



Social Worker: Alison Norma Taylor

Registration Number: SW68846

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review Meeting:

Meeting Venue: Remote meeting

Date of meeting: 23 September 2022

Final Order being reviewed:
Suspension Order

Meeting Outcome:
Removal Order

Introduction and attendees

1. This was the first review of a final order originally imposed by a panel of adjudicators of Social Work England on 29 March 2021. The panel imposed a final order of suspension for 18 months.
2. Ms Taylor did not attend the meeting, nor was she represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Capsticks LLP and their written submissions were set out within the notice of hearing letter.

Adjudicators	Role
Matthew Fiander	Lay Chair
Victoria Chew	Social Work Adjudicator

Hearings Team/Legal Adviser	Role
Debra Renwick	Hearings Officer
Loren Mace	Hearing Support Officer
Nathan Moxon	Legal Adviser

Service of Notice:

4. The panel of adjudicators (hereafter “the panel”) had careful regard to the documents contained in the substantive order review hearing service bundle as follows:
 - i. A copy of the notice of substantive order review hearing dated 24 August 2022 and addressed to Ms Taylor at her email and postal addresses as they appear on the Social Work England Register;
 - ii. An extract from the Social Work England Register detailing Ms Taylor’s registered email address;
 - iii. A copy of a signed Statement of Service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 24 August 2022 the writer caused the notice of hearing to be sent by email and post to Ms Taylor’s registered addresses;
 - iv. A copy of the email;
 - v. Confirmation from Royal Mail that the notice of hearing was received and signed for at 09:57 on 27 August 2022; and
 - vi. An email to Ms Taylor from Capsticks, sent to her registered email address and dated 7 September 2022, reminding her of the review.

5. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
6. Having had regard to rule 16 and all of 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 Taylor in accordance with rules 44 and 45 of Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules (updated 9 April 2020) ('the Rules').

Proceeding with the final order review as a meeting:

7. The notice of final order review hearing informed Ms Taylor that the review would take place electronically.
8. The notice stated:

*"If you wish to attend the electronic hearing, please confirm your intention **by no later than 4pm on 7 SEPTEMBER 2022. Unless we hear from you to the contrary, we shall assume that you will not be attending the electronic hearing and Social Work England may decide to deal with the review as a meeting.** If Social Work England do hold a meeting, the adjudicators will be provided with a copy of this letter setting out Social Work England's submissions and a copy of any written submissions you provide."*

9. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser with regard to Rule 16(c) of the Rules which provides:

"Where the registered social worker does not state within the period specified by the regulator whether they intend to attend before the regulator, the regulator may determine whether to make an order by means of a meeting."

10. Ms Taylor did not provide any response.
11. The panel noted that she had not attended the final hearing in March 2021. She had provided written submissions for that hearing, in which she stated that she had retired from social work. Upon being notified of the outcome of that hearing, she emailed Social Work England on 1 April 2021 to state the following:

*"I have already advised Social Work England that I will not engage further.
My understanding of the outcome of this hearing is that there is an 18 month interim suspension?
Please take note. I am retired. I will not work as a social worker again. I do not wish to be registered. I advised before the hearing I would not be paying any fee for registration.
I wish to be removed from the register.
I do not expect to see emails asking for payment of fees.
I would like confirmation of removal from Social Work register."*

12. Ms Taylor sent a further email to Social Work England, on 6 April 2021, in which she stated the following:

"This is a disgrace. I left the profession 4 years ago. I expected at the conclusion of the hearing that this matter would be at an end and I would need anymore contact with yourselves.

How long can I be forced to remain on a register that I have repeatedly asked to be removed from? 5 years? 10 years? 20 years? 100 years?

I will be contacting my MP yet again about this travesty and I will also almost certainly be seeking legal redress.

Given my circumstances and the lack of common sense with regards to this panel decision, I will be appealing and requesting removal from the register."

13. The panel was satisfied that it would be fair and appropriate to conduct the review in the form of a meeting in accordance with Rule 16(c). The panel was satisfied that Ms Taylor had intentionally absented herself and it concluded that adjourning the review would not secure her participation on a future occasion in light of the comments within her emails to Social Work England and the disengagement from proceedings thereafter.

Review of the current order:

14. The final order review hearing fell under the Transitional and Savings Provisions (Social Workers) Regulations 2019 and as a result the review was determined in accordance with Part 5 of the Regulations, Schedule 2 paragraph 15 of the Regulations and Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules.

The allegations found proved:

15. The allegations found proved, which resulted in the imposition of the final order, were as follows:

"Whilst registered as a Social Worker and employed by Newcastle City Council:

- 1. When completing an IA in relation to Child A on or around 25 May 2011 ('the assessment'), you:*

- a. did not adequately identify the suspected perpetrator (Person A) of Child A's injuries;*
- b. did not explore Person A's background;*
- c. did not provide the appropriate level of substance or analysis;*
- d. used historical information;*
- e. used inaccurate phrases;*
- f. took the information that Family A provided you with at face value.*

- 2. You made a recommendation within the assessment that the case should be closed which was inappropriate in light of the circumstances around Child A's injury and/or in that the suspected perpetrator had not been adequately identified.*

3. The matters set out at paragraphs 1 and 2 amount to misconduct. 4. By reason of your misconduct your fitness to practise is impaired.”

Findings of the final hearing panel:

16. The final hearing panel noted the background to the Allegation:

“The regulatory concern in this case is that Ms Taylor failed to conduct thorough IA in relation to Child A. Child A attended school with an injury that may have been caused by her mother’s partner, Person A. Person A was a convicted sex offender which Ms Taylor did not identify during her IA. In July 2019, Person A was convicted at trial and sentenced to twenty-three years imprisonment in respect of abuse of Child A, including sexual abuse..... The impact was that Person A was not identified and as a result his previous offending history against children was not identified and he was allowed to remain in contact with Child A. This contact between Person A and Child A facilitated Person A’s subsequent sexual abuse of Child A”

17. The final hearing panel found that Ms Taylor’s fitness to practise was impaired:

“There was no evidence to show that Ms Taylor demonstrated any remorse or insight into the allegations that had been proved against her. She had not provided any documents to establish evidence of remediation and there was nothing to support the suggestion that she had made any changes to her practice following her resignation from the Council. The panel noted that Ms Taylor had disengaged from the investigative process in or around April 2019 and were concerned that at that stage the tone of her written submissions was belligerent and more concerned with spreading blame rather than addressing her own shortcomings. The panel considered that members of the public would be concerned by the stance taken by Ms Taylor. The panel concluded therefore that Ms Taylor’s fitness to practise was impaired in terms of the risk which she posed to the health, safety, and well- being of the public and, of service users. The panel also concluded that the lack of insight, remediation and rehabilitation meant that the risk of repetition remained high.”

18. No mitigating features were identified, save for the lack of previous regulatory breaches. The following aggravating features were identified:

“.....this was a significant failure of professional practice and a breach of a fundamental tenet of social work practice. Her failings had led to a missed opportunity to investigate Child A (who was a vulnerable child), suffering prolonged and extensive sexual abuse by Person A. Ms Taylor had shown no remorse and had sought to shift blame and responsibility to others with whom she had worked in her written representations in April 2019.”

19. The final hearing panel concluded that a suspension order would give Ms Taylor the opportunity to adequately address her failings and to develop and demonstrate insight and remediation. It noted that a review panel may be assisted by Ms Taylor providing the following:

- “i. A full and detailed reflective statement addressing the failings that have given rise to the finding of impairment and details of how she has sought to remedy these.*
- ii. If Ms Taylor undertakes un-registered employment or other relevant activity during the period of suspension, references, and testimonials from people with whom she has contact; and*
- iii. Evidence that she has kept her skills and knowledge up to date.”*

Social Work England submissions:

20. The submissions of Social Work England were contained within the notice of hearing:

“Social Work England invite the Panel to find that the Social Worker’s fitness to practise remains impaired and to consider directing removal from the register. It is submitted that the Social Worker has shown no signs of engagement with the fitness to practise proceedings since the imposition of the Substantive Suspension Order. The Social worker did not attend or engage meaningfully with the final fitness to practise hearing.

Since the imposition of the Substantive Suspension Order, the Social Worker has had limited correspondence with Social Work England. The Social Worker has not engaged with the recommendations of the Final Hearing Panel, such as the submission of a reflective piece or providing evidence of continued learning. As no further communication has been received from the Social Worker, Social Work England submit that the Social Worker’s fitness to practise remains impaired. The initial concerns were serious and have not been remediated.

The Social Worker had stated repeatedly that she wanted to be removed from the social work register, and that she had no intention of returning to social work. Whilst Social Work England acknowledge that a Removal Order is the last resort for a social worker, it is evident that the Social Worker has no intention to engage in the proceedings or to return to social work. A further suspension serves no meaningful purpose in this case and no lesser order will protect the public. Social Work England submit that a removal order is now appropriate.”

21. Ms Taylor did not provide any submissions or evidence for the hearing. Her last communications to Social Work England were within the emails outlined above from April 2021.

Decision and reasons on current impairment:

22. In considering the question of current impairment, the panel undertook a comprehensive review of the final order in light of the current circumstances. It took into account the decision of the final hearing panel. However, it exercised its own judgement in relation to the question of current impairment.

23. The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the original panel. The panel also took account of the submissions made on behalf of Social Work England.
24. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. In reaching its decision, the panel was mindful of the need to protect the public and the wider public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards of behaviour and maintain public confidence in the profession.
25. The panel noted that the final hearing panel found that Ms Taylor had demonstrated limited insight, remediation and remorse. It described her written submissions as *"belligerent"*. Ms Taylor was given advice as to what she could provide to a review panel. Regrettably, there has been little change since. Ms Taylor's last contact with Social Work England was in April 2021 and was no more conciliatory than her previous communications. She has not adduced any evidence of developing insight, remediation or remorse. She has not provided any of the documentation recommended and has disengaged from proceedings. She has not shown any progress since the suspension was imposed and has instead stated that she no longer intends to work in social work and wishes to be removed from the social work register.
26. In light of the lack of evidence of insight and remediation, and the failure of Ms Taylor to adequately engage with these continuing regulatory proceedings, the panel found that there was a substantial risk of repetition of her failings and that a finding that her fitness to practice was impaired therefore remained necessary to protect the public.
27. Further, in light of the lack of evidence of developing insight and remediation, together with Ms Taylor's disengagement in these proceedings, the panel concluded that members of the public would be deeply concerned if her fitness to practice was not found to be impaired and that such a finding would undermine public confidence in the profession. Such a finding would similarly fail to uphold professional standards.

Decision and reasons on sanction:

28. Having found Ms Taylor's fitness to practise was currently impaired, the panel then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case.
29. The panel considered the submissions made on behalf of Social Work England. The panel also took into account the Sanctions Guidance published by Social Work England.
30. The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction was not to punish Ms Taylor, but to protect the public and the wider public interest. The public interest includes maintaining public confidence in the profession and Social Work England as its regulator and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour.
31. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Ms Taylor's interests with the public interest and by considering each available sanction in ascending order of severity.

32. The panel took into account and agreed with the mitigating and aggravating features identified by the final hearing panel. There has been no positive engagement with proceedings by Ms Taylor since and therefore no evidence of developing insight or remediation.

No Action

33. The panel concluded that, in view of the nature and seriousness of Ms Taylor's failings, which had not been remedied, and in the absence of exceptional circumstances, it would be inappropriate to take no action. Furthermore, it would be insufficient to protect the public, maintain public confidence and uphold the reputation of the profession.

Advice or Warning

34. The panel then considered whether to issue advice or a warning. The panel noted that neither of those sanctions would restrict Ms Taylor's ability to practise and was therefore not appropriate due to the existing risk to public safety. Ms Taylor's failings had the potential to have significantly adverse consequences, as they had to Child A, and therefore some restriction on her practise was required. Therefore, the panel concluded that issuing advice or a warning would be inappropriate and insufficient to meet the public interest.

Conditions of Practice Order

35. The panel went on to consider a conditions of practice order. The panel considered the nature of Ms Taylor's failings. The panel found that suitable conditions could not be formulated to adequately protect the public and satisfy the public interest. This was because Ms Taylor was unlikely to comply with conditions in light of her failure to engage with the review proceedings and her assertion that she does not intend to work in social work. Further, her lack of engagement and evidenced insight and remediation was such that the panel was not satisfied that the risk of harm to the public could be managed by conditions and also found that conditions would be insufficient to maintain public confidence or professional standards.

Suspension Order

36. Having determined that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate, the panel considered whether to impose a further period of suspension. The panel concluded that this would not be appropriate or proportionate in all of the circumstances. Ms Taylor has been subject to a final order for 18 months and has failed, in that time, to demonstrate adequate insight and remediation into her actions. The panel therefore concluded that, having failed to utilise the opportunities given by the original panel, and having instead challenged the sense of the final hearing panel's conclusions, there was little prospect of Ms Taylor utilising any subsequent opportunities.

37. Further, the panel concluded that it would not maintain public confidence in the profession or professional standards to impose a further period of suspension upon a social worker who had failed to utilise the previous period of suspension to demonstrate remediation and insight.

Removal Order

38. The panel noted that a removal order was a sanction of last resort where there was no other means of protecting the public or the wider public interest. The panel took the view that a removal order was necessary, appropriate and proportionate in this matter in light of the serious nature of Ms Taylor's failings and the absence of adequate engagement with the regulatory proceedings.
39. The panel concluded that whilst the public could be protected from harm by restricting Ms Taylor from practising by way of a suspension order, a further period of suspension would not serve the wider public interest. The panel concluded that, in all of the circumstances, an order for removal was the only order that would adequately maintain public confidence in the profession and professional standards.

Right of Appeal:

40. Under paragraph 16 (1) (b) of schedule 2, part 5 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018, the Social Worker may appeal to the High Court against:
- i. 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,
 - ii. the decision of the regulator on review of an interim order, or a final order, other than a decision to revoke the order.
41. Under regulation 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.
42. 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.