



Social worker: Sonia Lanzon

Registration number: SW101677

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review meeting

Date of meeting: 15 January 2024

meeting venue: Remote meeting

Final order being reviewed: Suspension order – (expiring 27 February 2024)

Hearing Outcome: Impose a new order namely a removal order with effect from the expiry of the current order

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the second review of a final suspension order originally imposed for a period of 12 months by a panel of adjudicators following a final hearing which commenced on 25 October 2021 and concluded on 1 November 2021.
2. At the first review on 7 October 2022 the suspension order was subsequently extended for 15 months and taking effect upon expiry of the original suspension order on 28 November 2022.
3. Ms Lanzon did not attend and was not represented on 15 January 2024.
4. Social Work England was represented by Capsticks LLP and their written submissions are set out within the notice of hearing letter.

Adjudicators	Role
Rachel Cook	Chair
Stella Elliott	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Tom Stoker	Hearings officer
Heather Hibbins	Hearings support officer
Scott McDonnell	Legal adviser

5. The panel of adjudicators (the panel) was provided with the hearing bundle (100 pages) and the service and supplementary bundle (13 pages).

Service of notice:

6. The panel of adjudicators had careful regard to the documents contained in the final order review service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the notice of the final order review hearing dated 14 December 2023 and addressed to Ms Lanzon at their registered email address, which they provided to Social Work England.
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as at 14 December 2023 detailing Ms Lanzon's registered email address.

- A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 14 December 2023 the writer sent by email to Ms Lanzon at the email address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents.

7. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
8. Having had regard to Rule 44 of the Social Work England Fitness to practise rules 2019 (as amended) (the Rules) 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 Lanzon in accordance with Rules.

Proceeding with the final order review as a meeting:

9. The notice of final order review informed Ms Lanzon that the review would take place as a meeting. The notice stated:

“If you would like to attend before the adjudicators in order to make oral submissions, please confirm your intention by no later than 4pm on 29 December 2023. Unless we hear from you to the contrary, we shall assume that you do not want to attend a 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.”

10. The panel received no information to suggest that Ms Lanzon had responded to the notice of final order review. The panel referred to the hearing bundle and noted that Ms Lanzon had not attended the final hearing or the previous review hearing. In addition in correspondence dated 25 April 2023 Ms Lanzon had stated “ I do not wish to return to the register, as I have previously stated as I have no plans now or in the future to return to the U.K.”
11. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser with regard to Rule 16(c) of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) 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.”

12. 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).

Review of the current order:

13. This final order review hearing is taking place under Paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) and Social Work England’s Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).
14. The current order is due to expire at the end of 27 February 2024.

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

15. Whilst employed as a social worker by Hampshire County Council:

1. You did not make and/ or record visits to children on your caseload within the required timescales on one or more occasions, in that;

a. On 2 February 2017, you had not made and/ or recorded a visit in respect of;

- i. Case 895102 since 4 October 2016;
- ii. Case 1170748 since 18 October 2016;
- iii. Case 1170749 since 18 October 2016;
- iv. Case 1034750 since 16 December 2016;
- v. Case 895100 since 16 December 2016;
- vi. Case 1155393 since 12 January 2017;
- vii. Case 715339 since 12 January 2017;
- viii. Case 1111150 since 12 January 2017;

b. On 10 February 2017, you had not made and/ or recorded a visit in respect of;

- i. Case 686049, despite being required to complete a visit on or before 6 February 2017;
- ii. Case 719819, despite being required to complete a visit on or before 6 February 2017;
- iii. Case 1155393, despite being required to complete a visit on or before 31 January 2017;
- iv. Case 1157573, despite being required to complete a visit on or before 30 January 2017;

c. Not proved

d. In respect of case 769417, you did not make and/ or record a visit until 22 March 2017, despite becoming the allocated social worker on 13 January 2016;

e. Not proved

f. Not proved

2. You did not complete and/ or submit one or more reports for Child Protection Conferences within the required timescales, resulting in these being cancelled/ postponed, namely;

a. In respect of case 1157573, in advance of the Child Protection Conference which was due to be held;

- i. On 16 January 2017;
- ii. On 10 February 2017;

- b. In respect of case 1026929, in advance of the Child Protection Conference which was due to be held on 16 March 2017;
 - c. In respect of cases 1034750 and 895100, in advance of the Child Protection Conference which was due to be held on 24 April 2017;
 - d. In respect of a Child Protection Conference had been due to take place on 10 January 2018, you did not submit a report until 9 January 2018.
3. You did not progress a S.47 investigation within the required timescale on one or more occasion, in that
- a. In respect of case 1236264, you had not submitted a CP1 report on or before 14 February 2017, despite the s.47 enquiry having been triggered on or around 10 November 2016;
 - b. Not proved
 - c. In respect of case 1248413, you did not submit a CP1 report until 13 October 2017, despite the s.47 enquiry having been triggered on or around 20 September 2017.
4. You did not adequately assess risk to service users on one or more occasions, namely:
- a. Not proved
 - b. In respect of case 754048 in advance of a Child Protection Conference on or around 13 December 2017

The previous final order review panel on 7 October 2022 determined the following with regard to impairment:

- 16. *"The panel considered that Ms Lanzon's lack of competence while employed at the council created risks for the children for whom she was responsible and also to her professional colleagues, who had to adjust their own workloads.*
- 17. *The panel noted that the final hearing panel considered Ms Lanzon's lack of competence to be remedial and, in its determination, it was of the view that Ms Lanzon's introduction to good professional practise had not been optimal. Her ASYE year had been completed under the management of a senior practitioner who herself was subject to criticism for not achieving effective management oversight, other team members were underperforming and changes were being made to the way that children's social work services were to be delivered in the council. The final hearing panel considered that in the circumstances it was not surprising that Ms Lanzon fell short of requirements.*
- 18. *However, in the absence of specific evidence of any particular steps taken by her to remedy the faults in her practise the final hearing panel found that there remained a risk of repetition. It also considered the level of insight shown by Ms Lanzon to be limited. It noted that in her communication with Social Work England she had emphasised how a lack of supervision and the personal and professional pressures that she worked under at the council, had adversely impacted on her professional development. The final hearing panel considered that there was no material reflection or insight by Ms Lanzon into the effects of*

her inadequate professional performance on service users, their families, their safety and well-being, or on her professional colleagues. Further she had not shown any insight into the adverse impact that her continued lack of professional competence had on the public's trust and confidence in the profession and on its reputation. Having had regard to the need to protect the public and the wider public interest the final hearing panel found Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise to be impaired.

19. *In considering whether Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise is currently impaired the panel today bore in mind the nature and extent of her lack of competence, noting that it occurred over a significant period of time and had the potential to put vulnerable service users at risk. The panel considered that it had no information before it to show that Ms Lanzon's insight had developed since the previous hearing or that she had taken steps to remedy her failings. The panel noted that Ms Lanzon had been in communication with Social Work England and had advised that she had been residing in California since August 2019 and had not practised as a social worker since that time. She further stated that she did not intend to return to the UK and that she wished to be removed from the register.*
20. *The panel noted that the final review hearing panel had set out some suggestions which may assist a future reviewing panel should Ms Lanzon decide that she wished to return to practice as a social worker. However, today's panel had no information to suggest that Ms Lanzon has acted on those suggestions or wishes to do so.*
21. *The panel today had no information to indicate that Ms Lanzon's insight had developed or that she had taken any steps towards remediation. Therefore, the panel had no evidence to indicate that the position had changed or that the risks identified by the final hearing panel had diminished. The panel therefore concluded that there remained a risk of harm to the public if Ms Lanzon was permitted to practise unrestricted. Accordingly, the panel concluded that, given the continued risk to the public, Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise is currently impaired.*
22. *The panel also considered that without evidence that Ms Lanzon's insight had developed, or evidence of any remediation, the public would be shocked and concerned if no finding of current impairment was made in her case. Therefore, the panel concluded that Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise also remains impaired on the ground of the wider public interest and the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold professional standards.*
23. *Accordingly the panel concluded that Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise remains impaired on the grounds of both public protection and the wider public interest."*

The previous final order review panel on 7 October 2022 determined the following with regard to sanction:

"No Action

24. *The panel concluded that given Lanzon's current impairment and her lack of remediation 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

25. *The panel next considered whether to issue advice or a warning. The panel noted that neither of these sanctions would restrict Ms Lanzon's ability to practise and is therefore not appropriate given the risk to public safety which has been identified. In addition, given this risk, such a disposal may seriously undermine public confidence in the profession. Therefore the panel concluded that issuing advice or a warning would be inappropriate and insufficient to protect the public and the wider public interest.*

Conditions of Practice Order

26. *The panel went on to consider a conditions of practice order. The panel took the view that Ms Lanzon's deficiencies are potentially capable of being remedied but this is dependent on her willingness to engage with remediation and comply with conditions. Ms Lanzon has provided no information to suggest that she would do so and has failed to respond to the suggestions made by the final hearing panel regarding information she may wish to provide to a future panel. In addition, the panel noted Ms Lanzon's current circumstances and her wish to be removed from the social work register. In these circumstances the panel concluded that although, in theory, it may be possible to formulate conditions to address Ms Lanzon's deficiencies, a conditions of practise order would not be workable or appropriate given Ms Lanzon's current unwillingness to engage and remediate.*

Suspension Order

27. *Having determined that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate, the panel concluded that the appropriate sanction is a suspension order. A suspension order would prevent Ms Lanzon from practising during the suspension period, which would therefore protect the public and the wider public interest. In addition it would provide a further period for Ms Lanzon to consider whether she wishes to resume practice as a social worker and to put in place steps to demonstrate insight and remediation.*
28. *The panel determined that the further suspension order should be imposed for a period of 15 months. This period would allow sufficient time for Ms Lanzon to reflect further should she wish to do so but, were she to continue to disengage with the review process and not provide any evidence of insight or remediation, then it would be open to a future panel to impose a removal order upon review, once a period of two years continued suspension has passed. The period of 15 months suspension will ensure that by the time the case is next reviewed Ms Lanzon would have been subject to continued suspension for a period of 2 years preceding the date of any removal order, in accordance with Schedule 2, Paragraph 13(2)(b) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018.*
29. *Accordingly the panel determined that a further period of suspension should be imposed on Ms Lanzon's registration for a period of 15 months.*
30. *This panel cannot bind a future panel. However, should Ms Lanzon consider returning to practice as a social worker, a future reviewing panel would be assisted if Ms Lanzon were to attend, including remotely. If Ms Lanzon decided that she would wish to return to professional practice as a social worker, the reviewing panel would be assisted by evidence*

that Ms Lanzon has identified a programme of supervision and professional training which would facilitate her safe and effective return to the register unrestricted. This may include evidence of continuing professional development to confirm that she has kept her social work skills and knowledge up to date, such as;

- Training courses (online or otherwise) including in relation to the importance of meeting deadlines for report submissions in advance of child protection conferences.*
- Seminars; reading journals and any self-directed learning.*
- Reflective statement setting out in detail the impact of her deficiencies in professional practice may be especially valuable.*
- Reflections on the insight that she has gained and the steps she intends to take to persuade a future panel that she can return to safe practice may be valuable.*
- Ms Lanzon may also wish to consider providing up-to-date testimonials from individuals, including her current or most recent employers, who, if possible, were willing to comment on Ms Lanzon's professional skills and knowledge relevant to social work role;*
- Any other evidence which indicates that Ms Lanzon is fit to return to the register without restriction”*

Social Work England submissions:

- 31. The panel read the written submissions from Social Work England who invited the panel to find that the Social Worker’s fitness to practise remains impaired and to impose a Removal Order.*
- 32. “The Social Worker has failed to provide any meaningful evidence of insight or remediation of the concerns raised and has indicated that she now lives in the USA and has no intention of pursuing a career in social work or returning to the UK. She has indicated that she wishes to be removed from the Social Work England register.*
- 33. In the absence of clear evidence of insight and remediation, Social Work England submit that the Social Worker’s fitness to practise remains impaired as it was at the final hearing.*
- 34. The Social Worker’s fitness to practise was found to be impaired by reason of her lack of competence and, as such, she could not be removed from the register until a period of continuous suspension of 2 years had passed. At the time of the review hearing the Social Worker will have been suspended for a period over two years. Social Work England submit that there is unlikely to be any future remediation, and therefore a Removal Order is now the appropriate and proportionate sanction.”*

Social worker submissions:

- 35. Ms Lanzon did not provide any written submissions and last engaged with Social Work England in April 2023.*

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

36. 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 previous panels. However, it has exercised its own judgement in relation to the question of current impairment. The panel also took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'.
37. The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the original panel and previous review panel. The panel also took account of the written submissions made by Capsticks LLP.
38. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. The panel was reminded that a social worker's fitness to practise is impaired if they pose a risk to public safety, or if their conduct or performance undermines the confidence the public is entitled to place in all social workers in England. A social worker's fitness to practise may also be impaired if their actions make it necessary to send a public message about the standards expected of social workers.
39. If the panel decided that Ms Lanzon's practice is currently impaired then it should then consider what sanctions are available and refer to Social Work England's 'Sanctions Guidance'. The panel must start from the least restrictive sanction. Insight and remediation are important factors.
40. The panel first considered whether or not Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise remains impaired.
41. The panel decided that there was no evidence of remediation or insight despite Ms Lanzon being provided with the opportunity to demonstrate this by the final hearing panel and the previous review panel. Ms Lanzon had failed to provide any evidence of reflection.
42. As such this panel was unable to find that her circumstances had changed over the past two years and since the final hearing and review hearing. The allegations found proved against Ms Lanzon showed failings in basic social work practice and Ms Lanzon had not shown that she had taken action to address the concerns raised.
43. The panel noted the aggravating and mitigating circumstances referred to by the final hearing panel and decided that since the final hearing Ms Lanzon had not shown any real remorse or displayed an understanding of the need for remediation and how that could be achieved. In addition Ms Lanzon had failed to fully engage with her regulator except to indicate that she intended to remain in the United States of America.
44. The panel therefore decided that Ms Lanzon's practise is currently impaired.

Decision and reasons:

45. Having found Ms Lanzon's fitness to practise is currently impaired, the panel then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case. The panel had regard to the written submissions provided along with all the information within the hearing bundles and accepted the advice of the legal adviser.

46. The panel considered the submissions made by Capsticks LLP on behalf of Social Work England, during which they invited the panel to consider imposing a removal order. Ms Lanzon had provided no written submissions.
47. The panel also took into account the 'Impairment and sanctions guidance' published by Social Work England.
48. The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction is not to punish Ms Lanzon, 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 by upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Ms Lanzon's interests with the public interest.

No Action, Advice or Warning

49. The panel took account of the Sanctions Guidance and considered the serious findings of fact by the final order panel, as well as the lack of insight and likelihood of repetition. The panel decided that taking no further action, providing advice or issuing a warning, would not be appropriate in this case as these sanctions would not restrict Ms Lanzon's practice and would therefore not protect the public from the risks that have been identified.

Conditions of Practice Order

50. The panel went on to consider a conditions of practice order. The panel took the view that there are no practical or workable conditions that could be applied noting that Ms Lanzon had failed to engage throughout these proceedings and the panel had no confidence that Ms Lanzon would comply with any conditions of practice.

Suspension Order

51. Having determined that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate, the panel then went on to consider if a suspension order would be the most appropriate sanction
52. The panel noted that Ms Lanzon had been suspended from practising for the last two years. This had provided her with an opportunity to complete regular training to address the concerns identified by the findings of the final order panel and to comprehensively reflect on her behaviour including demonstrating insight and remediate. The panel noted that Ms Lanzon had advised in her email of 25 April 2023 that she undertaken some training in the United States. However, the courses undertaken were not relevant to social work practice or legislation in the United Kingdom and did not relate to the identified deficiencies which resulted in her suspension. This gravely concerned the panel.
53. Although the final order panel had imposed a suspension order, which had been extended, this panel took into account that Ms Lanzon had done nothing in the intervening time period to address the concerns and findings against her by means of reflection or remediation or demonstrating insight. Ms Lanzon had not adopted the advice of previous panels including undertaking training.

54. The panel decided that a further suspension order would not be sufficient to protect the public and the wider public interest, specifically maintaining public confidence in the profession.

Removal Order

55. The panel noted that a removal order is a sanction of last resort where there is no other means of protecting the public or the wider public interest. The panel took the view that a removal order is necessary.
56. 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.”
57. The panel reminded itself that the final hearing panel had found that Ms Lanzon had failed to perform to the standard expected of a social worker.
58. The panel decided that Ms Lanzon’s case falls into the category requiring a removal order, because of the sustained failure to demonstrate full insight, remediation or reflection and the ongoing risk of repetition.
59. The panel concluded that Ms Lanzon’s current impairment and continuing risk to service users required that she should be removed from the register to protect the public from harm. The panel acknowledged that a suspension order would preclude Ms Lanzon from practising. However, the panel took into account that Ms Lanzon had been given an opportunity to evidence her insight and remediation in relation to the panel findings, but had not done so. The panel was therefore satisfied that any lesser sanction than a removal order would undermine public trust and confidence in the profession and would be wholly insufficient to maintain professional standards.
60. In reaching this conclusion the panel balanced the public interest against Ms Lanzon’s interests. The panel took into account the consequential personal and professional impact a removal order may have upon Ms Lanzon, but concluded that these considerations are significantly outweighed by the panel’s duty to give priority to public protection and the wider public interest. In addition, the panel noted the wishes expressed by Ms Lanzon to not return to social work practice in England.
61. The panel was satisfied it could consider that a removal order was available to the panel as Ms Lanzon’s fitness to practise was originally found impaired on the basis of one or more grounds as set out in regulation 25(2), (b), (e) or (h) and she had been suspended from practice or subject to a conditions of practice final order (or a combination of both) for a continuous period of two years immediately preceding the day when the removal order would take effect.

Right of appeal:

Under Paragraph 16(1)(b) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended), the social worker may appeal to the High Court against:

- a. 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,
 - b. the decision of the regulator on review of an interim order, or a final order, other than a decision to revoke the order.
62. Under Paragraph 16(2) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) an appeal must be filed before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with the day after the day on which the social worker is notified of the decision complained of.
63. Under Paragraph 15(1A) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended), where a social worker appeals against a decision made under sub-paragraph (1), the decision being appealed takes effect from the date specified in that sub-paragraph notwithstanding any appeal against that decision.
64. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).

Review of final orders:

65. Under regulation 15(1), 15(2) and 15(3) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended):
- 15(1) The regulator must review a suspension order, or a conditions of practice order, before its expiry.
 - 15(2) The regulator may review a final order where new evidence relevant to the order has become available after the making of the order, or when requested to do so by the social worker.
 - 15(3) A request by the social worker under sub-paragraph (2) must be made within such period as the regulator determines in rules made under Regulation 25(5).
66. Under Rule 16(aa) of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), a social worker requesting a review of a final order under paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 must make the request within 28 days of the day on which they are notified of the order.

The Professional Standards Authority

67. Please note that in accordance with section 29 of the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002, a review decision made by Social Work England's panel of adjudicators can be referred by the Professional Standards Authority ("the PSA") to the High Court. The PSA can refer this decision to the High Court if it considers that the decision is not sufficient for the protection of the public. Further information about PSA appeals can be found on their website at:

<https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-with-regulators/decisions-about-practitioners>