay on the social worker's register entry for periods of one, three or five years.

According to the Case Examiner guidance, a one year warning may be appropriate for an isolated incident of relatively low seriousness where the primary objective is to send a message about the professional standards expected of social workers; three years might be appropriate for more serious concerns to maintain public confidence and to send a message about the professional standards expected of social workers; and five years might be appropriate for serious cases that have fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction of registration, to maintain confidence in the profession and where it is necessary to send a clear signal about the standards expected.

The case examiners consider that a one-year warning order would not be sufficient to mark the seriousness of the concerns, given that the issues related to several service users and over an extended period of time. The case examiners take the view that a warning of three years' duration is appropriate due to the seriousness of the concerns. This will help to maintain public confidence and highlight the professional standards. A three-year period allows more time for the social worker to show that they have addressed any risk of repetition. The case examiners do not consider this to be a case that has fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction of registration, and as such, consider that a five-year warning would be disproportionately long.

The case examiners have also considered whether the next sanction, conditions of practice are more appropriate in this case. The social worker is an experienced practitioner, and the case examiners consider a condition of practice order would not be necessary in this case; they note from their guidance that conditions are more commonly suited to cases relating to health, competence or capability. The case examiners acknowledge that the social worker is committed to undertaking relevant training and continuing professional development to effectively perform the role; the case examiners do not therefore consider that conditions of practice are necessary.

To conclude, the case examiners have proposed a warning order of three-years' 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 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

Content of the warning

The case examiners formally warn the social worker as follows:

Failing to ensure statutory casework and safety / risk documentation are completed and/or up-to-date, and that all case notes are contemporaneously recorded is serious. This conduct has the potential to place vulnerable service users at risk and not safeguarded.

Your alleged actions do not align with the required Social Work England professional standards, and you are warned to comply with these in future, and specifically:

As a social worker, I will:

- 3.1 Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately.*
- 3.2 Use my assessment skills to respond quickly to dangerous situations and take any necessary protective action.*
- 3.8 Clarify where the accountability lies for delegated work and fulfil that responsibility when it lies with me.*

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.

You put vulnerable individuals at risk of harm. Your conduct could have an adverse effect on the public's confidence in you as a social worker; it may also damage the reputation of the social work profession. This conduct should not be repeated.

Any further matters brought to the attention of the regulator are likely to result in a more serious outcome.

Response from the social worker

The social worker provided a response on 04 November 2025 and confirmed *“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.”*

“I confirm this is my formal response to the case examiners.”

Case examiners’ response and final decision

The case examiners concluded on 01 October 2025 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 with a proposed accepted disposal rather than through a public hearing. They proposed a warning order with a duration of three-years, which the social worker has accepted.

In light of the social worker's acceptance of the warning order of three years' duration, 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 order of three year's duration 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 three year's duration is a fair and proportionate disposal and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.