

Social Worker: Laurajade Edwards

Registration Number: SW117702

Fitness to Practise:

Final Hearing

Date(s) of hearing: 27 June – 5 July 2022

Hearing Venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome: Removal order

Interim order: Interim suspension order (18 months starting on 5 July 2022)

Introduction and attendees

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018.
2. Ms Laurajade Edwards did not attend and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Sadaf Etemadi, case presenter for Capsticks LLP.
4. The adjudicators and other people present at the hearing are set out in the table below.

Adjudicators	Role
Miriam Karp	Chair
Suzanna Jacoby	Social Worker Adjudicator
Judith Webb	Lay Adjudicator

Natasha Quainoo	Hearings Officer
Robyn Watts	Hearing Support Officer
Natalie Amey-Smith	Legal Adviser

Service of Notice:

5. Ms Edwards did not attend and was not represented. The panel of adjudicators (“the panel”) was informed by Ms Etemadi that notice of this hearing was sent to Ms Edwards on 25 May 2022, by special delivery and by electronic mail to her postal and electronic mail addresses held on the Social Work Register. Ms Etemadi drew the panel’s attention to the service bundle which includes copies of other letters and emails which have been sent to Ms Edwards in relation to the final hearing. A letter dated 11 May 2022 was sent by special delivery and the bundle contains a Royal Mail track and trace proof of delivery. It notes that the letter was signed for by ‘EDWARDS’ on 13 May 2022. Ms Etemadi said that Capsticks LLP had instructed enquiry agents to check that Ms Edwards’ address is the one recorded on the Social Work Register. The response from the enquiry agent is dated 28 March 2022, and notes that in accordance with enquiries, Ms Edwards does reside at the address recorded on the Social Work Register. The notice of hearing letter sent on 25 May 2022 was not successfully delivered to Ms Edwards as the envelope included in the service bundle contains a Royal Mail stamp saying, ‘not called for.’ However, Ms

Etemadi said the electronic mail had been successfully delivered and submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served.

6. The panel had careful regard to the documents contained in the final hearing service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the notice of substantive order review hearing dated 25 May 2022 and addressed to Ms Edwards at her electronic mail address as it appears on the Social Work England Register.
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register detailing Ms Edwards' electronic mail address.
 - A copy of a signed Statement of Service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 25 May 2022 the writer instructed Docucentre to send to Ms Edwards by electronic mail, the '*Notice of Final Hearing*'.
7. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
8. Having had regard to the Social Work England (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2019 (as amended) ("the Rules") and all the information before it in relation to the service of notice, the panel was satisfied that notice of this hearing had been served on Ms Edwards in accordance with Rules 14, 15, 44 and 45.

Proceeding in the absence of Ms Edwards:

9. The panel heard the submissions of Ms Etemadi on behalf of Social Work England. Ms Etemadi submitted that notice of this hearing had been duly served, no application for an adjournment had been made by Ms Edwards and as such there was no guarantee that adjourning today's proceedings would secure her attendance. Ms Etemadi further submitted that Ms Edwards has not engaged with Social Work England throughout the fitness to practise process and that she has been provided with ample opportunity to provide written submissions or information to assist her case. Ms Etemadi therefore invited the panel to proceed in the interests of justice and the expeditious disposal of this hearing.
10. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the factors it should take into account when considering this application. This included reference to Rule 43 of the Rules and the cases of *R v Hayward [2001] EWCA Crim. 168*; *General Medical Council v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162* and the factors endorsed in *Sanusi v GMC [2019] EWCA Civ 1172*. The panel's attention was drawn to the '*Service of notices and proceeding in the absence of the social worker*' guidance dated 19 April 2022 on the Social Work England website.
11. The panel considered all the information before it, together with the submissions made by Ms Etemadi on behalf of Social Work England. The panel noted that Ms Edwards had been sent notice of today's hearing and the panel was satisfied that she was or should be aware of today's hearing. The panel took into account that Ms

Edwards has never engaged with the regulatory proceedings which had commenced in April 2020 and that she had not engaged with the disciplinary proceedings instigated by her employer in 2019. The panel considered that there is a burden on social workers to engage with Social Work England in relation to the investigation and resolution of allegations against them. The panel noted that Social Work England was calling one witness, a Local Authority social work manager, who had made herself available and was willing to give evidence today.

12. The panel, therefore, concluded that Ms Edwards had chosen voluntarily to absent herself from these proceedings. The panel had no reason to believe that an adjournment would result in Ms Edwards' attendance nor that it would secure her future engagement. Having weighed the interests of Ms Edwards in regard to her attendance at the hearing with those of Social Work England and the public interest in an expeditious disposal of this hearing, the panel determined to proceed in Ms Edwards' absence.

Allegations (as amended)

1. That you, a registered social worker, whilst employed by Blackburn and Darwen Council as a social worker:

In respect of Family A:

1.1 Did not undertake a statutory visit between July – September 2019 to see the children of Family A when the children were subject to a child protection plan.

1.2 Did not undertake a visit on 22 August 2019.

1.3 Falsely recorded on the case record that a visit took place on 22 August 2019.

1.4 Misrepresented when the entry in the case record was created.

2. Your conduct at Head of Charge 1.3 and / or 1.4 was dishonest in that:

2.1 You intended the record to mislead, knowing that the visit had not taken place.

2.2 You sought to suggest the record pre-dated the visit and was made in error when you were aware this was untrue.

3. That you, a registered Social Worker, whilst employed by Blackburn and Darwen Council ~~did not meet the required standard expected of a~~ **as a social worker in that:**

3.1 In relation to LP and LJ, you:

3.1(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and / or

3.1(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 01 August 2019.

3.2 In relation to LT, you:

3.2(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and / or

3.2(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 05 August 2019 and/or 13 August 2019.

3.3 In relation to LC, you:

3.3 (a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales (Case Ref 140139) and /or

3.3 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 06 August 2019 (Case Ref 140139).

3.4 In relation to (Case ref 163702)

3.4 (a) Failed to record that a ~~visit~~ **meeting** took place on 05 September 2019 (Case ref: 163702)

3.5 In relation to RP, you:

3.5 (a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.5 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 09 August 2019 and/or 15 August and or 28 August 2019.

3.6 In relation to LE, you:

3.6(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.6(b) Failed to record that a meeting took place on 08 August 2019 and/or 13 August 2019.

3.7 In relation to UM, you: 3.7(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.7(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 07 August 2019.

3.8 In relation to CJA (Family A), you: 3.8(a) Failed to record that a visit took place on 12 August 2019 and/or 14 August 2019 and/or 16 August 2019 and/or 12 September 2019.

3.9 In relation to MM, you:

3.9(a) Failed to undertake Child In Need (CIN) visits between 15 July 2019 and 10 September 2019.

3.10 In respect of JL, you:

3.10(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.10(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 14 August 2019.

3.11 In respect of SL, you:

3.11(a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory time scales and/or

3.11 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on ~~11 September 2019~~ **28 August 2019.**

3.12 In respect of DLS, you:

3.12 (a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory timescales and/or

3.12 (b) Failed to record whether a visit took place on 11 September 2019.

3.13 In respect of IH, you:

3.13 (a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory timescales and/or

3.13 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 18 September 2019.

Your conduct in Heads of Charge 1-3 above amounts to misconduct.

By reason of misconduct your fitness to practise as a social worker is impaired.

4. Whilst registered as a social worker in April 2021 you were included in the Children's and Adults Barred List by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

By reason of being included on the barred list of the Disclosure and Barring Service your fitness to practise as a social worker is impaired.

Preliminary matters

Application for part of the hearing to be heard in private

13. Ms Etemadi drew the panel's attention to Rule 38 of the Rules. She submitted that there might be parts of this hearing which relate to Ms Edwards' health and that those parts should be heard in private.
14. The panel took into account the advice of the legal adviser and Rule 38 of the Rules. The panel accepted the submissions made by Ms Etemadi and the panel acknowledged that there is a strong public interest in ensuring that hearings are conducted in public for transparency. However, Ms Edwards has a right to a private life and matters relating to her health should, in accordance with the Rules, be held in private.

Amendment to Allegations

15. Ms Etemadi sought to amend the allegations. The amendments she sought are set out above under the heading 'Allegations'. Proposed additions are included in bold type and proposed deletions contain strike-through.
16. Ms Etemadi submitted that the additions and deletions were minor amendments to resolve inconsistencies. In relation to the removal of the wording that Ms Edwards did not meet required standards, Ms Etemadi submitted that this related more to later stages and was not therefore required to be included in the allegations. Ms Etemadi said that as the amendments are minor, they do not change the nature of the gravity and no prejudice is caused to Ms Edwards.
17. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. She reminded the panel that it must consider whether such amendments would cause injustice to Ms Edwards or undermine her right to a fair hearing. The legal adviser informed the panel of the requirement to consider whether the proposed amendments heighten the seriousness of the allegations, or represent a material change in some other respect. If they do not, that would be a strong indicator that the proposed amendments would not cause any injustice.
18. The panel considered the proposed amendments to the allegations and concluded that the proposals serve fairly and appropriately to provide clarity and precision and therefore agreed to the amendments.

Application for the panel to consider facts in relation to charges 1-3 and to provide a determination on those before considering charge 4.

19. Ms Etemadi addressed the panel on the approach that Social Work England invite the panel to take when considering the charges. Ms Etemadi invited the panel to consider charges 1-3 of the allegations independently and determine those facts before considering charge 4.
20. Ms Etemadi submitted that if the panel were to find that the whole or part of charges 1-3 proven then it would be appropriate for the panel to move onto considering charge 4. However, if the panel were to find none of the charges at 1-3 proven then Social Work England would request a pause in the proceedings. This would allow for Social Work England to inform the DBS of the outcome and ascertain what steps the DBS will take in response to the Social Work England outcome on facts.
21. Ms Etemadi submitted that approaching the charges in this way would allow for fairness to Ms Edwards. Ms Etemadi explained that the underlying evidence

presented to the panel in respect of charges 1-3 is that which the DBS considered when making the barring decision. Therefore, if the panel find charges 1-3 not proved then the basis of the DBS decision could be called into question, and the DBS may need to review its decision. If the panel hear all the charges together there is a chance that they could find charges 1-3 not proved and charge 4 proved. Ms Edwards would then have a finding against her which would automatically require the panel to move on to consider impairment, despite the potential for the DBS to review/reverse its decision.

22. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser who drew its attention to Rule 32 of the Rules.
23. The panel determined that it should hear all the evidence on facts together and that it would not be appropriate to deliver a decision on charges 1-3 before hearing evidence on charge 4. The panel considered that Rule 32 (c) specifically sets out the procedure to follow at a final hearing and that at each stage the regulator must adduce evidence relevant to that stage. The panel concluded that it would not be unfair to proceed in the manner prescribed by the Rules and that fairness should be considered in the round including fairness to the public. The panel understood that the conduct alleged in the DBS decision is the same as the conduct which forms the conduct alleged in these regulatory allegations. If the panel were to find charges 1-3 not proved and charge 4 proved, it accepted it must then determine whether Ms Edwards' fitness to practise is impaired based on the facts found proved. In those circumstances, the principle of fairness, would necessitate that the panel take into account the potential anomaly with the DBS decision, and what weight to attach to that, when deciding on Ms Edwards' current impairment.

Summary of Evidence

Social Work England

24. Ms Etemadi opened the case setting out the background leading to the allegations against Ms Edwards.
25. On 1 April 2020 Social Work England received a referral regarding Ms Edwards, made by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council ("the Council"). Ms Edwards had worked for the Council from 4 September 2017 when she started the Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme.
26. Between August 2018 and May 2019 Ms Edwards was placed on a support plan as concerns were raised in relation to core group meetings being out of date, Child in Need (CIN) reviews not being recorded, meeting minutes not being undertaken and

case recordings not being up to date. Part of the support plan allowed for Ms Edwards to work from home to catch up with her cases and she was not allocated any new cases.

27. The referral was made because of an allegation that Ms Edwards failed to undertake a visit to a family whose children were subject to a Child Protection Plan. The visit was a statutory visit that ought to have taken place during July – September 2019. It is alleged that whilst the visit did not take place, Ms Edwards made a false entry on the case recording system that a visit had taken place on 22 August 2019. The entry formed part of the Child Protection Conference on 17 September 2019. When asked about the matter by her Team Manager, Ms Edwards stated that she had entered the case note incorrectly. The Council undertook an audit of the case note which revealed that the case note had been entered after the event. An internal investigation was undertaken by the Council but prior to the outcome, Ms Edwards resigned on 7 October 2019 from the role due to health grounds.
28. During the Council's investigation procedure, further audits were made on Ms Edwards' caseload. This further investigation revealed that Ms Edwards was behind in updating case notes, completing core group and CIN meetings.
29. On 14 April 2021, Social Work England were notified by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) that Ms Edwards had been barred from the adult's and children's list as of 7 April 2021.
30. Ms Etemadi told the panel that Social Work England rely on two witnesses to give evidence on fact. The first witness is Ms L, a registered social worker. At the time of the allegations Ms L was the Team Manager for an Assessment and Social Work team at Blackburn and Darwen Council. Ms L was Ms Edwards' line manager from 9 September 2019 until October 2019. The second witness is Ms K, investigator at Social Work England, who received the letter of notification from the DBS service. Ms Etemadi said that Social Work England would call live evidence from Ms L but not from Ms K because her evidence is limited to a production statement.
31. The panel was provided with five bundles in advance of the hearing including a witness statement bundle (21 pages); an evidence (exhibits) bundle (294 pages); a statement of case (16 pages); a service bundle (38 pages) and a hearing timetable (4 pages).
32. Ms L was called to give oral evidence. During her oral evidence she adopted the content of her witness statement dated 26 January 2022 which exhibited numerous documents including, contemporaneous case recordings, supervision notes, an internal audit and Council policy documents. Ms L gave her evidence on affirmation and answered multiple questions of clarification from the panel.

33. Ms L explained that the Council uses a system called Liquid Logic (which they refer to as 'Protocol') which is a case recording system and social workers are expected to accurately record on files in a timely manner. Ms L explained that the Council's approach is that if an event is not recorded on the system, then there is an assumption that it has not happened. Social workers can use their Council Outlook calendars to note when they are undertaking visits and meetings, but this is more for their own use and is not an alternative to recording on Protocol.
34. Ms L said that social workers are responsible for their own cases and ensuring that statutory timescales are met although the manager should also have an awareness. She told the panel that there is no discretion and that all statutory timescales should be met, accepting that there might be exceptional circumstances for not doing so such as failing to get access to a property.
35. Ms L explained that the audit she had carried out on Ms Edwards' files was to correlate the calendar entries against the recordings on Protocol. She then re-allocated the cases to ensure any missing visits were carried out as soon as possible.
36. Ms L was asked numerous questions of clarification by the panel and her responses are summarised in the paragraphs below.
37. **(Private)** Ms L said that she had not managed Ms Edwards for long but during that time had not observed any impact of any ill health on her work. However, she stated that it could have impacted on her at work.
38. Ms L spoke positively about Ms Edwards in that she had observed her being supportive to the team, would provide others with help and support and was well liked. Ms L said that she did not observe any of Ms Edwards' social work practice herself as she was only her manager for a short period of time.
39. Ms L addressed the panel on the various statutory meeting and visits her team undertake and the statutory timescales for those visits. Ms L then explained her view of the potential impact of failing to undertake statutory visits/meetings on service users. She explained that failure to carry out a statutory visit would mean that the child/ren would not have an opportunity to speak alone to the social worker to enable them to raise any worries or concerns about life at home. It would mean that potential safeguarding concerns would be missed, and parents would not have an opportunity to discuss progress of the plan. Equally, if there are no concerns, then any positive progress of the plan would go unmonitored and the child/ren would remain on plans longer than necessary.
40. Ms L accepted that reference to a caseload of 40 referred to in a supervision note preceding her time as manager, was exceptionally high. She said if this was the case then she would not be surprised to see recordings out of timescale. In relation to

the period when she managed Ms Edwards, she said she could not recall what the caseload was, but she understood that as a whole service at that time, caseloads were considered as manageable and that the maximum of 25 cases would be manageable. She did not recall any other team members raising issues with her about caseloads and meeting deadlines at that time.

41. Ms L said that when Ms Edwards' cases were very quickly re-allocated the children were seen by the new social workers and she was assured that no harm had occurred.
42. Ms L acknowledged that there was an error in her audit as referenced in her written statement in relation to two siblings' initials, LT. She explained that when she undertook the initial audit, she did not consider all individual children, the reason being that several of them had siblings and the usual practice would be to record the same information on both case files. Once the inaccuracy had been identified in her audit, she carried out a review and reviewed all children individually including each sibling. Ms L said that she was '*very and extremely confident*' about the accuracy of her audit. She accepted that on reflection it would have been appropriate to ask the new social workers on the cases to speak with the families as to whether they had been visited or not so that she could have further triangulated the data from the audit.
43. Ms L referred to Family A and the recording of the alleged visit which the case note states took place on 22 August 2019. Ms L recalled, as per her written statement, that she was contacted by the Child Protection Conference Chair who reported the family stating that they had not had any home visits between the initial conference and the current one. This was contrary to the information included by Ms Edwards in her written report for conference. Ms L said that she spoke with Ms Edwards about the concern and Ms Edwards had told her that finalising the note was an error. Ms Edwards had explained that following the issues of her timeliness in recording, she had started to record the case note prior to undertaking the visit. Ms L recalled that she then requested the Council's IT team to do an audit of that case note, and the results did not correlate with the explanation given by Ms Edwards. The case note was generated after the alleged visit and not prior to as reported by Ms Edwards. This indicated to Ms L that the information given to her from Ms Edwards was inaccurate and false and for that reason she thought it was dishonest.
44. Ms L said that falsely recording an entry onto the case file provides a misrepresentation of the service users' lived experience. Other professionals involved with the service user and family would not be fully sighted and it would potentially create missed opportunities as people would believe that the family have been seen and therefore would be less inclined to visit themselves.

Ms Edwards.

45. Ms Edwards was not present, had not provided any written submissions and had not engaged with Social Work England at all. The panel noted that Ms Edwards had not engaged with the Council's internal investigation and had emailed her resignation to Ms L on 24 September 2019. The email did not provide any comments in relation to the allegations against her but did comment on her poor health. The email states '*It has been a pleasure to work with the Local Authority and am grateful for the learning and opportunities I have had in the 2 years of my employment. However, as you will be aware (Private).*

Finding and reasons on facts

46. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser who referred them to the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019, Rule 32 (c) (i) (a) which requires the panel to determine any disputed facts at the outset of the hearing. The panel heard and accepted detailed advice from the legal adviser in respect of the approach to take in determining findings of facts and the burden and standard of proof. The panel heard advice on the issues of credibility and reliability, on hearsay evidence and what weight to attach to such evidence. The panel heard and accepted advice on the test to be applied when considering a charge of dishonesty which is found in the guidance of the Supreme Court in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) LTD t/a Crockfords [2017] UKSC 67*.
47. The panel was mindful of the fact that Ms Edwards was not present or represented and therefore it was incumbent on the panel and legal adviser to ensure that they explored any weaknesses there might be in Social Work England's case.
48. The panel viewed Ms L as being a clear, cogent, truthful, and reliable witness. She tried her best to remember the events of almost three years ago and she was willing to concede when she could not accurately recall. She was measured in her evidence, provided detailed explanations, and acknowledged the limits of her ability to comment on matters that were not within her knowledge. She was fair in the content of her evidence including providing positive feedback on Ms Edwards being a well-liked team player who supported her colleagues. Her evidence accorded closely with the contemporary records and in this regard the panel made a rounded assessment of Ms L's reliability.
49. The panel was mindful of the need to consider the weight of evidence and took into account that some evidence may be obviously reliable and is therefore likely to carry substantial weight, for example documents created in the course of business and official records. Therefore, although the panel found Ms L to be a reliable witness, it

approached the fact finding by considering and cross referencing each relevant exhibit document with the charge in question rather than placing reliance on the written and oral statement alone. Ms L's statement notes that to complete her audit, she *'used the case notes, information on core group CIN meetings around the time and prior to Ms Edwards going off on sick leave, records on the electronic system and Ms Edwards' calendar.'* She further states that she *'cross-referenced the entries made in Ms Edwards' calendar with the entries that had or had not been made on Protocol'* and that she had *'not been able to discuss this with Ms Edwards, as she did not engage with the internal investigation'*. The panel took into consideration that it did not have a copy of Ms Edwards' outlook calendar to refer to but noted the comments in Ms L's statement that *'Ms Edwards' calendar cannot be provided due to her now not being employed and her account being closed down.'* The panel were satisfied that whilst it did not have the outlook calendar it could rely on and was assured by the audit carried out by Ms L, the details of which it had probed in questioning of her during oral evidence.

Clarification of Issues

50. During the panel's examination of the evidence in the private panel room it became apparent that clarification was required on which pieces of evidence Social Work England was seeking to rely on for each of the charges and to clarify the meaning of the language used in the wording of the charges. At this stage the panel had not reached any decision on facts and therefore the hearing was recommenced.
51. The panel highlighted the issue to Ms Etemadi who sought a short period of time to consider her position.
52. The legal adviser provided advice that the panel needed to have a clear understanding on the meaning of the language used in the charges. Rule 32 allows the panel to manage the hearing in a way they consider fair, which includes fairness to Ms Edwards, Social Work England, and the public. The legal adviser provided further advice on hearsay and the weight to attach to evidence. The legal adviser reminded the panel that subject to the requirements of a fair hearing, it has the power to amend the charge or allegation. The charge should reflect the gravity of Ms Edwards' alleged conduct or behaviour. Seeking clarification of which evidence Social Work England rely on prior to having decided on facts would not amount to unfairness to Ms Edwards.
53. Following the short adjournment, Ms Etemadi made submissions to the panel. She clarified that in relation to allegation 3, the individual limbs of 'a' and 'b' are connected and that the approach Social Work England submit should be taken, is for the panel to decide if there was a failure to undertake a visit, and then to determine whether the visit was outside the statutory time limit. If the panel are satisfied that

there was a failure to record, having found a visit did occur, then that is the visit date to apply to the statutory time limits. Ms Etemadi submitted that in some of the charges, even if the panel find a visit did occur, then it would still have occurred outside of the statutory timescale.

54. Ms Etemadi said Social Work England rely on the calendar entries which Ms L refers to in her written statement as well as her oral evidence to show what visits occurred outside of timescales. Ms Etemadi took the panel through each of the limbs of each charge and addressed it on what evidence Social Work England place reliance on. In response to a question from the panel Ms Etemadi said that in general, if a meeting/visit is in Ms Edwards' calendar then Social Work England invite the panel to infer it did take place.

55. The panel retired to reach its decision on facts.

56. In the circumstances, having considered all the written and oral evidence and on the balance of probabilities the panel made the following findings:

1. *That you, a registered Social Worker, whilst employed by Blackburn and Darwen Council as a social worker:*

In respect of Family A:

1.1 Did not undertake a statutory visit between July – September 2019 to see the children of Family A when the children were subject to a child protection plan.

FOUND PROVED.

57. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L and the case notes from the case recording system. Ms L states that statutory timescales for child protection cases are that visits to the family need '*to be done every four weeks*'. The panel heard oral evidence that all statutory visits that are undertaken should be recorded on the case recording system and if not recorded the assumption is that the visit did not occur. In relation to Family A, the panel was provided with copies of the case notes from 1 July 2019 to 26 September 2019. The case notes do not contain any information which would indicate that a statutory visit was undertaken to Family A during the period July to September 2019. The case notes do show that Ms Edwards attempted a statutory visit on 25 July 2019 and 7 August 2019 but did not gain access to the home on either occasion. The case notes do contain an entry reporting that Ms Edwards did visit Family A and undertake a statutory visit on 22 August 2019 but given our findings in respect of '1.2' below, we find that she did not undertake a statutory visit between July to September 2019. **FOUND PROVED.**

*1.2 Did not undertake a visit on 22 August 2019. **FOUND PROVED.***

58. The panel accepted Ms L's evidence that a visit did not take place on 22 August 2019. Ms L states that she received a call on 18 September 2019, from the Chair of Family A's Child Protection Conference, relaying the parents' concern that they had not been visited by Ms Edwards since the conference on 29 July 2019. The Chair had drawn Ms L's attention to the Child Protection Report prepared by Ms Edwards which noted that she had visited the family since the conference on 29 July 2019. Ms L was concerned about this and emailed her manager to inform her of the situation and get advice on what to do next.
59. Ms L's evidence notes that she spoke with Ms Edwards on 19 September 2019 about the issue raised regarding Family A. During this discussion Ms Edwards informed Ms L that she had struggled to gain access and that the family had been hard to engage with. Ms Edwards discussed the record of the visit on 22 August 2019 where she stated that she started the case note prior to seeing the family as she was pre-empting what would be said. Ms L states in her written evidence that this is not usual practice.
60. Ms Edwards had told Ms L that she had started the note with a view to completing full details later after she had seen the family. Ms Edwards explained to Ms L that she struggled to keep on top of her case recording so it was something that she had started to do so that then she would be reminded to go back and complete the detail of the case note later. Ms Edwards informed that she started to create the case note on 22 August 2019, however that this was recorded in error. Ms Edwards informed Ms L that she did not have access to the family on 22 August 2019 and that she finalised the case note in error which is why it had the incorrect details. The information from the case note was then included in the report that was discussed in the Child Protection Conference, giving the impression that Ms Edwards had seen the family. Ms Edwards said that there was no intention to say that she had done a statutory visit when she had not done one.
61. The panel had regard to the exhibits bundle which included the case note dated 22 August 2019, the Child Protection Conference minutes (completed 9 October 2019), Ms Edwards' report for the conference dated 17 September 2019 and the email sent by Ms L to her manager on 19 September 2019. The panel concluded that the contemporaneous documentary evidence supports the witness testimony that Ms Edwards did not undertake a visit on 22 August 2019. **FOUND PROVED.**

*1.3 Falsely recorded on the case record that a visit took place on 22 August 2019. **FOUND PROVED.***

62. The panel had regard to the finding at '1.2' in that it was satisfied that a visit did not take place on 22 August 2019. The panel relied on the same evidence to assure itself that on the balance of probabilities Ms Edwards had falsely recorded on the case record that a visit took place on 22 August 2019. In relying on Ms L's evidence, the panel considered that it was Ms Edwards, who on being challenged, had acknowledged that she had not undertaken the visit and the record had been finalised in error. Ms Edwards' acknowledgment of not having seen the family accords with the information provided by Family A to the Chair and subsequently relayed to Ms L that they had not received a social work visit between the previous conference and the review.
63. The panel took into consideration Ms L's evidence that pre-populating a case note prior to a visit was not usual practice. The panel had regard to the case note of 22 August 2019 which is included in the exhibit bundle and considered the extent of the detail which is included in it. The case note contains specific information of the child's lived experience, the child's voice, and the parents' views. It comments that Ms Edwards was informed by the parents that *'they continue to be in a relationship and wish to remain together'* and that the children voiced that they are *'unhappy around the change in social worker again'*.
64. Even though Ms Edwards sought to provide an explanation and rationale for why she recorded the visit on 22 August 2019, that does not change the fact that the case note was finalised and falsely recorded that the visit took place. **FOUND PROVED.**

*1.4 Misrepresented when the entry in the case record was created. **FOUND PROVED.***

65. Having spoken to Ms Edwards about the circumstances of the case note dated 22 August 2019, Ms L asked the Council's IT team to establish what date the case note was created on. The audit trail for the case note dated 22 August 2019, states that the case note had been created on 29 August 2019, 7 days later than Ms Edwards had suggested. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L whose oral testimony corroborated with her written statement as to what she had been told by Ms Edwards in relation to when the entry in the case record was created. The panel took account of the 'IT Audit' included in the exhibits bundle which notes that the case note was created on 29 August 2019 at 18:04 and finalised on the same date, contrary to Ms Edwards' explanation. **FOUND PROVED.**

Your conduct at Head of Charge 1.3 and 1.4 was dishonest in that:

*2.1 You intended the record to mislead, knowing that the visit had not taken place. **FOUND PROVED.***

*2.2 You sought to suggest the record pre-dated the visit and was made in error when you were aware this was untrue. **FOUND PROVED.***

66. Having found charges 1.3 and 1.4 proved, the panel was required to consider whether this constituted dishonesty.
67. Regarding charges 1.3 and 1.4 the panel first considered what the actual state of Ms Edwards' knowledge or belief was as to the facts. The panel then went on to consider the question of whether the conduct was honest or dishonest by applying the objective standards of ordinary decent people with full knowledge of the facts of the case.
68. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L and the contemporaneous documents, as set out in detail above in relation to 'charge 1'. The panel took into account that Ms Edwards had made the case note entry 7 days after the date on which the false visit took place. The panel had no plausible explanation before it as to why on 29 August 2019 Ms Edwards would have thought a visit had taken place on 22 August 2019. The panel concluded that when making that case note entry, Ms Edwards would have known that the visit on 22 August 2019 had not taken place. The level of detail included by Ms Edwards in the case note of 22 August 2019 would cause anyone reading the entry to believe that a visit had taken place.
69. Ms Edwards' explanation to Ms L as to why the entry was made, in that she was pre-populating in advance of the visit on 22 August 2019, is undermined by the audit trail which shows that the entry was not created until 29 August 2019. Ms Edwards admitted to Ms L that she had not visited on 22 August 2019 and must have been aware she was not telling the truth when providing an explanation. In terms of whether her conduct was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people, the panel concluded that recording of false entries of activities that did not take place would be held to be dishonest by ordinary decent people as it amounts to creating a false impression. Seeking to suggest this was done in error, knowing this not to be true, would mean that a member of the public would describe her actions as alleged as dishonest. **FOUND PROVED.**
70. The panel moved onto considering charge 3, which generally pleads that whilst Ms Edwards was employed by Blackburn and Darwen Council as a social worker, she failed to undertake statutory visits/meetings and/or failed to record visits in relation to numerous families on her case load. The charge is split into 13 sections, some of which contain multiple dates with the requirement for the panel to consider some of them on an 'and/or' basis.
71. The panel approached each section and each date individually, carefully cross-referencing the evidence in the exhibits bundle which related to each of the families.

The panel had regard to the 'Trix' document within the bundle which sets out the minimum timescales associated with statutory visits. The panel kept in mind throughout its detailed analysis that Ms Edwards had provided no information to Social Work England or to the Council in relation to any explanations which might assist with an understanding of what was happening in her practice at the time, save for the dishonest account she provided for the case note of 22 August 2019.

72. The panel noted that Ms Edwards had been on a support plan from August 2018 to May 2019 as there were concerns that numerous meetings and visits were out of date or not being recorded. By way of example the support plan notes that Child In Need visits were not up to date, core group meetings were out of date and blank child protection visits were recorded on some of her files. As part of the support plan Ms Edwards was provided with additional support by advanced practitioners with training and development. The support plan ended in May 2019, when Ms Edwards commented that she had seen an improvement within herself and all the actions on the plan were completed. The panel concluded that due to the nature of the concerns previously raised and the support Ms Edwards received, she would have been aware of the importance of accurate and timely recording of case notes on the case recording system.

3.1 In relation to LP and LJ, you: 3.1(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and / or 3.1(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 01 August 2019.

3.1 (a) and 3.1 (b) FOUND PROVED.

73. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L who carried out an audit of Ms Edwards' cases after the initial concern had been raised in respect of Family A. Ms L's audit notes that Ms Edwards had recorded in her calendar that she carried out a visit with Service Users LP and LJ, on 1 August 2019 at 16:00. Ms L states that no record of this diarised visit had been made on the case recording system. The panel had reference to the case notes for this family which are included in the exhibits bundle and run from 1 August 2019 to 12 September 2019 and include case recordings made by other non-social work professionals involved with the family. The panel relied on Ms L's audit which shows that a calendar entry was made for 1 August 2019 inferring that a visit did take place. On the balance of probabilities, the panel find that Ms Edwards did undertake a visit on 1 August 2019 but the absence of a case note evidences that she failed to record it.
74. The case notes do not contain details of any statutory visits undertaken by Ms Edwards until an entry on 5 August 2019. Ms L states that a statutory Looked After Child visit should have been undertaken on this family by 24 July 2019 and therefore the statutory visit recorded on 5 August 2019 was out of timescale. Although the

panel find that Ms Edwards did visit on 1 August 2019, this was still 8 days outside of the statutory time limits. On the balance of probabilities, the panel concluded that Ms Edwards failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales. **3.1 (a) and 3.1 (b) FOUND PROVED.**

3.2 In relation to LT, you:

3.2(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and / or

3.2(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 05 August 2019 and/or 13 August 2019.

3.2 (a) and 3.2 (b – 13 August) FOUND PROVED. 3.2 (b- 5 August) NOT PROVED.

75. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L. Her audit states that Ms Edwards' calendar indicated that she carried out a Child In Need meeting with LT on 5 August 2019 at 13.30. Ms L states that the last recorded Child In Need meeting is recorded in the case notes as taking place on 25 June 2019. According to the audit, a further entry marked in the calendar on 13 August 2019 16:00 showed an entry to meet LT for a Child In Need meeting.
76. Ms L said that the entry on 13 August 2019 made it unlikely that the meeting on 5 August 2019 took place as she could not envisage any reason as to why a further Child In Need meeting would be held one week after the previous one. The panel accepted the reasoning of Ms L and found that on the balance of probabilities the meeting on 5 August 2019 did not go ahead but based on the diary entry the visit on 13 August 2019 did take place. Having found the meeting did not go ahead on 5 August 2019, it was not possible for Ms Edwards to fail to record a visit that did not happen. In relation to the visit on 13 August 2019, the panel referred to the case recordings for this family and noted that there are no case notes recorded for 13 August 2019 and therefore the panel found that Ms Edwards had failed to record that visit.
77. Having found that the Child In Need meeting did go ahead on 13 August 2019, the panel considered whether it was carried out within statutory timescales. The panel relied on Ms L's statement which says that the statutory timescales for Child In Need meetings are that they should be held every 6 weeks and accordingly a Child In Need Meeting should have taken place by no later than 6 August 2019. Therefore, a visit on 13 August evidences that Ms Edwards had failed to undertake a visit within statutory timescales. **3.2 (a) and 3.2 (b – 13 August) FOUND PROVED. 3.2 (b- 5 August) NOT PROVED.**

3.3 In relation to LC, (140139) you:

3.3 (a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales (Case Ref 140139).

3.3 (a) FOUND NOT PROVED

78. Ms L's witness statement in relation to case 140139 does not provide details of what the statutory deadline dates are for the case, nor when a visit should have been made by. The audit document prepared by Ms L notes that there has been no recording on the file since allocation to Ms Edwards on 29 July 2019. However, unlike other audit entries the entry for this family does not provide further notes which sets out when the most recent visits or meetings took place. In absence of that information the panel were unclear about when a visit should have taken place and therefore on balance did not have the evidence to satisfy itself on this part of the charge. **3.3 (a) FOUND NOT PROVED.**

3.3 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 06 August 2019 (Case Ref 140139).

3.3 (b) FOUND PROVED

79. Ms L's evidence notes that an entry was made in Ms Edwards' calendar on 6 August, indicating that she was to see Service User LC (case ref 140139) at 16:00 in relation to a Child In Need visit. However, there was no record on the case recording system of this visit having taken place. The panel took into account that the case notes provided in the bundle date from 1 August 2019 to 16 September 2019 but do not contain an entry from Ms Edwards. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L's audit that a visit did take place on 6 August 2019 and in the absence of a case note on that date, found that Ms Edwards failed to record the visit. **3.3 (b) FOUND PROVED.**

3.4 In relation to LC (Case ref 163702)

3.4 (a) Failed to record that a meeting took place on 05 September 2019 (Case ref: 163702). **3.4 (a) FOUND PROVED.**

80. Ms L's witness statement notes that Ms Edwards made an entry in her calendar in relation to a Child In Need meeting with Service User LC, to occur on 5 September 2019 at 13:00. There is no record created by Ms Edwards on the case recording system of this meeting having taken place. Ms L's statement notes that a record of the meeting on 5 September 2019 was recorded by Ms G, a Family Support Worker. The panel relied on the audit of Ms L to infer that Ms Edwards did attend a meeting on 5 September 2019. Further corroboration that the meeting did take place is provided by the case note entered on 5 September by Ms G. The panel had regard to the case notes for this family which run from 1 August 2019 to 16 September 2019, but which do not include any recording by Ms Edwards of the meeting on 5

September 2019. Having found that Ms Edwards did attend the meeting on 5 September, and in the absence of a case recording from her, the panel found that she had failed to record that a meeting took place on 5 September 2019. **3.4 (a) FOUND PROVED.**

3.5 In relation to RP, you:

3.5 (a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.5 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 09 August 2019 and/or 15 August and or 28 August 2019.

3.5 (a) and 3.5 (b) FOUND PROVED.

81. The panel relied on Ms L's audit and witness statement which evidence that Ms Edwards noted in her diary a LAC visit to RP on 9 August 2019 at 16:00, a home visit to RP at 16:00 on 15 August and a LAC visit to RP at 16:00 on 28 August 2019. The panel found on the balance of probabilities that visits to RP by Ms Edwards did take place on each of those dates.
82. The panel relied on the case notes provided in the bundle which date from 2 July 2019 to 18 September 2019. The case notes do not include any recordings by Ms Edwards for visits or meetings which took place on 9, 15 or 28 August. Having found that the visits on those dates did take place, and in the absence of any case notes from Ms Edwards, the panel found that she had failed to record that a visit took place on all the dates in this charge.
83. The panel considered whether Ms Edwards had failed to undertake a visit within statutory timescale. The panel noted that Ms L's statement states that the most recent LAC visit had been on 2 July 2019. The 'Trix' document states that a Looked After Child Visit should take place every 4 weeks. Therefore, by the time Ms Edwards undertook a visit on 9 August 2019, it was already out of timescales. **3.5 (a) and 3.5 (b) FOUND PROVED.**

3.6 In relation to LE, you:

3.6(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.6(b) Failed to record that a meeting took place on 08 August 2019 and/or 13 August 2019

3.6 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.6 (b) PROVED

84. The panel first considered whether the meeting on 8 and/or 13 August 2019 took place. The panel relied on Ms L's statement which states that Ms Edwards had made calendar entries for CIN meetings on 8 August at 15:00 and 13 August at 15:00. The panel cross referenced these dates with the audit document included within the exhibits bundle and noted they corroborated with Ms L's statement. Placing reliance on Ms L's evidence, the panel found that the meetings did take place on 8 and 13 August 2019. The panel took into account the case notes for this family which start on 5 August 2019 and run to 18 September 2019. The case notes include two case notes recorded by Ms Edwards, the first on 5 August (a failed visit due to family being on holiday) and the second on 22 August (notes of a complex case hub meeting). However, there is an absence of records for the meetings on 8 August and 13 August 2019. The panel therefore found a failure to record those meetings.
85. The panel considered whether Ms Edwards had failed to undertake a visit within statutory timescales. The panel referred to the evidence of Ms L who gives some detail about Ms Edwards completing an assessment but who does not provide any information as to whether the visits to this family were outside of statutory time limits. In the absence of a date when the statutory time limit should have commenced, the panel were unable to conclude whether the meetings on 8 August and 13 August had taken place outside of the time limit. On the balance of probabilities, the panel found that Ms Edwards had not failed to undertake a visit to LE within statutory timescales. **3.6 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.6 (b) PROVED.**

3.7 In relation to UM, you:

3.7(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.7(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 07 August 2019.

3.7 (a) and (b) NOT PROVED

86. The panel had regard to Ms L's audit document which notes a calendar entry for a core group with UM on 7 August 2019 and the wording '*Stat visit recorded (4pm)*'. The panel referred to the case notes for UM and noted that there is a case recording made by Ms Edwards for a contact with UM on 7 August 2019 at 16:00. The case note sets out the progress of the plan and includes the parent's views and details of the child's lived experience. Considering the documentary evidence, on balance the panel concluded that a visit did take place on 7 August 2019 and there is a case recording on the file of that visit and therefore Ms Edwards did not fail to record the visit.
87. Social Work England's case is that the date in charge (b) is related to the failure in respect of charge (a). Unlike with most of the other families, Ms L does not provide evidence to say whether a visit on the 7 August would have been outside of

statutory timescales. She states that *'if the visit on 7 August 2019 had occurred, a further visit should have taken place no later than 28 August 2019. There is no record of a visit being undertaken until 10 September 2019. The concern is therefore that Ms Edwards did not undertake the statutory visit within timescale.'* However, the panel are not asked to consider any other dates within this charge, just the 7 August. In the absence of evidence stating that a visit on 7 August would be outside of statutory timescales, the panel found that on balance, Ms Edwards had not failed to undertake a visit within statutory timescales. **3.7 (a) and (b) NOT PROVED.**

3.8 In relation to CJA (Family A), you:

3.8(a) Failed to record that a visit took place on 12 August 2019 and/or 14 August 2019 and/or 16 August 2019 and/or 12 September 2019. 3.8 NOT PROVED.

88. The panel first considered whether visits did take place on the dates specified and thereafter, if they did take place, whether there was a failure to record the visits. The panel had regard to its finding at charge 1.1 which relates to the same family. In that charge, the panel found that Ms Edwards did not undertake a statutory visit between July – September 2019 to see the children of Family A when the children were subject to a Child Protection Plan.
89. The panel took into consideration that charge 3.8 was different to other charges in that the calendar entries, audit and case notes are not the sole evidence.
90. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L who sets out in detail in her statement that she had received a telephone call on 18 September from a Child Protection Conference Chair who informed her that a conference had just taken place in relation to CJA (Family A) and that the parents had informed her that between the initial conference on 29 July 2019 and the conference on 18 September, they had not received a visit from the social worker.
91. Ms L's evidence explains that she had spoken to Ms Edwards on the morning of 19 September to discuss the concerns raised by the Chair. Ms L's statement notes *'Ms Edwards informed me that she had struggled to gain access and that the family had been hard to engage with. She explained how she had put a note through their door saying that she really needed to speak to them and rang the mother. Ms Edwards said that the Deputy Team Manager who was providing support to her before I commenced my post as Team Manager was aware that she was struggling to gain access to the family and that she had attempted to visit.'*
92. Ms L's evidence notes the acceptance by Ms Edwards during their discussion on 19 September that she did not visit the family on 22 August. Ms Edwards had told Ms L

that *'she did actually get to arrange a visit with the Mother as she was now engaging but this never took place due to an urgent case being in court.'* Ms Edwards had also told Ms L about *'some visits that she had planned to happen, however for one reason or another they did not happen and had to be cancelled due to her own work load.'*

93. In the exhibits bundle there is a case note from Ms Edwards dated Wednesday 14 August 2019 at 10:34 which states *'Contact made with PH, statutory visit arranged for Friday at 4pm.'* It appeared from this that a visit was due to take place Friday 16 August 2019.
94. In relation to the alleged visit on 16 August 2019, the panel had regard to Ms L's witness statement which says, *'Ms Edwards confirmed that this visit did not in fact occur.'*
95. The panel placed weight on the evidence of Ms L in reporting what was said to her firstly by the Conference Chair and secondly by Ms Edwards during the discussion on 19 September 2019. The information provided by the parents to the Chair corroborated with the information given by Ms Edwards that she had not visited the family during this time. The panel therefore concluded that visits to this family did not take place on 12 August, 14 August, 16 August, and 12 September and therefore Ms Edwards cannot be said to have failed to record them. **FOUND NOT PROVED.**

3.9 In relation to MM, you:

3.9(a) Failed to undertake Child In Need (CIN) visits between 15 July 2019 and 10 September 2019. 3.9 NOT PROVED.

96. Social Work England's case is that Ms L's audit demonstrates that between 15 July 2019 and 10 September 2019, Ms Edwards did not undertake any Child In Need (CIN) visits in respect of service user MM. The panel had careful regard to the contents of two sets of case notes for MM which are included in the exhibits bundle and which start on 1 July 2019 and end on 17 September 2019. The case notes include a recording from Ms Edwards on 14 August 2019 noting that a CIN meeting was arranged for that day at 11am but that the parents did not attend and so the meeting could not be conducted. There is a case note for Saturday 31 August 2019 which is marked as a 'case management decision' and which is inputted by Mr JL, who is described in Ms L's statement as the Deputy Team Manager for Ms Edwards between July 2019 and September 2019. The case record states that the case has

been reallocated to 'KM' and that the previous social worker, Ms Edwards is to complete the handover.

97. Given that Ms Edwards was not the case holder for MM from 31 August onwards, on balance the panel were unable to find that she had failed to undertake a Child In Need visit between 15 July and 10 September 2019. **3.9 NOT PROVED.**

3.10 In respect of JL, you:

3.10(a) Failed to undertake a visit within statutory time scales and/or

3.10(b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 14 August 2019.

3.10 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.10 (b) PROVED.

98. Ms L's statement refers to her audit and states that a calendar entry was made by Ms Edwards, showing that a CIN meeting was to take place with service user JL on 14 August 2019 at 16:00. Ms L states that this meeting was not recorded on Protocol and that her audit indicated that the last recorded CIN visit carried out by Ms Edwards took place on 11 July 2019.
99. The panel relied on the witness evidence of Ms L in conjunction with the audit document, to find that on balance, Ms Edwards did undertake a visit in respect of JL on 14 August 2019. The panel had regard to the case recordings which commence on 11 July 2019, (starting with Ms Edwards' case note of her CIN visit) and end on 25 September 2019. Having found that Ms Edwards did visit on 14 August 2019 and in absence of a case recording on that date, the panel found that Ms Edwards had failed to record the visit on 14 August 2019.
100. In relation to the statutory timescales, Ms L's statement says that a '*further visit should have taken place no later than 22 August 2019*'. Given the panel's finding that Ms Edwards did undertake a visit on 14 August 2019 which is prior to 22 August, it could not find that she had failed to undertake a visit within timescales. **3.10 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.10 (b) PROVED.**

3.11 In respect of SL, you:

3.11(a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory time scales and/or

3.11 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 28 August 2019.

3.11 (a) and (b) FOUND PROVED.

101. The witness statement of Ms L notes that Ms Edwards' calendar entry indicated that she was to undertake a visit to service user SL on 28 August 2019 at 16:00. The panel relied on this evidence to determine that on the balance of probabilities Ms Edwards

did undertake a visit to SL on 28 August 2019. The panel had regard to the documentary evidence which included case notes for SL from 2 August 2019 to 18 September 2019. The case notes only include one recording by Ms Edwards dated 9 August 2019 noting that she had emailed LAC minutes from 8 May 2019 to ‘*health*’ (the panel understood this to mean the health visitor). There is no recording by Ms Edwards of a visit on 28 August 2019. Having found that the visit did take place, and in the absence of a case note, the panel found that Ms Edwards had failed to record a visit that took place on 28 August 2019.

102. Ms L’s audit demonstrated that the most recent LAC visit undertaken by Ms Edwards for this family occurred on 18 July 2019. Ms L states that a ‘*LAC visit should have been undertaken no later than 15 August 2019.*’ Therefore, the visit which Ms Edwards undertook on 28 August was outside of the statutory LAC time limits. The panel relied on the evidence of Ms L in finding that Ms Edwards had not undertaken a visit within statutory time scales. **3.11 (a) and (b) FOUND PROVED.**

3.12 In respect of DLS, you:

3.12 (a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory timescales and/or

3.12 (b) Failed to record whether a visit took place on 11 September 2019

3.12 (a) and (b) FOUND PROVED

103. The panel noted that the wording in 3.12 (b) differed from the wording contained within the other charges in pleading that Ms Edwards ‘*failed to record whether a visit took place*’ whereas other charges plead ‘*failed to record that a visit took place.*’ Taking the ordinary meaning of the words the panel therefore approached this charge on the basis that whether a visit took place or not it should have been recorded.
104. The panel had regard to the statement of Ms L which states that Ms Edwards made a calendar entry showing that a CIN meeting with DLS was to take place on 11 September 2019 at 09:15. The panel cross referenced Ms L’s statement with the audit document in the exhibits bundle which corroborated the information she provided. Placing weight on the audit, the panel found that on the balance of probabilities a visit did take place on 11 September 2019. The panel carefully considered the case recordings provided for this family which date from 1 August to 16 September 2019 and there is no record of a visit taking place on 11 September. In absence of any case notes for the 11 September, the panel found that Ms Edwards had failed to record ‘*whether*’ a visit took place that day.
105. The statement of Ms L noted that her audit showed that no recordings had been made on Protocol by Ms Edwards since the case was allocated to her on 29 July 2019. Ms L states that as a minimum, visits should have been every 6 weeks. The

panel did not have evidence before it of when the last statutory visit took place prior to the 11 September, save that Ms Edwards had not undertaken one having been allocated the case on 29 July 2019. There is a case recording on 14 August 2019 from a Family Support Worker which notes that she received a telephone call from Ms Edwards, who reported to her that she was struggling to gain access to the property and has had numerous no access visits. However, whilst recognising that there may have been difficulties with access, the panel must determine whether the visit made on 11 September was made outside of statutory time limits. Considering that visits should be every 6 weeks, even if the statutory time limit did not start until the 29 July a visit should have been undertaken by 9 September and therefore the visit by Ms Edwards on 11 September would have been outside of the statutory time limit. **3.12 (a) and (b) FOUND PROVED.**

3.13 In respect of IH, you:

3.13 (a) Failed to undertake visits within statutory timescales and/or

3.13 (b) Failed to record that a visit took place on 18 September 2019

3.13 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.13 (b) FOUND PROVED

106. The panel relied on the witness statement of Ms L which states that Ms Edwards' calendar indicated that she was to carry out a CIN meeting and visit in relation to Service User IH, on 18 September 2019 at 16:00. Relying on Ms L's evidence and the quality of her audit, the panel concluded that on the balance of probabilities the visit did take place on 18 September 2019. The panel cross-referenced Ms L's statement with the case notes in the bundle and noted that the case notes do not include an entry in relation to a visit on 18 September which accords with what Ms Lyons notes in her statement. In the absence of a case note for 18 September, the panel concluded that Ms Edwards did fail to record that a visit took place on that date.
107. Ms L's statement notes that at the time of her audit a visit had been undertaken by Ms Edwards on 7 August 2019 and therefore a further visit should have been undertaken no later than 18 September 2019. The panel considered the case note in the bundle which is created by Ms Edwards at 14:00 on 7 August and notes that she conducted a CIN visit. In relation to 18 September the panel found that a visit did take place, albeit it was not recorded, and therefore this would have taken place within the statutory time limit. On the basis that Ms Edwards did visit on 18 September the panel found that she had not failed to undertake the visit within statutory timescales. **3.13 (a) NOT PROVED and 3.13 (b) FOUND PROVED.**

*4. Whilst registered as a social worker in April 2021 you were included in the Children's and Adults Barred List by the Disclosure and Barring Service. **FOUND PROVED.***

108. The panel took into account the witness statement of Ms K which sets out communication between Social Work England and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in respect of Ms Edwards. In finding this charge proved, the panel placed weight on the documentary evidence included in the bundle which is a copy of the final decision letter dated 8 April 2021 from the DBS to Ms Edwards. The letter states *'We wrote to you on 03/02/2021 and explained that it may be appropriate to include you in the Children's Barred List and Adults' Barred List. We gave you the opportunity to send us your representations, but we haven't received any. We have completed a final review of your case. We have decided that it is appropriate and proportionate to include you in the Children's Barred List and the Adults' Barred List.'*
- FOUND PROVED.**

Finding and reasons on grounds

109. Ms Etemadi submitted that the facts found proved at charges 1-3 clearly amount to misconduct. Ms Etemadi submitted that in assessing seriousness, the panel should consider not only the actual harm caused to service users, other professionals, and public confidence in the profession, but also the risk of harm. She told the panel that a risk of harm can be as important as actual harm caused. Continuing to act in a way that presents a risk to service users or members of the public, could cause actual harm in the future, notwithstanding that it did not in this case.
110. Ms Etemadi said that Ms Edwards' conduct puts her in breach of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016) as follows:

'The standards of conduct, performance and ethics you must keep to:

You must act in the best interests of service users.

10. You must keep accurate records.

13. You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you and your Profession.'

111. Ms Etemadi also referred the panel to the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers (2017) namely:

'1 Be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practise.

1.2 Recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly.

2 Be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession.

2.1 Understand current legislation applicable to social work with adults, children, young people and families.

2.2 Understand the need to promote the best interests of service users and carers at all times.

2.3 Understand the need to protect, safeguard, promote and prioritise the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

10 Be able to maintain records appropriately.

10.1 Be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines.

10.2 Recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines.'

112. Ms Etemadi submitted that the conduct found proved falls seriously short of what would have been proper in the circumstances. In relation to charge 1, Ms Edwards did not undertake a statutory visit but created a false record suggesting that one had taken place, and which led to the record being discussed at a Child Protection Conference. This caused sufficient concern and confusion for the Conference Chair to call and discuss the lack of visit with Ms L. Those present at the meeting and anyone reading the records were misled about what was happening in this family's life.
113. Ms Etemadi said that in respect of charge 2, by creating a false entry, Ms Edwards acted dishonestly as she knew that the record was not truthful and anyone reading the entry would believe that the visit had taken place. Ms Etemadi submitted that such an act is contrary to the core tenets of the social work profession, to be open and honest and to act with integrity.
114. Ms Etemadi acknowledged that in respect of charge 3, not all charges were proven, but nonetheless, the panel had found as facts that there had been multiple incidents in which Ms Edwards had failed to undertake visits within statutory timescales and failed to record that visits had taken place. Ms Etemadi submitted that this conduct was not isolated to one occasion or one case, but it was found across a number of Ms Edwards' cases.
115. Ms Etemadi said that the fact that these failures were found in some and not all of Ms Edwards' work indicates that she was not keeping the records updated as opposed to her being incapable of doing so. Ms Etemadi submitted that the seriousness of the conduct is highlighted by what Ms L said in her oral evidence, in that visit which did not take place within timescales mean that children were exposed to greater harm whether it was physical, emotional, or sexual harm, or

would have been subject to plans for longer than necessary. Ms Etemadi reminded the panel that during Ms Edwards' employment at the Council, she was subject to a support plan and was given time to catch up with her record keeping, however the same issues still arose after the plan had ended and after her caseload was significantly reduced.

116. In relation to charge 4 Ms Etemadi explained that this relates to its own discrete statutory ground as set out in the Social Workers Regulations 2018. She invited the panel to conclude that as it has found as a fact that Ms Edwards is subject to a DBS barring decision and that this ground is automatically made out.
117. Ms Edwards was not present and had not provided any written submissions or evidence.
118. The panel heard and accepted legal advice from the legal adviser on the issue of misconduct and the wording contained in paragraph 25 (2) (g) (i) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018. The panel at all times had in mind the overriding objective of Social Work England which includes its duty to protect the public, promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England and to promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.
119. The panel did not have a copy of the HCPC publications referred to by Ms Etemadi but noted that the standards which Social Work England submit are engaged were set out in Ms Etemadi's statement of case. The panel took into account that these standards were in force at the time Ms Edwards' conduct had occurred. The panel bore in mind that a departure from the standards alone does not necessarily constitute misconduct.
120. The panel considered that the behaviours and conduct of Ms Edwards in relation to the proven facts in charges 1-3, do amount to serious professional misconduct. They are a clear departure from all the standards outlined by Social Work England and are serious, fundamental departures which amount to misconduct.
121. The panel concluded that Ms Edwards' conduct and behaviour fell far below the standards expected of a registered social worker. Based on the findings, the misconduct falls into four areas:
 - (i) The dishonesty about the visit to Family A and thereafter the dishonesty in misrepresenting when the case note was created.
 - (ii) Failing to undertake statutory visits/meetings.
 - (iii) Failing to record visits/meetings which had taken place.

122. In relation to the dishonesty found against Ms Edwards, this is a serious departure from the standards expected. The dishonesty was two-fold relating to a falsely recorded visit to a child who was subject to a Child Protection Plan and thereafter dishonesty with the Team Manager, Ms L, about when the note had been created. The information contained within the false entry was used to inform a Child Protection Conference which was attended by other professionals and the parents of the child. As a result of the untruthful entry about the visit, the service user was left without social work contact from July 2019 until September 2019 and incorrect information was shared at the Conference. The incorrect information, being contrary to that provided by the parents, caused confusion and concern such that the Chair had contacted Ms Edwards' Team Manager. It could have led to direct harm as a professional reading the false case note would have been given a false picture, potentially risking them not identifying any potential issues. Thereafter, having been challenged about the false case note, Ms Edwards' dishonesty to her Team Manager was conduct which the panel determined would be regarded as disgraceful by fellow social workers. Social workers need to be trusted by the vulnerable service users who rely on them for support and help. Employers and other professionals also need to be able to trust the information that social workers provide and record to ensure services users are appropriately and adequately protected.
123. In relation to the failing to undertake statutory visits and meetings, the panel concluded this was a serious departure from the standards expected of social workers. Adherence to the statutory time limits is a legal requirement, and those timescales are in place to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable service users who require the support of a social worker. Ms Edwards' failure to undertake visits/meetings within timescales left vulnerable children on her caseload not being reviewed. By failing to act in accordance with timescales, Ms Edwards had potentially placed the service users at risk of harm as safeguarding concerns could be missed and equally, positive aspects could remain unreported meaning social care involvement for families could continue for longer than is necessary.
124. In relation to the failure to record visits/meetings the panel concluded this was a serious failure to follow standards. A failure to record a visit or meeting means that other professionals involved with the family would not be fully sighted on the family's current situation. Anyone looking at the case notes could be potentially relying on outdated information (from previous or subsequent recorded visits) which does not give an accurate account of the family's situation and could escalate the risk to the service user.
125. The panel considered that the conduct by Ms Edwards was not isolated, it occurred on multiple occasion across multiple families. It was a pattern of behaviour which had previously been noted when Ms Edwards was made subject to a support plan

and had her caseload reduced. The failures to adhere to statutory time limits and record visits are basic and core social work duties which Ms Edwards did not adhere to.

126. In relation to charge 4, the panel concluded that as it has found as a fact that Ms Edwards is subject to a DBS barring decision, the following statutory ground is automatically made out:

S25 (2) (g) being included—

(i) by the Disclosure and Barring Service in a barred list (within the meaning given in section 60(1) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 or article 2(2A) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

Finding and reasons on current impairment

127. Ms Etemadi submitted that a finding of current impairment should be made on the grounds of public protection and public interest. She reminded the panel of the requirement to consider the personal and public components of impairment.
128. Ms Etemadi submitted that the risk of harm can be as important as actual harm caused. This is because continuing to act in a way that risks public safety could cause actual harm in the future, whether or not it has in the past. She said that Ms Edwards' failure to undertake visits within the statutory timescales creates an issue as the visits must take place so that children on plans are not neglected but regularly checked up on. This will allow social workers to assess and determine whether such children are being harmed or are at risk of harm. She submitted that if these visits do not take place, harm to children can go on for a prolonged period, undetected. The creation of the false record led to the record being discussed at a conference. This created a very unprofessional and chaotic situation, the opposite of what the family needed.
129. In relation to charge 2, by creating a false entry, Ms Edwards acted dishonestly as she knew that the record was not truthful and anyone reading the entry would believe that the visit had taken place. Ms Etemadi submitted that records and case files need to accurately reflect what has been happening with a case, otherwise they are meaningless and service users will be left without the support needed. Honesty and integrity are essential to social work practice and the public need to be able to trust in the care they receive. Ms Etemadi submitted that dishonesty is difficult to remediate, and Ms Edwards has not demonstrated any

insight into her conduct that would suggest she has remediated it or that it will not be repeated.

130. Ms Etemadi submitted that in respect of Head of Charge 3, the seriousness of the conduct of statutory visits not taking place within timescales is that a child is potentially left at risk of harm. Potential harm will not be picked up and the child will have been exposed to potential harm for much longer until it is eventually picked up. Ms Etemadi said that equally, as pointed out by Ms L, if there was positive improvement this also would not have been picked up and the child would have been subject to a plan for longer than necessary. In relation to the failure to record visits/meetings in a number of cases, Ms Etemadi submitted that this is serious as it suggests that a visit has not taken place and creates chaos and confusion. Without an accurate record the level of monitoring and care provided cannot be ascertained and those involved in the cases of these children cannot form an accurate picture of the interventions given.
131. Ms Etemadi submitted that these incidents were not one-off isolated incidents or errors. She said that there are multiple examples relating to numerous cases where statutory visits did not take place on time or there was a failure to record the visits which persisted during Ms Edwards' employment with the council. Ms Etemadi said that this meant that multiple families were at risk and notwithstanding the support that was in place, demonstrates a considerable risk of repetition. She asked the panel to consider this against the backdrop of its finding on dishonesty.
132. Ms Etemadi acknowledged that Ms Edwards has no previous adverse findings against her. However, she submitted that Ms Edwards has not engaged with the regulator, has offered no evidence of insight, reflection, or remediation.
133. Ms Etemadi submitted that the findings in this case are so serious that action would be required on public interest considerations as well. She said that it would be contrary to the protection of the public and public interest for a social worker who has been barred from working with adults and children to not be considered as having their fitness to practise currently impaired.
134. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to impairment. The panel took into account that it should have regard to both the personal and public components and keep in mind the wider public interest. The panel also took into account the cases of *CHRE v (1) NMC & (2) Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)* and *Cohen v GMC [2008] EWHC 581 [Admin]*.
135. The panel considered Ms Edwards' current fitness to practise firstly from the personal perspective and then from the wider public perspective. The panel also had

regard to whether the conduct in this case is easily remediable, whether it has been remedied and whether it was highly unlikely to be repeated.

136. In determining current impairment, the panel had regard to the four tests identified by Dame Janet Smith in her 5th Shipman Report and cited in *CHRE v (1) NMC and (2) Grant*. The panel considered whether:
- a- The social worker has in the past and/or is liable in the future to place service users at unwarranted risk of harm.
 - b- The social worker has in the past brought and/or is liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute.
 - c- The social worker has in the past breached and/or is liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the profession.
 - d- Has the social worker in the past acted dishonestly and/or is liable to act dishonestly in the future.
137. In relation to the first component the panel determined that Ms Edwards has in the past/is liable in the future to place service users at unwarranted risk of harm. The panel considered that the findings on misconduct at paragraphs 120-125 show that Ms Edwards has acted in a way as to put services users at risk of harm. Although there is no evidence before the panel that Ms Edwards' misconduct caused actual harm to service users, her conduct gives rise to the potential for direct harm. In relation to the dishonesty the panel took into account that by positively asserting you have done something when you have not (the statutory visit on 22 August), it is likely that no-one else will do it which then gives rise to potential risk.
138. In relation to the question of whether Ms Edwards has in the past brought and/or is liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute, the panel determined she had. A significant aspect of public interest is upholding proper standards of behaviour so as not to bring the profession into disrepute. The panel took the view that members of the public would be extremely concerned to learn that a registered social worker working with vulnerable children and their families has behaved in the manner found in Ms Edwards' case.
139. In finding that Ms Edwards did not behave and conduct herself in such a way as to adhere to the HCPC professional standards, the panel determined that she had breached fundamental tenets of the social work profession. The panel considered that honesty and integrity are fundamental tenets of social work.
140. In relation to the fourth component, the panel determined that Ms Edwards had in the past acted dishonestly and/or is liable to act dishonestly in the future.

141. In relation to the misconduct the panel had no written evidence or oral testimony that would evidence that Ms Edwards has properly reflected and fully understood the seriousness of her misconduct. Nor has she demonstrated that she has developed insight into the failings in her practice and conduct. Neither had the panel any information which would demonstrate any remediation. The panel considered that whilst dishonesty is difficult to remediate, the poor record keeping and failing to undertake visits within statutory timescales are amenable to remediation. However, in the absence of any information from Ms Edwards, the panel had to conclude that she has not remediated her misconduct. There is no evidence before the panel that Ms Edwards has taken any responsibility for her actions. She has not engaged with Social Work England, nor did she engage with the Council investigation.
142. At the time of the facts arising, Ms Edwards was relatively newly qualified and had previously been provided with extra support so she should have known and understood the importance of accurate record keeping and timely visits. There remains no explanation as to why Ms Edwards acted in the way she did in relation to the failures to record and visit and no explanation as to what she was thinking when she dishonestly drafted the case note for the falsified visit. Ms Edwards' dishonesty was particularly serious as it covered a failure to visit a vulnerable child. The panel finds that there is a risk of Ms Edwards repeating such behaviour as she has not shown any understanding of how her behaviour and conduct has impacted on service users and the wider public. Although the misconduct in this case is capable of remediation, in the absence of any insight and remediation the panel determined the risk of repetition to be high.
143. The panel determined that Ms Edwards' fitness to practise is currently impaired on the grounds of her misconduct. The panel also concluded that public trust and confidence in the profession and the regulatory process would be seriously undermined if there was no finding of impairment in light of the finding that Ms Edwards is subject to DBS barring and is barred from working with adults and children. The panel concluded that the wider public interest requires a finding that Ms Edwards' fitness to practise is currently impaired.

Decision on sanction

144. The panel heard submissions from Ms Etemadi on behalf of Social Work England. Ms Etemadi drew the panel's attention to the Social Work England guidance on sanctions.
145. Ms Etemadi submitted that following the panel's determination that Ms Edwards' impairment poses a current risk to the public, it would be reasonable to move beyond no action, advice/warning as these sanctions would not protect the public and would allow Ms Edwards to practise unrestricted.

146. Ms Etemadi submitted that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate in this case due to the gravity of the concerns but more pertinently there is not a workable condition that could be formulated to prescribe against dishonesty. She submitted that a conditions of practice order would not alleviate the risk posed to the public identified by the panel in its determination.
147. Ms Etemadi submitted that in line with the 'Sanctions Guidance', Ms Edwards' misconduct warrants a sanction of removal. She said that there is no evidence that Ms Edwards has accepted her wrongdoing and of the risk she placed service users at. There is no evidence that she has used the time since the incidents to remediate and rectify her conduct.
148. Ms Etemadi submitted that a suspension order would protect the public, however, it would be unlikely to trigger any insight or reflection that would remediate any deficiencies in Ms Edwards' practice. She submitted that Ms Edwards had failed to undertake an important statutory visit and then misled her employers and the participants of the Conference that a visit had taken place. Ms Etemadi submitted that this would undoubtedly cause substantial damage to the confidence of Family A in the Council and in the social work profession.
149. In respect of not recording case notes, Ms Etemadi submitted that this would have caused the families involved to lose confidence in social workers. Ms Etemadi said that as Ms Edwards has not engaged thus far it is difficult to envisage how she would try and remediate concerns relating to her integrity, dishonesty as well as regain the trust of the profession.
150. Ms Etemadi drew the panel's attention to the DBS decision. She submitted that whilst the DBS have currently barred Ms Edwards and she is currently unable to work with adults and children, the DBS may review its decision depending on the outcome of these proceedings. She submitted that as the DBS decision is not permanent, the panel may feel that a long suspension order may be more proportionate as it would take into account that the DBS decision may change and give Ms Edwards further opportunity to remediate.
151. Ms Etemadi made submissions on the aggravating and mitigating factors making reference to Ms Edwards' health, relative inexperience and the dishonesty aspects of the case.
152. The panel heard and accepted the legal advice on all the available options on sanction and considered the Social Work England 'Sanction Guidance' dated 26 November 2019. The panel reminded itself that the purpose of any fitness to practise sanction is to protect the public which includes maintaining confidence in

the profession and upholding professional standards and that the sanction imposed should be the minimum necessary to protect the public.

153. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Ms Edwards' interests with the public interest and by considering each available sanction in ascending order of severity. The panel considered the mitigating and aggravating factors in determining what sanction, if any, to impose.
154. The panel identified the following mitigating factors:
- (a) Ms Edwards was a relatively inexperienced social worker having only completed her ASYE in 2018.
 - (b) Ms Edwards had suffered from some health issues and **(Private)**
 - (c) There is evidence in a supervision note that the Team Manager (prior to Ms L) had observed that Ms Edwards' written work was of a high standard.
 - (d) Ms L gave oral evidence that Ms Edwards was a team player and was supportive to colleagues.
 - (e) Ms Edwards has no previous adverse regulatory findings against her.
155. The panel identified the following aggravating factors:
- (a) Ms Edwards was on a support plan until May 2019 for issues relating to failing to record and failing to undertake timely visits as a result of which she was given support and a reduced caseload. Therefore, she should have had at the forefront of her mind the importance of undertaking and recording visits/meetings within statutory timescales. However, the issues in this regard had continued despite her knowing how to access support and escalate concerns.
 - (b) The facts found relate to repeated failures on several different occasions across numerous families. This placed multiple vulnerable service users at risk of harm on multiple occasions.
 - (c) Ms Edwards was given an opportunity during her discussion with Ms L to be honest about the situation with Family A, but instead she misled Ms L as to when the case note was made, which created further confusion because of her perpetuating the lie. During the Council's investigation and the subsequent investigation by Social Work England, Ms Edwards has had ample opportunity to reflect, engage and explain her actions, but has not done so.
 - (d) Ms Edwards' conduct caused professionals and Family A confusion by giving a false picture of the home situation for that family and she has failed to

recognise the impact that her actions had. Not only was there a potential risk to the child/family but also other professionals were not fully sighted, which could impact on their ability to undertake their jobs and take appropriate actions.

156. Considering the serious findings of fact, the panel decided that taking no further action, issuing advice or a warning, would not be appropriate in this case as these sanctions would not restrict Ms Edwards' practice and would therefore not protect the public from the risks that have been identified. The panel had no evidence of engagement by Ms Edwards which would suggest that she would be amenable to accepting or following advice.
157. The panel went on to consider whether a conditions of practice order would be appropriate. Whilst such an order might in some cases address some aspects of the misconduct of the type found in Ms Edwards' case, the panel considered it would not do so in this case. It took into account the aggravating feature of the multiple failings across multiple families and concluded that the high level of supervision and restriction of practice that would be required to mitigate the identified risks would be tantamount to suspension. The panel considered that, in any event, there is no evidence that Ms Edwards would comply with any conditions given her failure to engage in this fitness to practise process.
158. In terms of her dishonest behaviour, the panel was concerned that it has no acknowledgment about it from Ms Edwards due to her failure to engage with the Council and with Social Work England. Therefore, it is difficult to see how a conditions of practice order might address and safeguard members of the public from the risks of this aspect of her misconduct. The panel reminded itself that it had found Ms Edwards had shown no insight and that the risk of repetition was high. With this in mind the panel considered that conditions of practice would not be guaranteed to prevent the risk of repetition and that given the gravity of the misconduct the public could not be sufficiently protected from the risks identified. The panel concluded that a conditions of practice order is not sufficient to protect the public.
159. The panel then considered whether a suspension order should be imposed to protect the public and the wider public interest. The panel considered that suspension orders can be imposed for a period of up to 3 years. It noted from the Sanctions Guidance that *'suspension is appropriate where no workable conditions can be formulated that can protect the public or the wider public interest, but where the case falls short of requiring removal from the register or where removal is not an option.'* The panel had in mind that the purpose of a suspension order is not to punish but to protect the public and public interest.

160. The panel asked itself what a period of suspension would seek to achieve in Ms Edwards' case. A period of suspension would provide an opportunity for Ms Edwards to seek to address the misconduct findings made against her. However, the panel took into account that Ms Edwards has not engaged at all, either with the Council investigation or with Social Work England. The last correspondence from Ms Edwards, was almost three years ago, being, the email she sent to the Council on 25 September 2019 tendering her registration. The panel concluded that given the length of time that has passed without any evidence from Ms Edwards of the realisation of the seriousness of her misconduct or recognition of the impact it had, then the possibility of a period of suspension being used for reflection, understanding and the development of insight was remote.
161. In relation to dishonesty, the panel noted that it can be capable of being remedied. However, such remediation requires an acknowledgment of fault, meaningful reflection, and a commitment to ensuring that the dishonesty and underlying conduct will not be repeated. There was no evidence before the panel that Ms Edwards has admitted her dishonesty or is willing to take active steps to fully remediate her misconduct. On the contrary, Ms Edwards has simply not engaged with the process and on being challenged by Ms L about the falsified case note, she perpetuated the lie by saying it had been created prior to the visit when the subsequent audit showed this to be incorrect. The panel took into account that whilst the dishonesty only occurred in relation to Family A's case, social workers are routinely trusted with access to people's homes, and highly sensitive and confidential information and therefore any individual dishonesty is likely to threaten public confidence in social workers. The public and employers must be able to trust the accuracy of information provided by social workers.
162. For these reasons the panel determined that a suspension order was not sufficient to protect the public, public confidence in the profession, nor to mark the public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour.
163. The panel, having decided a suspension order does not protect the public nor meet the wider public interest, decided that the proportionate order was a removal order.
164. The panel took into account the Sanctions Guidance which states that '*a removal order must be made where the adjudicators conclude that no other outcome would be enough to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession or maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England*'.
165. The panel considered that a removal order is a sanction of last resort and should be reserved for those categories of cases where there is no other means of protecting the public and the wider public interest. The panel decided that Ms Edwards' case falls into this category because of the nature and gravity of her dishonest conduct,

her complete failure to engage and the ongoing risk of repetition. The panel was also satisfied that any lesser sanction would undermine public trust and confidence in the profession.

166. In reaching this conclusion the panel balanced the public interest against Ms Edwards' interests. The panel took into account the consequential personal and professional impact a removal order may have upon Ms Edwards but concluded that these considerations are significantly outweighed by the panel's duty to give priority to public protection and the wider public interest.
167. The panel did take into consideration the finding it had made in respect of charge 4 and Ms Etemadi's submissions that the DBS decision could be subject to review. The panel acknowledged and accepted that a decision of the DBS to bar someone from working with adults and children is open to review, although at present Ms Edwards is barred from working with adults and children and therefore cannot undertake social work. Notwithstanding that, the panel's deliberations, and determinations in relation to sanction, focused on the misconduct findings it had independently made in relation to charges 1-3. The panel determined that the misconduct found in respect of these charges is serious enough combined with Ms Edwards' lack of insight to warrant a removal order.
168. The panel concluded that the appropriate and proportionate order is a removal order.

Interim Order

169. Ms Etemadi sought for the panel to make an interim order to cover the appeal period. She submitted that an interim order is necessary to protect the public in light of the findings made by the panel.
170. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the test for interim orders. To impose an interim order in the present circumstances it needed to be satisfied that such an order was necessary for the protection of the public which includes the public interest.
171. At this hearing, the panel has made findings of fact in respect of Ms Edwards and found misconduct including dishonesty. The panel has determined that her fitness to practise is currently impaired. The panel determined that an interim order was necessary for the protection of the public because of the nature and seriousness of the findings against Ms Edwards. A member of the public would be extremely concerned if she was able to continue to practise during the appeal period or, if an appeal was lodged, during the time it took for an appeal to be determined, in circumstances where her acts and omissions had exposed service users and others to

risk of harm. Furthermore, it would be inconsistent with the panel's determination that there is an ongoing risk of repetition.

172. The panel concluded that an interim conditions of practice order would be inappropriate and unworkable for the same reasons that conditions were not imposed as a substantive sanction. Therefore, the panel determined that an interim suspension order should be imposed on Ms Edwards' registration.
173. In reaching this decision the panel considered the impact an interim suspension order may have on Ms Edwards. However, the panel took the view that the protection of the public significantly outweighs any opposing interests Ms Edwards may have and concluded that an interim suspension order is proportionate. The panel decided that the appropriate length of an interim order is 18 months, to cover the 28-day appeal period and the time it may take for any appeal, if made, to be determined.

Right of Appeal

1. Under paragraph 16 (1) (a) of schedule 2, part 5 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018, the social worker may appeal to the High Court against the decision of adjudicators:
 - (i) to make an interim order, other than an interim order made at the same time as a final order under paragraph 11(1)(b),
 - (ii) not to revoke or vary such an order,
 - (iii) to make a final order.
2. Under paragraph 16 (2) schedule 2, part 5 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 an appeal must be made within 28 days of the day on which the social worker is notified of the decision complained of.
3. Under regulation 9(4), part 3 (Registration of social workers) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018, this order can only be recorded on the register 28 days after the Social Worker was informed of the decision or, if the social worker appeals within 28 days, when that appeal is exhausted.
4. This notice is served in accordance with rules 44 and 45 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019.