

Social Worker: Stephanie Poulin

Registration number: SW105021

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 27 January 2025 to 31 January 2025

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing Outcome: Fitness to practise impaired, removal order

Interim order: Interim suspension order (18 months)

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”).
2. Mx Poulin did not attend and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Mr Harris case presenter from Capsticks LLP.

Adjudicators	Role
Timothy Skelton	Chair
Christine Anne Rice	Social worker adjudicator
Lorna Taylor	Lay adjudicator

Tom Stoker	Hearings officer
Jo Cooper	Hearings support officer
Uwa Adedeji	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

4. The panel of adjudicators (hereafter “the panel”) had careful regard to the documents contained in the service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the Notice of Hearing dated 12 December 2024 addressed to Mx Poulin at their email address as it appears on the Social Work England Register;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register detailing Mx Poulin’s registered email address; and
 - A copy of a signed Statement of Service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 12 December 2024 – more than 28 days before this hearing – the writer sent by email to Mx Poulin at their registered email address: Notice of Hearing and related documents.
5. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice. This included reference to Rules 14- 16, 44 and 45 of Social Work England’s Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the “FTP Rules 2019”).
6. The panel decided that the copy of the Notice sent by email had been served on Mx Poulin in accordance with the Regulations and the FTP Rules. The panel’s reasons for that decision were as follows:
 - The Notice had been served by one of the mandatory means of service specified in rule 44(a) of the FTP Rules, namely, by email.
 - As required by rule 44(a)(iii) of the FTP Rules, the Notice had been sent to an email address for Mx Poulin which they had provided to Social Work England, namely, the email address which appeared on the extract of their entry in the Register which was included in the service bundle.
 - Service had been proved by one of the means specified in rule 44(b) of the FTP Rules, namely, by a statement of service made by the person who had sent the Notice to Mx Poulin by email.
 - The panel were aware of the second email address used by Social Work England that had also been provided by Mx Poulin. The fact that the second email address provided by Mx Poulin was

out of use did not make service of the Notice by email invalid. It was Mx Poulin's responsibility to provide Social Work England with an up to date email address and, in the meantime, service of the Notice by sending it to the registered email address remained valid.

Proceeding in the absence of the social worker:

7. The panel heard the submissions of Mr Harris on behalf of Social Work England. Mr Harris submitted that notice of this hearing had been duly served, no application for an adjournment had been made by Mx Poulin and as such there was no guarantee that adjourning today's proceedings would secure their attendance. Mr Harris further submitted that the limited response from Mx Poulin showed that Mx Poulin did not wish to engage with Social Work England or return to social work practice. Mx Poulin's absence was deliberate; and consideration to the vulnerable witnesses warned to appear should also be given. He therefore invited the panel to proceed in the interests of justice and the expeditious disposal of this hearing.
8. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to proceeding in Mx Poulin's absence.
9. That advice included reference to rule 43 of the FTP Rules, Social Work England's guidance entitled 'Service of Notices and Proceeding in the Absence of the social worker' and the cases of *R v Jones* [2003] UKPC 1 and *General Medical Council v Adeogba* [2016] EWCA Civ 162.
10. The panel was satisfied that it would be fair and appropriate to proceed in Mx Poulin's absence on the basis that:
 - Mx Poulin had been provided with the hearing Notice.
 - Mx Poulin has made it clear that they no longer wish to engage with the Social Work England fitness to practise process and, consequently, appears to have voluntarily absented themselves.
 - Mx Poulin has not requested to adjourn the Final hearing.
 - Any adjournment would not guarantee the attendance of Mx Poulin in the future.
 - Furthermore, witnesses including a vulnerable witness had been alerted to attend.