

Case Examiner Decision  
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SW133168  
FTPS-23642

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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	15 January 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	22 January 2026
	Accepted disposal - removal order

## Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1-4 being found proven by the adjudicators.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1-4 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1-4, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

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

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

On 20 January 2026 the social worker confirmed that they had read the case examiner's decision and the accepted disposal guide. The social worker confirmed

that they understood the terms of proposed disposal of their case and accepted them in full.

The case examiners have considered all of the documents made available within the evidence bundle. Key evidence is referred to throughout their decision and the case examiners' full reasoning is set out below.

## Anonymity and redaction

Elements of this decision have been marked for redaction in line with our Fitness to Practise Publications Policy. Text in **blue** will be redacted only from the published copy of the decision, and will therefore be shared with the complainant in their copy.

## The complaint and our regulatory concerns

### The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer, Hull City Council.
Date the complaint was received	23 July 2024
Complaint summary	The social worker was dismissed from her employment with Hull City Council on 28 October 2024, following allegations that the social worker had accessed client records without professional reason to do so. Further investigation suggested that the social worker had not been honest about their conduct to their [then] employer and to the regulator.

### Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker:

1. Between 29 April 2024 and 17 July 2024 you accessed service user case records without professional reason to do so.
2. On 19 November 2024, when submitting a voluntary removal application, you declared that you were unaware of any current allegation, investigation, proceedings, or order which may result in action being taken against you, despite being aware that Hull City Council had made a referral to Social Work England regarding your fitness to practise.
3. In response to being questioned by your employer Hull City Council, about your access to service user records, you provided explanations that were inaccurate and/or misleading.
4. Your actions at regulatory concern 2 and 3 were dishonest.

The matters outlined in the regulatory concerns amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

## 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"/>



## 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 and 4 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

- 1. Between 29 April 2024 and 17 July 2024 you accessed service user case records without professional reason to do so.**

The case examiners have had sight of the local authority's case management system, Liquid Logic access report and the chronology of Liquid Logic access, both documents show the frequency and duration of the social worker's access to Person A's case records. The report and the chronology show that the social worker accessed Person A's case records on 20 occasions within the date range stipulated in regulatory concern 1.

The case examiners have been provided with a screenshot of the system notice from Liquid Logic. The social worker must click 'OK' to the terms of the notice every time they access Liquid Logic. The notice reads '*you must only access information where there is a legitimate need and a right to know as part of your current role... Do not*

*under any circumstances, for any purpose, view personal records relating to yourself, family members, friends or colleagues.’* The system notice appears to clearly set out the expectation around accessing personal data.

The case examiners have considered the social worker’s initial response to the regulatory concern where the social worker accepts that Person A was not allocated to them and that they *‘did access records without a work-related purpose in respect to Person A, and have immense guilt and remorse in regard to the situation.’*

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

- 2. On 19 November 2024, when submitting a voluntary removal application, you declared that you were unaware of any current allegation, investigation, proceedings, or order which may result in action being taken against you, despite being aware that Hull City Council had made a referral to Social Work England regarding your fitness to practise.**

The case examiners have been provided with the local authority’s formal investigation minutes which records on 17 July 2024 that the investigating officer informed the social worker that they had been advised to notify Social Work England of the incident. *‘[officer] closed the meeting by explaining the next steps to [the social worker] [officer] said she has been advised that she needs to make Social Work England aware of the incident due to the data breach and in respect of the investigation.’*

The formal investigation minutes from a further meeting on 16 August 2024 record that the social worker was informed that Social Work England had been notified of the concerns. *‘[officer] advised Social Work England had been informed of the data breach, the honesty and integrity issue in line with Social Work registration. [officer] advised Social Work England have asked to know the outcome and to be sent associated documents in respect of the formal investigation report... [social worker] asked if it was ok to carry on completing CPD. [officer] advised to carry on as normal but to take advice from Social Work England.’*

The evidence appears to suggest that whilst the social worker had not received any correspondence from Social Work England at the time of the voluntary removal application, they were aware of the allegations that had been referred to the regulator.

The case examiners have had sight of the voluntary removal application declaration, submitted by the social worker on 19 November 2024, which shows that the social

worker has selected that they were unaware of any *‘current allegation, investigation, proceedings or order which may result in action taken against you’*.

The social worker states in their initial response to the regulatory concern that *‘at the time I was aware that concerns had been raised against me, and I believed that I had ticked this box on the form when completing this, however this was clearly not the case.’* Whilst the social worker goes on to explain that this was *‘genuine human error due to carelessness and heightened emotional state’* it does not appear from the account provided that the social worker is disputing they made an incorrect declaration to the regulator.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

**3. In response to being questioned by your employer Hull City Council, about your access to service user records, you provided explanations that were inaccurate and/or misleading.**

The case examiners have had sight of the local authority formal investigation meeting minutes. The local authority interviewed the social worker on 3 occasions, 5 July 2024, 17 July 2024 and 16 August 2024, during which it appears that the social worker provided differing accounts. The social worker has signed the record of minutes as being a true account of the meetings. The social worker provided the following accounts regarding their access to Person A’s case records:

5 July 2024

- The access was partly accidental.
- The access was partly motivated by professional curiosity regarding Mental Health Capacity Assessments.
- The social worker acknowledged the breach and accepted the access was without a business need.
- The social worker acknowledged that they should have sought permission before accessing the information.

17 July 2024

- The social worker confirmed the account provided in the meeting on the 5 July 2024 as to why they had accessed Person A’s case records was correct.

- When questioned about the plausibility of their initial explanation provided on 5 July 2024 the social worker admitted the access was not accidental.
- When asked to think back and be as honest as possible and explain why they had accessed the records, the social worker confirmed that they had accessed the records out of *'morbid curiosity'* and without good reason.
- The social worker confirmed that they had not shared any information regarding Person A but that their actions may have indirectly influenced the advice they had given to Person A's granddaughter (Person B) with whom the social worker was friends.

#### 16 August 2024

- The social worker confirmed that it was fair to say that their rationale for accessing Person A's records had changed after the data was presented to them in the meeting on 17 July 2024.
- The social worker was advised to answer with honesty, as the matter was now not solely regarding the data breach but also the social workers integrity.
- The social worker admitted to using Person B's laptop (also a social worker at the local authority) to access Person A's case records, in breach of protocol and an action not previously disclosed. The social worker denied sharing any information with Person B.
- When asked why they had repeatedly stated the reason for accessing the case records was partly accidental and partly motivated by professional curiosity regarding Mental Health Capacity Assessments, the social worker stated that *'her back was against the wall when first approached about it and was the first thing that came into her head.'*

The evidence appears to show that the social worker provided misleading and differing accounts to their employer throughout the course of the formal investigation into their conduct.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

#### **4. Your actions at regulatory concern 2 and 3 were dishonest.**

In considering regulatory concern 4, the case examiners have applied the test for dishonesty, which consists of two parts – the subjective test and the objective test.

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

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

### Regulatory concern 2

In relation to the subjective test, the case examiners are of the view that the social worker knew whether they had any current allegation, investigation, proceedings, or order which may result in action being taken against them at the time they made the declaration within the voluntary removal application. The case examiners note the evidence that the social worker was informed in two of the formal investigation meetings that a referral had been made to the regulator regarding their conduct. The social worker has admitted in their submissions that they were aware of the concerns raised against them.

Turning to the box ticked on the declaration, the social worker seems to suggest in their evidence that it was yes or no box to tick and that she had selected the wrong one. *'I did not check the answers that I had provided before submission, which is careless behaviour, and had I checked I would have amended my answer to yes in regards to knowledge of any concerns raised.'* The case examiners have had sight of the declaration provided and it was not a yes or no tick box. The declaration had a list of statements with only one box to select to confirm the statement was true. The statement read *'I am unaware of any current allegation, investigation, proceedings, or order which may result in action being taken against me'* and the social worker selected the box next to that statement. The case examiners consider that there could be an element of human error when completing online forms, however this appears more plausible where there is a yes or no tick box and the incorrect box is selected. The case examiners cannot find facts and are therefore not in a position to resolve the issue of whether the declaration was made by mistake or with dishonest intent. They are of the view that there is sufficient evidence to suggest the social worker knew that they were declaring they were unaware of current allegations, when they were aware of the allegations, by their own admission.

In relation to the objective test, the case examiners consider that if the social worker was found in regulatory concern 3 to have knowingly provided an incorrect declaration the regulator, ordinary, decent people would view this to be dishonest.

### Regulatory concern 3

In relation to the subjective test, the case examiners are of the view that the social worker would have known why they had accessed Person A's case records when questioned by their employer. The case examiners note the evidence that the social workers explanations changed throughout the course of the three investigation meetings and particularly when presented with evidence which contradicted their account, as noted above in the commentary regarding regulatory concern 3. The social worker admitted that '*her back was against the wall*' when they were first approached about accessing Person A's case records.

In relation to the objective test, the case examiners consider that if the social worker was found in regulatory concern 4 to have knowingly provided inaccurate and/or misleading explanations for their conduct to their employer during the course of a formal investigation, ordinary, decent people would view this to be dishonest.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

### Grounds

The case examiners are aware that there is no legal definition of misconduct, but it generally would consist of serious acts or omissions, which suggest a significant departure from what would be expected of the social worker in the circumstances. This can include conduct that takes place in the exercise of professional practice, and also conduct which occurs outside the exercise of professional practice, but calls into question the suitability of the person to work as a social worker.

To help them decide if the evidence suggests a significant departure from what would be expected in the circumstances, the case examiners have considered the following standards, which were applicable at the time of the concerns.

### Social Work England – Professional Standards (2019)

*As a social worker I will:*

*2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.*

*2.6 Treat information about people with sensitivity and handle confidential information in line with the law.*

*As a social worker I will not:*

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

#### Regulatory concern 1

Social workers are routinely trusted with access to service user's personal lives and highly sensitive and confidential information, such as case notes. Social workers are relied on to act with integrity and professionalism when accessing service users' personal information. The case examiners note the professional standards guidance which sets out that *'professional integrity in social work means always upholding the values and reputation of the profession.'*

The evidence suggests, and the social worker accepts, that they accessed service user case records without professional reason to do so. The case examiners are of the view that, if proven, regulatory concern 1 may represent a breach of standard 2.6, around handling confidential information and 5.2, in that social workers are not expected to behave in a way that would bring into question their suitability to work as a social worker. Given the importance of handling case records appropriately and in line with the law, the case examiners consider that the social workers actions would be considered a significant departure from the professional standards.

Accordingly, the case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that regulatory concern 1 amounts to the statutory ground of misconduct.

#### Regulatory concerns 2, 3 and 4

With reference to the regulator's professional standards guidance, the case examiners note that where it is found that a social worker acted dishonestly, this is always likely to be considered serious. Honesty is key to good social work practice. Social workers are routinely trusted with access to service user's personal lives and highly sensitive and confidential information, such as case notes. When a social worker does not act honestly, this brings into question their suitability to work as a social worker. The evidence suggests that the social worker knew they had provided inaccurate and misleading information to their employer during the formal investigation meetings and also provided an inaccurate declaration to the regulator regarding allegations made against them.

When reviewing dishonesty, the case examiners can consider factors such as the duration of dishonesty and whether the social worker admitted the dishonest behaviour at the earliest opportunity. The evidence contained within the record of minutes from the formal investigation meetings suggests that the social worker

changed their rationale for accessing case records when presented with evidence from their employer. The evidence also suggests that the social worker was not honest with their employer in the first instance because their *'back was up against the wall'*. In the case examiners' view, the conduct alleged in this case is particularly serious because the evidence suggests a pattern of behaviour that continued throughout the employer investigation meetings and when making a declaration to the regulator.

The case examiners are satisfied in light of the evidence provided that this is a serious matter and, if proven, a significant departure from professional standards 5.2 and 2.1.

Accordingly, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that regulatory concerns 2, 3 and 4 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

### 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 acknowledge that dishonest conduct can be difficult to remediate, as it is characterised in case law as a behavioural or attitudinal issue. The case examiners turn to the sanctions guidance to assist, which states, *'concerns that raise questions of character (such as dishonesty) may be harder to remediate. This is because it is more difficult to produce objective evidence of reformed character.'* The social worker has not provided evidence of reformed character but has shown remorse and provided some insight into what happened and what they would do differently in the future. However, given the severity of the misconduct in this case



and that the evidence suggests a pattern of behaviour, the case examiners consider the social worker's conduct difficult to remedy.

#### Insight and remediation

The social worker accepted the key facts in relation to regulatory concerns 1 and 2 in their initial response dated 4 February 2025. In relation to regulatory concern 2 the social worker denies intentionally making an incorrect declaration to the regulator. Despite extensive efforts, the investigator was unable to obtain a final response from the social worker to include a response to regulatory concerns 3 and 4. The social worker has shown remorse and accepts their role and responsibilities in relation to their conduct in regulatory concerns 1 and 2. Examples of the social workers insight are listed below:

- *'I confirm that I did access records without a work-related purpose in respect to Person A, and have immense guilt and remorse in regard to the situation. I did so without the knowledge of my colleagues or peers, which I agree is dishonest and not in line with the standards and practices of Social Work England.'*
- *'I have internally reflected upon my actions and again have a number of regrets that I have to live with moving forward, and am working on ways on how to improve myself moving forward in regards to honesty and transparency, as this is the first and last time where I have been dishonest in the workplace.'*

There is no objective evidence of remediation, such as, completion of education or training courses or positive feedback in relation to professional practice. The social worker has been out of practice since their dismissal making obtaining such feedback more difficult. The social worker has shown remorse, but dishonest conduct is highly damaging to public confidence in social work and therefore likely to warrant a finding of impairment.

#### Risk of repetition

Whilst the social worker has shown some insight and is remorseful, without significant evidence of remediation, and the evidence which suggests a pattern of behaviour, the case examiners are satisfied that a risk of repetition remains.

#### **Public element**

The case examiners have next considered whether the social worker's actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in the social work profession, or the maintenance of proper standards for social workers.

In considering the public element, the case examiners were mindful of the regulator's guidance, which explains that allegations of dishonesty are particularly serious. Honesty is key to good social work practice, therefore conduct amounting to dishonesty will likely undermine public confidence in the social work profession.

In such circumstances, the case examiners can only conclude that a failure to find impairment would be highly likely to damage public confidence in the social work profession and would fundamentally undermine the maintenance of proper professional standards for social workers.

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 to be 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 type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is a hearing necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession, and/or to uphold the professional standards of social workers?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Additional reasoning

The case examiners have concluded that the public interest in this case is engaged. However, they are satisfied that this interest may be appropriately fulfilled by virtue of the accepted disposal process.

The social worker accepts the key facts of regulatory concerns 1 and 2, although in relation to regulatory concern 2 the social worker denies intentionally making an incorrect declaration to the regulator. Despite extensive efforts, the investigator was unable to obtain a response from the social worker in relation to regulatory concerns 3 and 4. However, the case examiners are satisfied that the social worker has been given the opportunity to provide a response.

Where a social worker does not accept the key facts, case examiner guidance suggests that a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. However, the case examiners note that the guidance states the social worker must accept the matter of impairment at the point of concluding the case. The case examiners are of the view that this does not prevent them offering accepted disposal prior to this.

Whilst the matter is serious, the case examiners are not of the view that it is so serious that a hearing might be necessary to maintain public confidence in the social work profession, or in Social Work England's maintenance of the standards expected of social workers.

The case examiners consider 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.

## Accepted disposal

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

Reasoning
<p>The case examiners have identified the following mitigating and aggravating factors in this case;</p> <p><u>Mitigating</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of remorse and insight and the social worker has taken accountability for their conduct in regulatory concerns 1 and 2.</li> </ul> <p><u>Aggravating</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleged repeated dishonesty during the employer's disciplinary investigation.</li> <li>Alleged dishonesty when making a declaration to the regulator.</li> <li>The social worker has not provided evidence of remediation.</li> </ul> <p>In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England's sanctions guidance (December 2022) and reminded</p>

themselves that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish the social worker, but to protect the public.

The case examiners have decided that it is not in the public interest to refer this matter to a final hearing and have chosen the least restrictive sanction necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest. They have started at the lowest possible sanction and worked up, testing the appropriateness of each sanction to confirm their decision is proportionate.

The case examiners have already determined there is a realistic prospect that the social worker's fitness to practise would be found impaired. The sanctions guidance advises that if the personal element of impairment is found, *"a sanction restricting or removing a social worker's registration will normally be necessary to protect the public"*. The case examiners are therefore led to consider sanctions which restrict the social worker's practice. They note that the guidance suggests it may therefore *"be reasonable to move beyond the lower sanctions (no action, advice or a warning) on this basis alone"*. The case examiners have already determined that they do not consider that the social worker has demonstrated sufficient remediation and that a risk of repetition remains. Therefore, the sanctions of no further action, advice or a warning are considered inappropriate on the basis that these outcomes will not restrict practice and therefore not sufficiently protect the public.

The case examiners have then considered a conditions of practice order, however they note the sanctions guidance again which states these orders are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitude or behavioural failings. The case examiners have not been provided with any evidence that the social worker feels able to remediate or return to practice currently, making a conditions of practice order unsuitable. Furthermore, the case examiners felt this order does not adequately address the serious nature of the alleged misconduct.

The case examiners next considered a suspension order, in order to mark the seriousness of the alleged conduct and protect the public. They are guided to only consider a suspension order where all of the following apply:

- *the concerns represent a serious breach of the professional standards.*
- *the social worker has demonstrated some insight.*
- *there is evidence to suggest the social worker is willing and able to resolve or remediate their failings*

The case examiners have established that this case represents a serious breach of the professional standards and set out their reasoning for this earlier in the decision.

The social worker has demonstrated some insight. The social worker has not returned to practice since their dismissal and has indicated that they do not wish to do so stating:

*'I have no intentions of returning to Social Work practice, and do not plan to use the title of a Social Worker moving forward. At this point in time, I would not feel comfortable returning to Social Work Practice, hence why I submitted the Voluntary Removal form in the first place, as the thoughts of returning to Social Work practice in the future makes me feel anxious, due to the severity of the data breach and my misguided loyalties.'*

Given the content of their submissions above and the fact that they appear to have disengaged with the regulator throughout the course of the investigation, the case examiners do not feel there is evidence to suggest the social worker is willing and able to remediate their failings.

The case examiners also considered if the conduct in this case is so serious that nothing but a removal order will satisfy the public interest? The case examiners are of the view that dishonesty, with evidence of a pattern of repeated dishonest behaviour, is enough to justify a removal order. Given the allegations of very serious misconduct and repeated dishonesty, the case examiners do not feel that a suspension order is the minimum necessary sanction to protect the public and uphold standards in social work.

The case examiner sanctions guidance states that:

*'a removal order may be appropriate in cases involving dishonesty, especially where persistent and/or concealed.'*

Having set out their reasoning as to why a suspension order (and other lesser sanctions) are not appropriate in this case, the case examiners again refer to the sanctions guidance that states that:

*'A removal order must be made where the decision makers conclude that no other outcome would be enough to (do one or more of the following):*

- *protect the public*
- *maintain confidence in the profession*
- *maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England'*

The case examiners have decided to propose a removal order to the social worker. 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 20 January 2026 the social worker confirmed that they had read the case examiner's decision and the accepted disposal guide. The social worker confirmed that they understood the terms of proposed disposal of their case and accepted them in full. The social worker responded as follows:

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

The case examiners are satisfied that an accepted disposal (removal) is a fair and proportionate outcome to address the concerns and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and satisfy the wider public interest.

## Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners concluded 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, published decision and removal, rather than through a public hearing. They proposed a removal order, the social worker accepted this proposal.

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