

Case Examiner Decision
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FTPS-21517

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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	19 May 2025
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	18 June 2025
	Accepted disposal - removal order

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 being found proven by the adjudicators.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 being found to amount to the statutory ground of a conviction or caution in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence, and regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4 and 5 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

The case examiners did not consider it to be in the public interest for the matter to be referred to a final hearing and determined that the case could be concluded by way of accepted disposal.

As such, the case examiners requested that the social worker be notified of their intention to resolve the case with a removal order. The social worker subsequently

confirmed that they accepted the terms of an accepted disposal removal order in full. Having revised the public interest in the case, the case examiners determined that an accepted disposal removal order was the most appropriate outcome in this case.

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.

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker as part of their routine registration renewal.
Date the complaint was received	16 December 2022
Complaint summary	The social worker, during a routine registration renewal application, disclosed that they were on bail, pending further investigation, due to “a young person not in (their care) having gone missing and later returning back to their place of living”. During the course of Social Work England’s investigation, the social worker accepted a police caution for keeping a child away from care without lawful authority as set out in regulatory concern 1 below. Information obtained from the police also raised further concerns, including sexual motivation, as summarised at regulatory concerns 2-5 below.

Regulatory concerns

1: While registered as a social worker, on or around 3 February 2023, you accepted a Police caution in relation to Young Person A for the offence of ‘Keep[ing] a child away from care without lawful authority, contrary to Sections 49(1) and (3) of the Children Act 1989’.

2: In relation to RC1 above, you arranged for Young Person A to travel to your home by taxi, despite knowing or suspecting that they were a looked after child.

3: You allowed Young Person A to stay overnight at your home despite knowing or believing that they were a looked after child.

4: Your actions at RC2-RC3 were sexually motivated.

5: Once you were aware that Young Person A was vulnerable, you did not notify the appropriate agencies of their whereabouts on 2nd November 2022.

Regulatory Concern 1 amounts to the statutory ground of receiving a conviction or caution in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your conviction or caution.

Regulatory concerns 2-5 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, 3, 4, and 5 being found proven, that concern 1 could amount to the statutory ground of a conviction or caution in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence and concerns 2, 3, 4 and 5 could amount to the statutory ground of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

1: While registered as a social worker, on or around 3 February 2023, you accepted a Police caution in relation to Young Person A for the offence of 'Keep[ing] a child away from care without lawful authority, contrary to Sections 49(1) and (3) of the Children Act 1989'.

The case examiners have seen a copy of the caution dated 3 February 2023, which was issued to the social worker. The case examiners have also seen an email from the police dated 13 February 2023, in which the police state that the social worker received a caution in relation to the offence as set out in the regulatory concern above. They have also seen the police summary of the case, which again states that a caution was issued. The case examiners have also seen an email from the Local Authority

Designated Officer to the regulator dated 6 February 2023, in which they state that the social worker has been issued and accepted a police caution.

The case examiners note the police have confirmed that they do not have a signed copy of the caution. However, they have seen an email from the social worker dated 9 February 2023 to the regulator, in which the social worker stated that they have received a simple caution. Furthermore, the social worker has stated, both within their initial submissions to the regulator on 14 July 2023 and within a registration renewal, that they have a caution in respect of the offence as set out above.

Whilst the case examiners do not have a signed copy of the caution, it does not appear to be in dispute that the social worker was issued with and accepted a caution as set out at concern 1 above.

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

2: In relation to RC1 above, you arranged for Young Person A to travel to your home by taxi, despite knowing or suspecting that they were a looked after child.

In respect of regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4 and 5, the case examiners have seen a number of transcripts and interviews with the social worker about what happened between themselves and Young Person A. These include the social worker's responses to the police and their employer, as well as the social worker's submissions to the regulator.

The case examiners note that these accounts to the respective agencies vary in differing degrees in terms of the detail. The case examiners, however, having assessed all the evidence, consider that the most reliable accounts are likely to be the ones provided by the social worker to the police, for the following reasons:

- The accounts were taken shortly after the incident took place;
- They were taken whilst the social worker was under caution and;
- The social worker had legal representation during the police interviews.

As such, the case examiners are satisfied that it is appropriate for them to rely on the accounts provided by the social worker to the police in their assessment of the cogency of evidence.

The case examiners have seen the transcripts of interviews carried out between the police and the social worker on 4 November 2022, and 3 February 2023 as well as the case summary report from the police.

The case examiners note the transcript of the police interview on 4 November 2022, which was a few days after the alleged event. In this account, the social worker initially said that they believed Young Person A had travelled to their home by cab, but did not respond directly when asked if they (the social worker) had booked the cab. The social worker stated that they booked a cab the next morning and they also said, in relation to the journey to their home, that *'I couldn't even book a cab even if I wanted to'* as they were working. The police advised that they had knowledge of a phone exchange between Young Person A and the social worker; at this point the social worker was given the opportunity to share anything further, however they did not comment further on the taxi within this interview.

The case examiners have seen a copy of the transcript of a telephone exchange said to be between the social worker and Young Person A. The exchange appears to be about arrangements for the Young Person 1 to get transportation. The social worker asks, *'shall I cancel the booking?'*, to which Young Person A answers, *'Yes yes please'*. Young Person 1 later says, when they have got to another location, *'Order it now'* and also asked, *'Why is it taking so long to get an uber?'*, to which the social worker responds, *'no idea'*. There are continued references to the time taken to obtain a taxi; for instance, the social worker states, *'it still says connecting you to a driver'*, and *'not showing any drivers in the area'* and *'what's the other cab firm. Trying to find another cab thing'*. Finally, the social worker informs Young Person 1 that *'its found a driver. Arriving in 3 mins. Toyota Yaris'*.

The case examiners have seen a copy of the transcript of the subsequent police interview on 3 February 2023. Within this interview, the social worker is asked again whether they booked the taxi for Young Person 1 to come to their home and they said that *'I had a look at Uber but there were no Ubers available. Then I had a look at Bolt, and I was able to get a Bolt....so then I booked the Bolt for Young Person 1, and then Young Person 1 came over'*. Also, within this interview, the police officer shared with the social worker that, *'...obviously on your phone when we downloaded it, we saw the Bolt code on it'*. The social worker was asked why this was not shared in the first interview; they responded that the last time they had been interviewed, they were really anxious and nervous due to it being the first time they had ever been arrested.

The evidence suggests that the social worker booked a taxi for Young Person 1 to travel to their home.

The case examiners have gone on to look at whether there is also evidence that the social worker was aware or suspected that Young Person 1 was a looked after child prior to booking the taxi.

The case examiners note within the police interview on 4 November, which was a few days after the alleged event, the social worker stated that they met Young Person 1 on a dating app around the end of September, which was for people who are over 18. The social worker stated that initially it was, *'talk about fun about sexual stuff. Then*

The police officer asks about the phone call prior to Young Person 1 coming to the social worker's home and the social worker stated that the young person "was just saying that 'Oh I have to get out of the house. They are making mean comments about me. They were saying bad things about my scars'. Like they were like, 'This is why I keep telling you like I don't see the point in living anymore'. So, they were basically the conversations we were having at that time'.

In the interview on 3 February 2023, the social worker stated again that prior to booking the taxi they had a conversation about Young Person 1 coming over on another day, however they state that Young Person 1 said, *'no I really need to come over today because I feel really low because of what's happened at home and I really want to meet with you'.*

Further, when the police officer upon questioning the social worker said, *'you knew [Young Person 1] was in care. You said in the last interview you knew'.* The social worker responded, *'okay'.* The police officer spoke further about the conversations that took place prior to Young Person 1 coming to the social worker's house, where they were summarising and stated, *'you've already gone through this situation where they told you they were in care',* to which the social worker answers, *'yeah'.*

The case examiners note that the social worker was employed in a team working with young people aged 16 plus, and therefore they would be expected to have knowledge of the legislation and arrangements for accommodating young people. The evidence suggests that the social worker was aware the Young Person 1 was vulnerable, they were under 18 and was living in care.

The case examiners are therefore satisfied that the evidence suggests the social worker arranged for Young Person 1 to travel to their home by taxi and, prior to doing so, would have been aware or suspected that Young Person 1 would be classed a looked after child.

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

3: You allowed Young Person A to stay overnight at your home despite knowing or believing that they were a looked after child.

As set out in regulatory concern 2, the evidence suggests that the social worker was aware or suspected prior to the Young Person 1 coming to their home, that they were a looked after child.

The case examiners note that the evidence indicates, and in both police interviews with the social worker on 4 November 2022 and 3 February 2023, the social worker is recorded as admitting, that Young Person 1 had stayed the night in their home.

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

4: Your actions at RC2-RC3 were sexually motivated.

The case examiners note their guidance which advises them that sexual misconduct covers a wide range of conduct, which includes pursuing an inappropriate sexual relationship, and any other misconduct of a sexual nature, such as sexual touching and inappropriate comments.

In considering whether the social worker's actions were sexually motivated, the case examiners have considered whether the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a sexual relationship.

The case examiners note the information contained within the police interviews, in which the social worker has advised that they met Young Person 1 on a dating app, which was for over 18s. Also, within these interviews, the social worker stated that their initial conversations with Young Person A were *'mostly talk about fun about sexual stuff'*.

The case examiners have noted the conversation immediately prior to the social worker arranging a taxi for Young Person 1 to come to their home. They note a number of comments which may be considered sexual in nature:

- Young Person 1 said, *'I was all looking all fresh and lovely and cute for our date and everything and now I feel like shit'*. The social worker replies, *'sure you look fine'*.



- Later in the same conversation, Young Person 1 asks the social worker to come outside and get them and when the social worker asks why, the young person states, *'cos I'm your responsibility cos you're my social worker'* and *'but I'm your property so'*. Again, other than deny that they are Young Person 1's social worker, they do not close down the conversation or contradict Young Person 1.

The case examiners note within the police interviews that the social worker stated that Young Person 1 slept in their bed and that they slept on the sofa. Further, they state that Young Person 1 *'tried to make advances'* and the social worker said that they responded, *'No sorry, I'm really tired. You just go to bed'*. The social worker within both interviews denies having a sexual relationship with Young Person 1.

In respect of regulatory concern 2, the case examiners have concluded that the evidence suggests the social worker met Young Person 1 via a dating app, which would suggest they were in pursuit of a relationship. The evidence suggests the nature and content of the communications sent between the social worker and Young Person 1, immediately prior to the young person coming to their home, included some which could be considered sexual in nature, and were therefore likely to have been sent in pursuit of a sexual relationship. As such, the case examiners consider it reasonable to infer from this evidence that the social worker's actions were sexually motivated.

In respect of regulatory concern 3, the case examiners note that the social worker in the police interviews stated that they allowed Young Person 1 to stay as they *'were worried for their safety'*, as Young Person 1 had talked of self-harm and suicidal ideations, *'so I told them to go to sleep and then in the morning I booked them a cab'*.

Whilst the case examiners note that there is no direct evidence that, when allowing Young Person 1 to stay overnight at their home despite knowing or believing that they were a looked after child, the social worker's actions continued to be sexually motivated, the case examiners are aware from their guidance that they:

"can assess the weight of the evidence. In some instances where there is a factual dispute, there may be clear and cogent evidence supporting one side of the dispute. This may also be confirmed and supported by other evidence. The evidence to the contrary may also be inconsistent or wholly implausible."

In this instance, the case examiners are of the view that there is supporting evidence of sexual motivation which they are able to consider, and that it is implausible that the social worker's actions in allowing the Young Person to stay at their home were, as they

claim, motivated only by a desire to protect the young person with sexual motivation being absent.

As outlined above, the social worker acknowledged to the police that when they first engaged with Young Person 1 on a dating app, the conversations had been about “*sexual stuff*”, and the case examiners have already outlined evidence suggesting that social worker’s actions in arranging the taxi prior to the social worker staying at their home were sexually motivated. In addition, the social worker informed the police that the young person had, while staying at their home, “*tried to make a move*” on the social worker, but the social worker submits that they had said no.

The case examiners also note from the police transcripts that it was established by the social worker prior to Young Person 1 coming to the social worker’s home that they were vulnerable and had self-harmed in the past, as the social worker had spoken to them about this. Nonetheless, the social worker had allowed and arranged for them to attend their home. The social worker acknowledged to the police that, given their knowledge and professional background, they should have taken action to protect Young Person 1 in light of the information they shared with the social worker about any concerns they had for their safety, rather than allowing them to stay the night, however they did not do so. The social worker has also indicated that they were trained in child sexual exploitation.

The case examiners therefore conclude that it is implausible that the social worker allowed Young Person 1 to stay at their home only out of concern for their “safety”, and that their motivation did not include a desire to pursue a sexual relationship with them.

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

5: Once you were aware that Young Person A was vulnerable, you did not notify the appropriate agencies of their whereabouts on 2nd November 2022.

As established in regulatory concern 2, the case examiners are satisfied there is evidence that the social worker knew that Young Person 1 was vulnerable and may be a looked after child.

Within the police interviews, the social worker described their professional role in terms of working with young people, and advised that they considered that they were almost acting in the capacity of a social worker as they were listening to Young Person 1 and encouraging them to speak to their social worker about some of the things that they had discussed. However, the social worker was asked directly why they had not contacted anyone, and the social worker stated that they did not know where the

young person lived, or where they were staying, and they had no means of contacting any other professionals in respect of this person.

The evidence suggests that despite reporting to be extremely worried about the young person, the social worker at no point contacted or spoke to any other agencies in respect of Young Person 1's wellbeing or whereabouts.

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

Grounds

A conviction or caution in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence

The case examiners have seen a copy of the caution dated 3 February 2023, which was issued to the social worker. The case examiners have also seen an email from the police dated 13 February 2023, in which the police state that the social worker received a caution in relation to the offence as set out in the regulatory concern above.

In emails dated 9 February and 14 July 2023 from the social worker to the regulator, the social worker has stated that they have received a simple caution in relation to Young Person A for the offence of 'Keep[ing] a child away from care without lawful authority, contrary to Sections 49(1) and (3) of the Children Act 1989'.

The case examiners are satisfied that adjudicators would consider that the statutory ground of a conviction or caution in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence is engaged.

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. The case examiners consider the social worker may have breached the following standards:

As a social worker, I will:

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

As a social worker, I will not:

5.1 Abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone or condone this by others.

5.2 Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker whilst at work, or outside of work.

The case examiners are aware that falling short of the professional standards may not always amount to misconduct. However, adjudicators in this instance may determine that the social worker has significantly departed from these standards and as such the statutory ground of misconduct is engaged. The case examiners note the adjudicators may be concerned that the social worker, despite their professional background of working with vulnerable young people, allowed a young person to come to their house and stay over. This was allegedly in pursuit of a sexual relationship, despite the social worker becoming aware that the young person was under 18, and were aware the young person was living in some form of residential care accommodation. Furthermore, despite all their knowledge and background, and stating that they had concerns for the young person of a safeguarding nature, it is alleged that the social worker took no action in response to these. Safeguarding is a basic tenet of the social work profession and failure to act on matters of a safeguarding nature would be viewed very dimly by both adjudicators and the public.

The case examiners note that the alleged conduct took place outside of the social worker's employment and in their personal life. However, they consider that given the social worker's professional background, they would have been acutely aware of the vulnerabilities of the young person and the steps to take in this instance. However, despite this, the evidence suggests that they continued to pursue a sexually motivated relationship by arranging for the young person to come to their home and stay overnight.

The case examiners' guidance reminds them that social workers hold privileged positions of trust and that a social worker's role often requires them work with people, who may be highly vulnerable. Whilst the alleged conduct took place outside of the workplace, it remains essential to the effective delivery of social work that the public can trust social workers implicitly. Any abuse of trust by a social worker is a serious and unacceptable risk in terms of public protection and confidence in the profession as a whole, whether in or outside of the workplace.

The case examiners consider that the social worker's actions as alleged represent a significant breach of the professional standards required, and amount to serious misconduct. Young Person 1 is identified as a vulnerable person, and the case

examiners consider that by engaging in the alleged sexually motivated conduct the social worker placed the young person at risk of emotional harm.

The case examiners note the social worker's assertions in the police interviews and to their employer that they felt they were helping the young person. Case examiners note within these interviews, the social worker was able to articulate the steps that they should have taken to safeguard the young person, however the evidence suggests that despite their knowledge and background, they did not do so.

Where it is alleged that a social worker has pursued a sexual relationship with a vulnerable child, this would not align with Social Work England standard 5.1 and 5.2.

Where it is alleged that a social worker has not reported matters of a safeguarding nature, this would not align with Social Work England standard 3.12.

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 these matters amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Impairment

Personal element of impairment

In considering the personal element of impairment, the case examiners have considered the test for personal impairment as set out in the case examiner guidance (2022), namely whether the conduct is remediable; whether the social worker has undergone remediation and demonstrated insight; and whether there is a likelihood the matters alleged will be repeated. The guidance also reminds the case examiners that they should take into account whether the social worker has admitted the allegations, any relevant previous history and any testimonials that have been provided.

The case examiners note there is no previous adverse history in respect of this social worker.

The case examiners are of the view that the conduct alleged did not arise from a character flaw such as dishonesty, however, the evidence suggests it involved a serious abuse of trust and may be considered incompatible with social work values. Remediation may then be challenging; however, it may be possible to remediate in a variety of ways such as additional training and reflection.

The case examiners are of the view that the social worker has shown very limited insight into the alleged conduct. The case examiners note that the social worker has provided inconsistent accounts of what happened, and with time appears to have minimised their actions. The case examiners remain concerned that the social worker's submissions suggest that they do not appear to recognise the seriousness of their conduct and the potential impact on the young person.

The social worker has not fully considered what they should have done differently. The case examiners would have liked to see deeper insight into how the social worker's alleged actions may impact on public confidence and also the potential impact on the young person.

In terms of remediation, the case examiners note that the social worker has provided a reflective piece, which was requested as part of the registration renewal process. However, the case examiners consider that this fails to address the seriousness and appears to be defending the social worker's actions.

The case examiners note that the social worker has been subject to an interim suspension order since 24 October 2023, and subsequently an interim conditions of practice order since 7 April 2025, and they confirm that they have not worked in a social work capacity since the initial order was in place. The case examiners have been provided with no evidence of remediation.

The case examiners have concluded that the alleged conduct was serious, and the social worker has demonstrated very limited reflection, and no remediation. As such, the case examiners consider there is a risk of repetition.

Public element of impairment

The case examiners 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. 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 arranged for a vulnerable child, to attend their home and allowed them to stay overnight, whilst living in some form of residential care accommodation. Furthermore, although the social worker claims to have had concerns of a safeguarding nature, they do not appear to have taken any appropriate action in relation to these concerns. Adjudicators may consider that the public would

be extremely concerned about a social worker acting in this manner and may not have confidence in their abilities to practise safely in the future.

The case examiners consider that emotional harm may have been caused to the young person as a result of the social worker's actions.

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

Accordingly, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of the 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	☐
	No	☒

Referral criteria

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

Additional reasoning

The case examiners have considered whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. The case examiners have noted that the social worker, via their representative, has indicated that they do not accept some of the key facts and neither do they consider that they are currently impaired.

Where a social worker does not accept the key facts or that their practice is impaired, case examiner guidance suggests that a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. However, 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 disputes a number of the concerns and via their representative indicates that they consider there is no realistic prospect of a number of the key facts being found proven. However, 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.

- The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker with the opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on facts 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 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 accept the facts and 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 conditions of practice order is already in effect.

Accepted disposal

Case outcome		
Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☐
	Conditions of practice order	☐
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☒
Proposed duration	Where a social worker is removed from the register, there is no defined end to the finding of impairment. A social worker that has been removed from the register may only apply to be restored to the register 5 years after the date the removal order took effect. The adjudicators will decide whether to restore a person to the register.	

Reasoning

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.

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 are satisfied that in this case, given the seriousness of the social worker alleged conduct, such outcomes are inappropriate.

Conditions of practice order:

The case examiners next considered a conditions 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 were of the view that the social worker has shown very limited insight. Furthermore, this conduct took place in the social worker's private life, therefore, the case examiners do not consider there are any workable or proportionate conditions that they could formulate that would manage the existing risk present. The case examiners also considered that the public interest in this case would require a more serious sanction, so that public confidence could be maintained.

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, whilst the social worker has engaged with the regulator, the case examiners note that they have provided conflicting accounts to those which have been provided to both the police and their employers. The social worker, via their representative, does not appear to accept some of the concerns nor that they are currently impaired. The case examiners have not been provided with evidence that the social worker is willing or able to remediate at this stage.

Further, the case examiners note the regulator's sanctions guidance (para 161) that 'decision makers should consider imposing a more serious sanction if they find the social worker impaired because of sexual misconduct. This is because of the seriousness of these types of cases'. 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 in light of evidence of sexual motivation, a serious abuse of trust and failure to safeguard a vulnerable child, there is no other outcome available to them that would provide the level of assurance needed in respect of these three criteria.

Given the lack of insight, the conflicting accounts provided by the social worker and the lack of remediation, the case examiners consider that the alleged conduct is fundamentally incompatible with the role and values of a social worker. In the case examiners' view, a removal order is the only sanction available that will safeguard public confidence.

To conclude, the case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a removal order. They will now notify the social worker of their intention and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly. The social worker will be offered 28 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

Response from the social worker

On 17 June 2025 the social worker returned their completed accepted disposal response form, confirming as following:

"I have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide. I admit the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, and that my fitness to practise is impaired. I understand the terms of the proposed disposal of my fitness to practise case and accept them in full".

Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners have reviewed their decision, paying particular regard to the overarching objectives of Social Work England:

- The protection of the public
- Maintaining confidence in the social work profession
- The maintenance of professional standards.

The case examiners remain satisfied that an accepted disposal removal order is a fair and proportionate way to conclude this matter, and is the minimum sanction required to protect the public and the wider public interest.

The case examiners note that there is an interim order currently in effect; this will be revoked upon enactment of the agreed removal order.