

Case Examiner Decision
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FTP70299

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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	1. 19 July 2024. 2. 25 July 2025.
	1. Information requested / submissions requested. 2. Accepted disposal proposed - conditions of practice order (18 months).
Final outcome	19 September 2025.
	Accepted disposal proposed - conditions of practice order (18 months).

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1a, 1b, and 1c being found proven by the adjudicators.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1a, 1b, and 1c being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.
3. For regulatory concerns 1a, 1b, and 1c, 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 be notified of their intention to resolve the case with a conditions of practice order of 18-months.

On 10 September 2025, the social worker confirmed that they had read the case examiner's decision and the accepted disposal guide. The social worker confirmed that they accepted the terms of the accepted disposal in full and agreed to their fitness to practise case concluding by way of a conditions of practice order of 18 months duration.

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. Text in **red** will be redacted from both the complainant's and the published copy of the decision.

In accordance with Social Work England's fitness to practise proceedings and registration appeals publications policy, the case examiners have anonymised the names of individuals to maintain privacy. A schedule of anonymity is provided below for the social worker and complainant and will be redacted if this decision is published.

Professional A	
Professional B	
Professional C	
Professional D	

Professional E	
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The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer, Southampton City Council.
Date the complaint was received	28 May 2019
Complaint summary	The initial complaint was raised with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), who regulated social work in England at the time the complaint was raised. The complainant alleged that the social worker did not provide adequate managerial oversight. The specific issues raised by the complainant are captured in the regulatory concerns section, below.

Regulatory concerns and concerns recommended for closure

Regulatory concerns as amended by the case examiners

Please note that amendments are highlighted in bold text and the reason for amendments is given in the 'preliminary issues' section of this decision.

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

1. That you, a registered social worker, whilst employed by Southampton Council, did not adequately safeguard children in that you:
 - a. failed to ~~M~~**manage** the timeliness of decision making
 - b. lacked systems for oversight
 - c. did not work in partnership with your colleagues

The matters at RC1 amount to misconduct and/or lack of competence.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct and/or lack of competence.

Concerns being recommended for closure:

Concerns being recommended for closure are concerns raised by the complainant, for which no evidence has been found during the investigative process or where the evidence obtained negates the concern(s). Decisions regarding concerns being recommended for closure remains the remit of the case examiners.

1. That you, a registered social worker, whilst employed by Southampton Council, did not adequately safeguard children in that you:
 - a. failed to **manage** the timeliness of decision making

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	☐

Requests for further information or submissions, or any other preliminary issues that have arisen

19 July 2024

The case examiners are aware of the need to consider cases expeditiously and the need to ensure fairness to all parties. However, the case examiners consider, bearing in mind their investigatory function and statutory duty, that further information is needed to be able to reach a decision on this case.

The case examiners have noted the case examiner guidance, which states they should only request further information if it would not be possible to reach a decision without it. They are satisfied that their chosen course of action is consistent with the guidance.

The case examiner guidance states that case examiners must request information in writing and explain why it is required. As such, they request that they are provided with any linked cases so that they may consider them together.

The case examiners request this because:

- In the evidence bundle provided to the case examiners, a witness statement indicates that 2 other social workers in senior managerial positions are also subject to fitness to practise proceedings in respect of the same, systemic concerns (PDF p.4).
- If there are 2 other social workers with managerial responsibility who are also subject to fitness to practice proceedings in respect of the same, systemic concerns, the case examiners require all the associated evidence at the same time. This will ensure fairness to all parties by determining the roles and responsibilities of each person and better understanding the broader organisational context at the time of the alleged conduct.
- The complainant in this case was the immediate line manager of the social worker who is the subject of the complaint. As such, the complainant had managerial oversight of the social worker, and therefore it cannot be ruled out that they may have contributed to any systemic failings. In addition, if this case is treated in isolation, the impartiality of the evidence provided by the complainant could be called into question.

In addition, the case examiners note that in their submissions, the social worker indicates that they were suffering ill-health at the time of the alleged conduct. The case examiners consider that, should misconduct be proven, this may provide some mitigation. However, they have not been provided with any evidence to verify the social worker's assertion.

The case examiners therefore request any information relating to the social worker's health at the time of the alleged conduct, and up to date health information in respect of the condition that the social worker submits impacted on their practice [REDACTED]. Once in receipt of this, it may be that a regulatory in respect of health needs to be considered. Irrespective, the current health position would still be required to assist the case examiners in weighting the mitigation presented.

The case examiners were subsequently provided with 2 linked cases; and they were informed that the social worker declined to provide any further information in respect of their health.

14 July 2024

The case examiners have made minor grammatical amendments to the regulatory concerns, which are clearly indicated (by the use of **bold font**) in the regulatory concerns section.

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

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 1a, 1b, and 1c 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

Regulatory concern 1b

It is alleged that the social worker did not adequately safeguard children in that they lacked systems for oversight.

The case examiners have been provided with evidence that includes the following:

- A job description for the role of service manager.
- A witness statement from Professional A, an independent social work consultant who was commissioned to undertake a review of services that were managed by the social worker. Professional A stated that:

- The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) team was not meeting statutory timescales, therefore children were being left at risk and the service required a complete overhaul.
- It was taking 3 weeks or more for decisions to be made about whether children were at risk and needed a referral, but the statutory requirement was 24 hours.
- Decisions to safeguard children were being inappropriately managed, with too much emphasis being placed on parental reassurance, and not enough rigour or curiosity.
- Following the departure of the social worker, the MASH service was overhauled, and this led to rapid improvements, with staff being engaged and able to perform the job well once given the right direction and feedback from Professional D, who replaced the social worker.
- An evaluation which included a review of approximately 150 MASH cases that identified specific shortfalls, including a failure to consider family history, failure to consider the age and relative vulnerabilities of children, inadequate case recording, and a lack of clarity and inconsistency in respect of management direction.
- A witness statement from Professional B, the social worker's former manager. Professional B stated that:
 - Team managers in MASH felt that there was not sufficient oversight of their teams and when they raised these issues with the social worker, they were not listened to.
 - The social worker did not adequately manage and monitor day-to-day resourcing in MASH.
 - Timeliness of decision-making was inadequate.
 - The MASH team was not functioning adequately, and the social worker did not have effective oversight of some of the contacts and referrals that came into MASH.
 - They had to closely monitor the social worker and review cases; however, they later found out that the social worker did not open many emails they were sent in respect of those cases.

- The social worker acknowledged they had not progressed cases in a timely way and stated that they had “dropped the ball”.
- In January 21, they looked at 17 cases involving unallocated children waiting for decisions to be made.
- There were breaches in timescales and they were concerned about the social worker’s management of risk on their cases.
- Information officers, as opposed to social workers, were giving out advice on cases.
- They spoke to the social worker about the results of the work completed by external consultants, and the social worker accepted they had not put in supervision sessions (the policy was once every 8 weeks) and audits for their team managers.
- An investigation report into the leadership, oversight, and performance in MASH, which notes that:
 - Professional D described picking up a chaotic team where there was no system in place to ensure children were safe.
 - Staff described the team as chaotic and those that raised concerns with the social worker said there was little or no impact.
 - Professional C reported having very few supervisions, and no notes or follow-ups in respect of the supervisions that did take place.
 - There were numerous failings, including in the application of procedure, inconsistent thresholds, decision-making, and management of timelines.
 - The identified failings placed children at risk of harm.
 - The team were operating at an unacceptably low standard, and this was allowed to continue unchecked and unchallenged [by the social worker].
 - The social worker believed they had not been able to see what was going on due to the demands on them and their time and that they had been “spread too thinly”. They said that they were “horrified” in respect of the issues raised in the investigation, and they

acknowledged that they didn't "have enough scrutiny over these issues".

- Professional E found there was a backlog of assessments, poor systems, ineffective practices, no oversight of the work completed by team managers, a lack of accountability, no oversight of cases, and therefore, unassessed risk.
 - The social worker identified that there were organisational changes, shortfalls in staffing, and a high demand for services.
 - The social worker acknowledged they struggled to "keep formal supervision going" due to the day-to-day demands, and that this aspect of their oversight was not good.
 - The social worker said that they did review cases, but that they did not have a formal or regular process for doing this.
 - The social worker said there were weekly management meetings that looked at collective issues.
 - There were cases that had come into the service where there were obvious risks, but no timescales had been applied and nor further actions explored.
- Emails to and from the social worker in which several concerns are raised.
 - Minutes of a disciplinary hearing (dated 23/05/2019) in respect of the social worker.
 - A witness statement from Professional C, a team manager who reported to the social worker. Professional C stated that:
 - They did not receive regular supervision from the social worker.
 - They were told by the social worker that they were "too complainy" because they raised concerns and asked for help.
 - The social worker rarely attended meetings and was difficult to get hold of.
 - There were difficulties within the wider leadership team.

Regulatory concern 1c

It is alleged that the social worker did not adequately safeguard children in that they did not work in partnership with their colleagues.

The case examiners have been provided with evidence that includes the following:

- A witness statement from Professional B, the social worker's former manager. Professional B stated that:
 - Team managers in MASH felt that when they raised concerns with the social worker, they were not listened to.
 - The social worker was unhappy about team managers raising concerns directly with them (Person B), telling the team managers that "we do not air our dirty laundry".
 - In July 2018 the social worker was offered additional support and resourcing but did not accept it.
 - In August 2018 the social worker did not engage with support from another service manager and was offered support from the principal social worker but declined it.
 - In October 2018, they offered the social worker support with caseloads, but they declined it.
 - In January 2019, they offered the social worker support, but the social asked them not to get involved.
- An investigation report into the leadership, oversight, and performance in MASH, which notes that:
 - Staff reported that the social worker was rarely available or visible in the office – the social worker denies this, stating they were accessible, available on the phone, or in the office.
 - Professional C reported having very little leadership and support from the social worker, very few supervisions, and no notes or follow-ups in respect of the supervisions that did take place.
 - Professional C also reported that the social worker had poor relationships with other agencies and did not welcome challenges or questions in respect of cases.

- The social worker acknowledged they struggled to “keep formal supervision going” due to the day-to-day demands, and that this aspect of their oversight was not good.
- A witness statement from Professional C, a team manager who reported to the social worker. Professional C stated that:
 - They were told by the social worker that they were “too complainy” because they raised concerns and asked for help.
 - The social worker told them that they should not “share what was happening inside MASH outside OF MASH”.

Concerns being recommended for closure

Concern 1a

The case examiners have noted that regulatory concern 1a was presented to the case examiners by investigators with a written recommendation for closure, as permitted by Paragraph 4 (1) (d) of the Social Work England appointment rules 2020. However, the case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of the facts alleged in 1a being found proven, and therefore they do not agree with the investigators’ recommendation for closure.

It is alleged that the social worker did not adequately safeguard children in that they failed to manage the timeliness of decision making.

The case examiners have been provided with evidence that includes the following:

- A job description for the role of service manager.
- A witness statement from Professional A, an independent social work consultant who was commissioned to undertake a review of services that were managed by the social worker. Professional A stated that:
 - The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) team was not meeting statutory timescales, therefore children were being left at risk and the service required a complete overhaul.
 - It was taking 3 weeks or more for decisions to be made about whether children were at risk and needed a referral, but the statutory requirement was 24 hours.

- Following the departure of the social worker, the MASH service was overhauled, and this led to rapid improvements, with staff being engaged and able to perform the job well once given the right direction and feedback from Professional D, who replaced the social worker.
- A witness statement from Professional B, the social worker's former manager. Professional B stated that:
 - Timeliness of decision-making was inadequate.
 - The social worker acknowledged they had not progressed cases in a timely way and stated that they had "dropped the ball".
 - In January 21, they looked at 17 cases involving unallocated children waiting for decisions to be made.
 - There were breaches in timescales and they were concerned about the social worker's management of risk on their cases.
- An investigation report into the leadership, oversight, and performance in MASH, which notes that:
 - There were numerous failings, including in the application of procedure, inconsistent thresholds, decision-making, and management of timelines.
 - The identified failings placed children at risk of harm.
 - Professional E found there was a backlog of assessments.
 - There were cases that had come into the service where there were obvious risks, but no timescales had been applied and nor further actions explored.

The social worker states that their performance was impacted by a high level of continual stress, and they describe a challenging work environment in which they routinely raised concerns. The social worker also refutes the suggestion that they had a poor relationship with other colleagues and agencies and did not work in partnership. However, they acknowledge that they did not provide enough "formal supervision", and as noted above, they acknowledged that they were "spread too thinly"; didn't "have enough scrutiny over these issues"; had not progressed cases in a timely way and had "dropped the ball".

Having reviewed the evidence provided to them, the case examiners acknowledge that the social worker was operating in a chaotic and challenging environment, and had multiple demands placed on their time. Nevertheless, the evidence presented to the case examiners indicates that the social worker lacked systems for oversight, and as noted above, the social worker acknowledges that they did not provide enough formal supervision, didn't have enough scrutiny, and "dropped the ball".

It is also significant that the evidence suggests the social worker declined support on numerous occasions. Adjudicators are likely to consider that it was the social worker's responsibility to address the concerns, and therefore, to accept the support offered. By accepting and engaging with the support that was offered, there is a possibility that problems could have been resolved, and therefore the risk to children and families could have been reduced.

The case examiners also acknowledge that there is evidence (for example, in the form of testimonials) that the social worker has worked constructively with others. However, the case examiners are of the view that working in partnership includes working in partnership with direct reports and senior managers.

In this instance, the case examiners have been provided with evidence that the social worker declined support on numerous occasions and therefore did not work collaboratively or in partnership with their manager or other managerial colleagues.

The case examiners have also been provided with evidence that the social worker did not work collaboratively with team managers, who were their direct reports. For example, there is evidence that the social worker did not act on concerns that were raised about the safety of working practices.

The case examiners note that the social worker indicates that they agree with recommendation for closure in respect of regulatory concern 1a, but that they struggle to understand how they could have managed the timeliness of decision making if they did not have systems for oversight. The case examiners agree with this view, and they consider that there is evidence to support both regulatory concerns 1a and 1b.

The case examiners are satisfied that the sub particulars of the regulatory concerns, if proven, have direct consequences in respect of safeguarding children, and that the social worker's alleged actions/inactions are likely to be considered inadequate.

Having reviewed all the evidence provided to them, the case examiners have concluded there is a realistic prospect that regulatory concerns 1a, 1b, and 1c

would be found proven by adjudicators, and that this would engage the overarching regulatory concern.

Grounds

This case has been presented on the grounds of misconduct and/or a lack of competence or capability. The case examiners' guidance encourages them to (where possible) identify the appropriate statutory ground to proceed on, as this provides clarity as to the basis of Social Work England's case against the social worker. The case examiners are reminded, however, that in some cases they may not always be in the best position to identify one ground over another.

Lack of competence or capability

The case examiners' guidance explains that lack of competence or capability suggests a standard of professional performance which is unacceptably low. It means a social worker has demonstrated that they may lack the knowledge and skills to do their work in a safe and effective manner. This must usually be demonstrated over a fair sample of a social worker's work. There is no set definition of 'fair sample', but it suggests a sample sufficient to show the social worker's usual standard of work over a period of time.

The guidance also explains that single episodes or incidents do not normally suggest a social worker lacks the knowledge or skills to be competent. However, in exceptional circumstances, a single episode or incident could happen because of a lack of knowledge or competence in a fundamental principle of social work. This may raise concerns for public safety.

In this instance, the case examiners note that the social worker had more than 20 years' experience at the time the concerns were raised, and that no concerns had been raised previously. This suggests that the social worker has demonstrated that they have the knowledge and skills to do their work in a safe and effective manner. In addition, the case examiners consider that the concerns raised relate to relatively brief period in the social worker's career. As such, the case examiners consider that the evidence provided does not equate to a 'fair sample', that is sufficient to show the social worker's usual standard of work over a period of time.

The case examiners are therefore satisfied that there is no realistic prospect of adjudicators finding that the matters amount to the statutory ground of a lack of competence or capability.

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.

HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics 2016

2.5 You must work in partnership with colleagues, sharing your skills, knowledge and experience where appropriate, for the benefit of service users and carers.

4.2 You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.

6.1 You must take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to service users, carers, and colleagues as far as possible.

6.2 You must not do anything, or allow someone else to do anything, which could put the health or safety of a service user, carer, or colleague at unacceptable risk.

7.2 You must support and encourage others to report concerns and not prevent anyone from raising concerns.

7.6 You must acknowledge and act on concerns raised to you, investigating, escalating, or dealing with those concerns where it is appropriate for you to do so.

Having considered the relevant standards, the case examiners have concluded that the social worker's alleged conduct could represent a significant departure, because the allegations indicate that the social worker did not work in partnership with colleagues, including their manager, their managerial colleagues, and their direct reports; and that by not accepting and engaging with the support offered, they did not take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to service users, carers, and colleagues as far as possible.

The evidence also indicates that the social worker did not provide appropriate supervision, and did not acknowledge and act on concerns, or support and encourage others to raise concerns.

Impairment

Assessment of impairment consists of 2 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 are satisfied that although the alleged conduct in this case is serious, it could nevertheless be remedied, for example, via a demonstration of significant reflection and insight, and/or completion of relevant training.

Insight and remediation

The social worker admits some elements of the concerns raised, but they do not admit to every aspect. They recognise that they were “spread too thinly” and that there were external (organisational) factors which contributed to the concerns. However, their submissions demonstrate limited insight in respect of their responsibilities and what they could and should have done differently, for example, accepting and engaging with the support that was offered.

The case examiners note that the social worker has referred to their health and how they believe this contributed to the concerns. However, the social worker declined to provide evidence to support this, therefore any reference to the social worker’s health in their submissions is not verifiable.

Risk of repetition

Having reviewed the evidence provided to them, including the social worker's submissions, the case examiners have concluded that the insight demonstrated by the social worker is partial, and that remediation is incomplete. As such, the case examiners cannot conclude that the risk of repetition is low.

Public element

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

The case examiners have outlined their view that the alleged conduct in this case is serious, and that the regulatory concerns could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct. Furthermore, the case examiners consider that adjudicators may find that public confidence would be undermined if a finding of impairment were not made.

Accordingly, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the social worker's fitness to practise to be currently impaired.

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

Case examiner guidance states that if the case examiners have found there is no public interest in the case being referred to a hearing, they may then consider whether an accepted disposal may be appropriate (paragraph 181). The guidance goes on to state that for a case to be concluded through accepted disposal, the social worker must accept the key facts and that their fitness to practise is currently impaired. In this instance:

- There is no conflict in the evidence that requires resolving at a hearing.
- The social worker accepts the majority of key facts.

The case examiners acknowledge that the social worker does not accept every aspect of the regulatory concerns. However, the case examiners are of the view that having read their proposal (including the reasoning), the social worker may accept all key aspects of the concerns and that they are currently impaired, in which case, the matter can be concluded via accepted disposal.

Furthermore, the case examiners have concluded that:

- Although the public interest is engaged, and the concerns in this case are serious, the case examiners are satisfied that public confidence in the profession and the professional standards for social workers can be upheld by the proposed outcome, and the decision being published on Social Work England's public register.
- The public would support efforts made by the case examiners to resolve this case in a timely and proportionate manner, without the need to refer to a hearing.

Consequently, the case examiners have determined that accepted disposal is the appropriate outcome in this case.

Interim order

An interim order may be necessary for protection of members of the public	Yes	☐
	No	☒
An interim order may be necessary in the best interests of the social worker	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☐
	Conditions of practice order	☒
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☐
Proposed duration	Conditions of practice order (18 months)	

Reasoning

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of the regulatory concerns being found proven by adjudicators. Furthermore, they found a realistic prospect that the concerns, if proven, could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.

The case examiners have also found a realistic prospect that adjudicators could find the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England's Impairment and 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 guidance requires that decision makers select the least severe sanction necessary 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 sanctions in ascending order of seriousness.

No further action

The case examiners considered taking no further action. However, the case examiners considered that this would not be appropriate in this instance because they are not satisfied that a finding of impairment alone would protect the wider

public interest. Furthermore, the case examiners have concluded there is a lack of insight and remediation, and subsequent risk of repetition.

Advice or Warning

The case examiners next considered whether offering advice or a warning would be sufficient. 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 believe that issuing advice is not sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they view the alleged misconduct, and again it would not adequately protect the public.

A warning order implies a clearer expression of disapproval of the social worker's conduct than an advice order. However, the case examiners are not satisfied that a warning order would send a strong enough message to the social worker, and particularly, the wider social work profession. Furthermore, a warning order is not likely to be appropriate where there is a lack of insight and a risk of repetition, and again it would not adequately protect the public.

Conditions of practice

The case examiners then considered a conditions of practice order. The case examiners have consulted their 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.

Whilst the social worker has not demonstrated full insight, the case examiners note that they have shown some reflection into the circumstances of the case, and that this could offer an opportunity to develop further insight and remediation. The case examiners are of the view that workable conditions can be formulated that would support the social worker to develop the requisite insight and remediate their practice. Additionally, the order is subject to review, which can be extended or replaced with a different order if necessary.

Having concluded that a conditions of practice order is the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners went on to consider the length of time for the order. The case examiners consider that 18 months would allow the social worker sufficient time to demonstrate strengthened practice within a full appraisal cycle. They consider that any longer period, given that some insight and remediation has already been demonstrated, would be unnecessary and punitive.

Suspension or Removal Order

The case examiners went on to test the suitability of the conditions of practice order by considering the next most severe sanctions, a suspension order and a removal order.

Having considered their guidance, the case examiners did not consider these orders to be proportionate. Although, the concerns are serious, the case examiners consider that the public can be protected with an appropriate conditions of practice order.

To conclude, the case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a conditions of practice order of 18 months duration. They will now notify the social worker of their intention and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly.

The social worker will be offered 28 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

Content of the conditions of practice

Conditions 1 to 14 (inclusive) should be in place for an 18-month period.

In accordance with paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018, the regulator must review the conditions of practice order before its expiry.

The social worker and/or Social Work England can seek early review if new evidence becomes available to suggest the current order needs to be varied, replaced or removed.

1. You must notify Social Work England within 7 days of any professional appointment you accept or are currently undertaking and provide the contact details of your employer, agency or any organisation with which you have a contract or arrangement to provide social work services, whether paid or voluntary.
2. You must allow Social Work England to exchange information with your employer, agency or any organisation with which you have a contract or arrangement to provide social work or educational services, and any reporter referred to in these conditions.
3.
 - a. At any time you are providing social work services, which require you to be registered with Social Work England, you must agree to the appointment of a reporter nominated by you and approved by Social Work England. The reporter must be on Social Work England's register.
 - b. You must not start or continue to work until these arrangements have been approved by Social Work England.
4. You must provide reports from your reporter to Social Work England every 3 months and at least 14 days prior to any review.
5. You must inform Social Work England within 7 days of receiving notice of any formal disciplinary proceedings taken against you from the date these conditions take effect.
6. You must inform Social Work England within 7 days of receiving notice of any investigations or complaints made against you from the date these conditions take effect.
7. You must inform Social Work England if you apply for social work employment / self-employment (paid or voluntary) outside England within 7 days of the date of application.
8. You must inform Social Work England if you are registered or subsequently apply for registration with any other UK regulator, overseas regulator or relevant authority within 7 days of the date of application [for future registration] or 7 days from the date these conditions take effect [for existing registration].
9. You must work with your reporter to formulate a personal development plan, specifically designed to address the shortfalls in the following areas of your practice:

- Working in partnership with others, specifically, any direct reports (if applicable) and those in managerial roles, including peers and those more senior to you.
 - Accepting any support that has been identified as being necessary for you in the workplace.
 - Developing, implementing and utilising systems for oversight, including the oversight of any cases that you are responsible for, whether directly or indirectly.
10. You must provide a copy of your personal development plan to Social Work England within 4 weeks from the date these conditions take effect and an updated copy 4 weeks prior to any review.
11. Every 3 months you must make arrangements for an audit to be carried out by your reporter in relation to case management, and, if applicable, management oversight of direct reports. The audit must be signed by your reporter and provided to Social Work England every 3 months and at least 14 days prior to any review.
12. You must read Social Work England's Professional Standards (July 2019) and provide a written reflection 4 months after these conditions take effect, focusing on how your conduct in respect of working in partnership and managerial oversight was below the accepted standard of a social worker, and what you should have done differently.
13. You must provide a written copy of your conditions, within 7 days from the date these conditions take effect, to the following parties confirming that your registration is subject to the conditions listed at 1 to 12, above:
- Any organisation or person employing or contracting with you to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary.
 - Any locum, agency or out-of-hours service you are registered with or apply to be registered with in order to secure employment or contracts to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary (at the time of application).
 - Any prospective employer who would be employing or contracting with you to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary (at the time of application).

- Any organisation, agency or employer where you are using your social work qualification/knowledge/skills in a non-qualified social work role, whether paid or voluntary.

You must forward written evidence of your compliance with this condition to Social Work England within 14 days from the date these conditions take effect.

14. You must permit Social Work England to disclose the above conditions, 1 to 13, to any person requesting information about your registration status.

Response from the social worker

The social worker submitted a completed accepted disposal response form on 10 September 2025, which included the following declaration:

“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 note that the social worker has accepted the proposed disposal as outlined by them. The case examiners have considered the public interest in this matter. They have not been presented with any new evidence that might change their previous assessment and therefore remain satisfied that the public interest in this instance can be fulfilled through the accepted disposal process.

The case examiners therefore direct that the regulator impose a conditions of practice order (18 months).