

Case Examiner Decision
Neelam Gul Hassan –
SW134862
FTPS-22600

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	8
The public interest.....	15
Accepted disposal	17

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	18 June 2025
	Accepted disposal proposed - warning order 5 years (published)
Final outcome	29 July 2025
	Accepted disposal agreed – warning order 5 years (published)

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.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1,2 and 3 being found to amount to the statutory ground 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. The social worker subsequently agreed to the terms of the proposed accepted disposal.

The case examiners direct that this case can now be resolved with a warning order of 5 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.

Anonymity and redaction

Elements of this decision have been marked for redaction in line with our Fitness to Practise Publications Policy. Text in **red** will be redacted from the published copy of the decision.

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by a way of a self-referral by the social worker.
Date the complaint was received	13 June 2023
Complaint summary	The social worker was subject to an employer investigation about information submitted as part of their university coursework while they were a registered social worker. The investigation related to allegations of dishonesty and falsification of information. Before the investigation concluded, the social worker resigned from their position.

Regulatory concerns

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

Whilst registered as a social worker, you:

1. Submitted a recording which purported to be a treatment session with a client when this was not the case.
2. Falsified a colleague's signature on a consent form.
3. Your actions at regulatory concerns 1 and/or 2 were dishonest.

Grounds of impairment:

Your actions at regulatory concern 1, 2 & 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	☐

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 ground of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst registered as a social worker, you:

1. Submitted a recording which purported to be a treatment session with a client when this was not the case.

The case examiners have reviewed all the evidence provided by the social worker's former employer in relation to the employer's internal investigation. This investigation recorded that the social worker had submitted coursework to Surrey University on 10 April 2023 as part of a psychological wellbeing practitioner training course. Concerns were then raised by the University in relation to the authenticity of the material submitted. There is cogent evidence to suggest that while the submitted recording was supposed to be of a therapeutic session with a service user, the session had instead been pre-scripted and simulated by the social worker, using a person that was personally known to them.

Having independently reviewed the evidence from the employer's investigation, the case examiners have concluded that there is clear and cogent evidence to support this regulatory concern. This is supported by emails, witness interview evidence, supporting documents evidencing the existence and content of the audio recording, associated submissions, documentary information and a full chronology of circumstances relating to the matters in question.

In the initial fact-finding interview on 26 April 2023, prior to resigning from their employment, the social worker appears to have provided several inconsistent responses to their employer. These indicated an initial lack of transparency by them when questioned about the circumstances of their university submission.

In their final submissions from the social worker to the regulator, they accept this regulatory concern. They accept that this was irresponsible and an act of poor judgement.

The case examiners conclude **a realistic prospect of the adjudicators finding the facts proven for regulatory concern 1.**

2. Falsified a colleague's signature on a consent form.

The case examiners have reviewed the evidence as cited in regulatory concern 1. There appears to be a clear audit and paper trail which evidences that the social worker falsified a consent form, which was required for their university submission. This was supposed to have been signed by their supervisor. Further, this evidence is supported by an employer investigation witness interview with the supervisor on 04 May 2023. During this interview, the supervisor confirms that they never signed off the form with their consent.

In their final submissions from the social worker to the regulator, they accept this regulatory concern.

The case examiners conclude **a realistic prospect of the adjudicators finding the facts proven for regulatory concern 2.**

3. Your actions at regulatory concerns 1 and/or 2 were dishonest.

The test in respect of dishonesty is in two parts as follows:

1. A subjective test to ascertain the actual state of the social worker's knowledge or belief at the time of the alleged conduct. The question is not whether the social worker's beliefs are reasonable, but whether they were genuinely held at that time.

In the social worker's initial resignation letter to their employer, the social worker outlined personal challenges which they believed impacted on their state of mind at the time of making the university submissions; [REDACTED]

In their final submissions to the regulator, the social worker states that their actions in relation to concerns 1 and 2 were also affected by a fear of failure, as well as their personal circumstances; [REDACTED]

Evidence from the initial fact-finding transcript appears to suggest that the social worker consistently failed to be truthful when questioned about whether they got their supervisor to sign-off their consent form. They stated that their supervisor had signed off their form when the evidence indicated that this was not the case.

Notwithstanding the difficult challenges faced by the social worker in their private life at the time of these concerns, the case examiners consider there is strong and compelling evidence to suggest that they knew they should not present work as having been completed with a service user, when this was not the case. However, they appeared to do so regardless. In addition, the evidence indicates that they knew that the signature they presented as having been made by their supervisor, needed to have been made by the supervisor, but that this was also not the case.

2. Secondly, once the social worker's state of mind is established, whether the social worker's alleged conduct may be considered dishonest will be determined by applying 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 of the view that an ordinary member of the public would consider a social worker knowingly acting in the way outlined above, to be dishonest.

In reviewing the subjective and objective test, the case examiners conclude a **realistic prospect of the adjudicators making a finding of dishonesty for concerns 1 and 2.**

Grounds

Summary of facts with a realistic prospect of being found proven: 1, 2 and 3.

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 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:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

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

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.

The case examiners accept that the social worker was not working in a professional social work role at the time of these concerns; they were working in a client facing role as an allied health care professional while registered as a social worker.

However, their alleged actions carried a potential risk of harm to vulnerable service users, so bringing their own profession into disrepute. Had the social worker gained and used the skills based on a psychological qualification gained because of dishonest actions, this would have had the potential to cause a very real risk of future harm to service users.

The case examiners consider the alleged act of submitting false evidence for a qualification, together with a further act of falsifying consent documents, to be serious. This is further exacerbated by the social worker's initial denial of the concerns, which appear to have been accepted by them only when presented with incontrovertible evidence. In the opinion of the case examiners, the mitigation offered by the social worker does not justify the alleged actions taken by the social worker.

Social workers are required to be open and honest, where they are not, this can put people at risk and may damage confidence in them as a social worker and the social work profession. Where it is alleged that a social worker has acted dishonestly, this would not align with the standards outlined above. The case examiners consider the departure from the professional standards to be significant and serious. They

therefore conclude **a realistic prospect of the adjudicators making a finding of misconduct as a statutory ground.**

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 consider 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 alleged conduct in relation to dishonesty as difficult to remediate. This is because it could represent an issue with the social worker's character.

Insight and remediation: Guidance on impairment and sanction reminds the case examiners that *"ideally, insight and successful remediation should take place as early as possible. The earlier it takes place, the greater weight it will carry when the decision makers are making a decision as to impairment."* At the initial stages of the employer investigation, the social worker showed no insight, exhibited by their repeated denial of their actions combined with inconsistent accounts for their actions.

However, the case examiners are of the view that insight has developed over time, and this is demonstrated by the social workers acceptance of all the regulatory concerns, including dishonesty. Their final submissions indicate that they are now on the path to gaining full insight into their prior behaviours. While the social worker disputes current impairment, they do accept historic impairment, citing relevant mitigation, as applied to the concept of impairment, rather than the act of misconduct. They accept that their mitigation, while offering some explanation for why they may have acted as they did, does not excuse their actions as alleged. They offer regret, remorse and an acceptance of how their role in these matters could have resulted in a significant departure from the social work professional standards.

The social worker has also offered a considerable amount of remediation. While they have only more recently started to reflect on the serious nature of their alleged dishonesty, they appear to have made significant and substantial steps to ensure that their future practice is modified to ensure that these types of events do not happen again. This is evidenced by full completion of their 'ASYE' assessed year in practice, together with a reflective account of how they could have acted differently, as applied to the relevant professional standards. Remediation is supported by completion of training in relation to supervision and professional boundaries, resilience and wellbeing, risk analysis and professional judgement. While remediation is not wholly attributable to matters relating to alleged dishonesty, it is evident that the social worker has gained further insight and is on a remediation pathway.

Risk of repetition: The case examiners consider the social worker's prior alleged acts of dishonesty to be serious. This seriousness is exacerbated by a pattern of behaviour which occurred over a defined period, that was sustained, pre-meditated and wilful.

The case examiners do consider however that the alleged acts appear to have occurred over a period where the social worker was experiencing highly difficult and traumatic personal experiences which undoubtedly had a highly negative impact on their life. The social worker appears to have now taken steps to ensure that their future wellbeing is protected by enhanced structures of resilience. As such, while the case examiners consider that some risk of repetition remains, given the absence of early insight and the premeditated nature of the alleged acts, the current steps taken by the social worker are likely to assist in reducing the likelihood of the social worker repeating similar actions in the event of future difficult personal challenges.

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.

If proven, the regulatory concerns represent a serious breach of the cited professional standards. While the social worker has accepted their alleged dishonesty in full, the consequence for service users could have been very serious, had the social worker gained their psychology qualification by deception.

The case examiners consider that an informed member of the public would be highly concerned to learn that the social worker's actions may have engaged in alleged acts of dishonesty. Such a member of the public would be keen to ensure that proper standards for social workers are maintained, to minimise future risks to service

users. A member of the public would also be keen to be assured that professional standards are maintained, in order avoid any further undermining of public confidence in the social work profession.

The case examiners conclude **a realistic prospect of the adjudicators making a finding of impairment in this case.**

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 guidance reminds them that wherever possible and appropriate, case examiners will seek to resolve cases through accepted disposal. The case examiners note that the social worker disputes current impairment but accepts historic impairment.

The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker with an opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on facts, 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 in public if they wish to reject the case examiners finding on the facts and grounds or explore the question of impairment in more detail.

The case examiners are aware that a case cannot be concluded through an accepted disposal process where a social worker does not 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 would require a response from the social worker for the case examiners' consideration. It is also

subject to a final review of the case by the case examiners, who may determine to send the matter to a hearing in public following any response received.

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☒
	Conditions of practice order	☐
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☐
Proposed duration	Warning order – 5 years (published)	

Reasoning

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

The case examiners are reminded by this guidance that they should consider mitigating and aggravating factors when considering which sanction may be appropriate or proportionate. In relation to his case, the case examiners consider there to be several mitigating factors, comprising:

- full engagement with the investigation with their employer and regulator
- personal mitigation, with regards to their personal life challenges at the time of the concerns
- efforts taken by the social worker to remediate and prevent any similar behaviour recurring
- an absence of any previous fitness to practise history

The case examiners have also identified the following aggravating factors:

- a degree of preplanning with regards to the alleged acts

- the risk of harm posed to service users if the social worker had successfully gained a qualification to which they were not entitled

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

The case examiners commenced by considering whether it may be appropriate to reach a finding of impairment, with no requirement for any further action. The case examiners were satisfied that in this case, and considering the seriousness of the concerns raised, that a finding of no further action would be insufficient to protect public confidence.

The case examiners next considered whether offering advice would be sufficient in this case. Advice will normally set out the steps a social worker should take to address the behaviour that led to the regulatory proceedings. The case examiners were of the view that offering advice to the social worker was inappropriate in this case as it would not be sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they viewed the social worker's conduct and would not be sufficient to protect public confidence.

The case examiners went on to consider a warning order, which would provide a clearer expression of disapproval of the social worker's conduct. The case examiners' guidance reminds them that a warning order is likely to be appropriate where the fitness to practise issue is isolated or limited, there is a low risk of repetition, and the social worker has demonstrated some insight.

While the case examiners have found some risk of repetition in this case, they are concerned that the alleged dishonesty appears to have been premeditated with insight taking time to develop. The case examiners have balanced this against the unique stressful personal circumstances experienced by the social worker in the weeks prior to them acting as alleged. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The case examiners are aware of the need to treat every case on its own merits, and while they are of the view that ordinarily nothing short of a suspension or exclusion from the register would be appropriate for such serious concerns, in all the circumstances of this case, which include the insight and remediation that the social worker has gone on to develop, they are of the view that a warning order is the most appropriate and proportionate outcome in this case. It represents the minimum sanction necessary to adequately address the public's confidence in the profession, and to maintain professional standards.

To test their decision on sanction, the case examiners went on to consider whether a conditions of practice or a suspension order might be more appropriate. Given the mitigation and degree of insight and remediation identified to date, they did not consider that this was a case requiring restrictions on practice. They are also aware from their guidance that conditions of practice are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitude or behavioural failings which include alleged dishonesty.

The case examiners next considered whether suspension would be proportionate in the circumstances of this case. The case examiners consider the seriousness of the circumstances to potentially warrant a suspension order. The case examiners take an exceptionally dim view of the social worker's alleged conduct, which includes allegations of dishonesty. However, they have also noted that these concerns appear to have occurred during a period of significant distress in the social worker's personal life, which is likely to have impacted their decision-making. The case examiners consider that the social worker has since engaged in further remediation and professional consolidation which could reduce the risk of any future repetition of such behaviours. They have also completed their 'ASYE' and are currently managing a complex caseload, to the credit of themselves together with the endorsement of their employer. The case examiners therefore consider that a suspension order would be unnecessarily punitive in all the circumstances of this case. A suspension order could also risk de-skilling a social worker who has only just consolidated their practice to the required competencies and professional standards.

To further test their reasoning, the case examiners closely considered whether a removal order would be appropriate in this case. A removal order is appropriate in cases involving dishonesty, especially where the behaviour is persistent and / or concealed. Dishonest conduct is highly damaging to public confidence in social work. Therefore, it is likely to warrant a finding of impairment and a more serious sanction of suspension or removal. A removal order is also appropriate where there is a persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of the social worker's actions or consequences. While this alleged dishonesty was arguably concealed, at least at the initial employer investigation stage, the social worker has since developed some insight and considerable remediation in their acceptance of the regulatory concerns. The dishonesty has not been persistent, occurring during an isolated and discrete period of their life, which involved mitigating and distressing circumstances. In that respect it could be seen as an isolated act of behaviour. The case examiners therefore consider that a removal order would not be appropriate, and that public confidence can be maintained by reconsideration of a warning order.

In reverting back to a warning order as the most appropriate outcome, the case examiners therefore moved on to consider the length of the warning order proposed.

Warning orders can be imposed for one, three or five years. A one-year warning order is appropriate for an isolated incident of relatively low seriousness. Given that the incident was of high seriousness, one year in duration is not likely to be appropriate.

A three-year warning order is more appropriate for more serious concerns. However, the case examiners consider that the level of seriousness is at the upper end of threshold. Therefore, a three-year order would be unlikely to satisfy public confidence that adequate standards of practice be maintained.

A five-year warning order is appropriate for serious cases that have fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction of practice. The case examiners have already decided that conditions of practice are unsuitable, and that a suspension order while a proportionate outcome, could risk de-skilling the social worker. Therefore, they consider that a five-year warning order would reflect and represent the appropriate level of seriousness, which is at the upper end of the continuum. This would also reinforce that the social worker should ensure there is no risk of repetition throughout this extended period.

The case examiners have therefore decided to propose to the social worker a warning order of five 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 14 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

Content of the warning

The case examiners formally warn the social worker as follows:

Your conduct represented a significant breach of the following professional standards:

As a social worker I will:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

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

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.

The case examiners warn that, as a social worker, you are required to adhere to these professional standards in your future practice.

The case examiners take an exceptionally dim view in relation to the social worker's dishonesty as alleged, and this type of conduct should not be repeated. Any similar conduct or matters brought to the attention of the regulator are likely to result in a more serious outcome.

Response from the social worker

Following the social worker's request for amendments, the case examiners invite the social worker to reconsider the offer of accepted disposal of a warning order of five years duration. The social worker will be offered 14 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

29 July 2025:

The case examiners have received an 'accepted disposal response form' from the social worker dated 27 July 2025. This states that they have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide. They admit the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, accepting that their fitness to practise is impaired. They also understand the terms of the proposed disposal of their fitness to practise case and accept them in full.

Case examiners' response and final decision

In the light of the social worker's acceptance of the proposed disposal, the case examiners have reconsidered whether a warning order of 5 years duration remains the appropriate outcome. The case examiners remain of the view that there is no requirement for this case to be referred to a hearing as the social worker accepts that their fitness to practise is impaired. They have also reviewed their decision with 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 a warning order of 5 years duration is a fair and proportionate disposal, and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.

The case examiners therefore direct that this case be resolved by an accepted disposal of a 5-year warning order.