

Social worker: Petua J Akom

Registration number: SW92540

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review Hearing

Date of hearing: 2 May 2025

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Final order being reviewed: Suspension order (expiring 15 June 2025)

Hearing outcome: Removal order with effect from the expiry of the current order

Introduction and attendees:

1. This final order review hearing is taking place under paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 to the Social Workers Regulations 2018 (the Regulations) and in accordance with Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (the Rules).
2. This is the fourth review of a final suspension order originally imposed on Mrs Petua Akom (Mrs Akom) for a period of 12 months by a panel of adjudicators on 21 November 2022.
3. The first review of the final order was undertaken on 2 November 2023, and the suspension was extended by six months.
4. The second review of the final order was undertaken on 14 May 2024, and the suspension was extended by a further six months.
5. The third review of the final order was undertaken on 4 November 2024, and the suspension was extended by a further six months. The current expiry date is 15 June 2025.
6. Mrs Akom attended today's review but was not represented.
7. Social Work England was represented by Ms Adjoa Adjei-Ntow (Ms Adjei-Ntow), case presenter instructed by Capsticks LLP.
8. The panel of adjudicators conducting this review (the panel) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Sara Nathan	Chair
Charlotte Scott	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Hannah Granger	Hearings officer
Kathryn Tinsley	Hearings support officer
Jane Kilgannon	Legal adviser

9. The panel had been provided with the following documentation in advance of the hearing: a final order review hearing bundle of 205 pages and a service and supplementary bundle of 17 pages.

Review of the current order:

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

10. At a final hearing held between 14 and 21 November 2022, the adjudicators made the following findings of fact:
1. *While working at Southwark Council (between June 2019 and July 2019) and Haringey Council (between July 2020 and October 2020), you did not safeguard service users as set out in Schedule A. [PROVED except for H2(c)]*
 2. *You did not inform the local authorities set out at Schedule B that you were subject to a fitness to practise investigation when you applied for social work roles at those local authorities and / or commenced work at those local authorities. [PROVED]*
 3. *Your conduct in relation to Paragraph 2 was dishonest [PROVED in so far as it relates to Haringey Council and Southampton Council only].*

Schedule A

	Service User	Action
A	Person A	1. <i>You did not respond immediately to a Merlin Report on 7 June 2019; and</i> 2. <i>You did not undertake the action in respect of Person A, as set out in your Manager's email of 19 June 2019 in a timely manner.</i>
B	Person B	1. <i>You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 29 September 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> a. <i>Contact referral to acknowledge referral and gather information;</i> b. <i>Contact Person B to determine their wishes and views;</i> c. <i>Progress Safeguarding Triage and to determine Person B's mental capacity;</i> d. <i>Email Person B's GP to review his injuries and health;</i> e. <i>Email the police to ascertain the outcome of their investigation;</i>

		2. You did not: a. Contact Person B's supported living provider to ensure their safety and wellbeing; b. Contact the Mental Health Team to assess care needs and whether to move Person B out of the facility; c. Discuss the case with your line manager; d. Progress the case to a Section 42 enquiry.
C	Person C	1. You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 29 September 2020, in a timely manner or at all: a. Acknowledge the referral and seek further information from those involved in Person C's care; b. Contact Person C to determine their wishes and views; c. Progress Safeguarding Triage and to determine Person C's mental capacity.
D	Person D	1. You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 5 October 2020 and your case discussion on 6 October 2020, in a timely manner or at all: a. Contact Person D / their advocate regarding their safety from the safeguarding concern, and to determine Person D's wishes and views; b. Follow up with the Care Quality Commission. 2. You did not: a. Commence an investigation into safeguarding concerns and make a decision as to whether Person D's case needed to progress to a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry and/or progress the case to a Section 42 Enquiry;

		<i>b. Contact other professional groups / agencies, and other professionals involved in Person D's care;</i> <i>c. Contact Person D's sister to keep her informed of what action was being taken;</i> <i>d. Discuss with your life manager whether the agency providing Person D's care should be changed while the investigation is underway;</i> <i>e. Formulate a Safeguarding Plan of Action and / or conduct a Safeguarding Planning meeting;</i> <i>f. Carry out and record the completion of a handover of Person D's case.</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>Person E</i>	<i>1. You did not complete some or all of the actions identified in the case record dated 30 July 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. Check actions have been taken to address immediate safety needs;</i> <i>b. Contact referral, internal information sources and partner agencies to obtain further information;</i> <i>c. Contact providers to provide the Safeguarding Enquiry Form and request that the report back within five working days;</i> <i>d. Contact Person E to determine their views and wishes (unless this would place them or others at further risk of harm / contaminate evidence);</i> <i>e. Ascertain if the concern meets the criteria for a Section 42 Enquiry and/or other action is required to respond to the concern.</i> <i>2. You did not:</i> <i>a. Visit Person E on or around 25 August 2020 in circumstances where Person E was not contactable by telephone;</i>

		<i>b. Contact a manager on or around 25 August 2020 having been unable to contact Person E the same day.</i>
<i>F</i>	<i>Person F</i>	<i>1. You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 16 September 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. Contact Person F to obtain their views and wishes;</i> <i>2. You did not:</i> <i>a. Discuss the referral with Children and Families Social Services;</i> <i>b. Follow-up on a telephone call with the safeguarding referrer;</i> <i>c. Complete initial screening within five working days;</i> <i>d. Conclude the case within 28 days.</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>Person G</i>	<i>1. You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 24 September 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. Contact the referrer to acknowledge the safeguarding referral and to follow up Triage;</i> <i>b. Contact Person G regarding the safeguarding concern and to obtain their views and wishes.</i> <i>2. You did not:</i> <i>a. Contact Person G's allocated mental health social worker and request that they undertake a Mental Capacity Act Assessment regarding Person G's finances;</i> <i>b. Seek further information from the referrer regarding their concerns;</i> <i>c. Consider reporting the suspected financial exploitation to the police;</i>

		<i>d. Consider the need for an application to the Court of Protection to allocate an appropriate individual to manage Person G's finances.</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>Person H</i>	<i>1. You did complete some or all of the actions identified in the case record on 30 July 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. Check actions have been taken to address immediate safety needs;</i> <i>b. Contact referral, internal information sources and partner agencies to obtain further information;</i> <i>c. Contact providers to provide the Safeguarding Enquiry Form and request that they report back within five working days;</i> <i>d. Contact Person H to determine their views and wishes (unless this would place them or others at further risk of harm / contaminate evidence);</i> <i>e. Ascertain if the concern meets the criteria for a Section 42 Enquiry and/or other action is required to respond to the concern.</i> <i>2. You did not complete some of all of the actions identified in your case record dated 25 September 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. Contact Person H to :</i> <i>i. determine their safety;</i> <i>ii. identify Person H's GP to request an urgent review of Person H's mental health and for GP to refer Person H to appropriate support services;</i> <i>b. Contact Person H's wife to ask for her consent to refer her to an organisation offering support for the victims of domestic violence;</i>

		<i>c. The outstanding actions that had previously been identified in the Case record of 30 July 2020 [NOT PROVED]</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Person I</i>	<i>1. You did not complete some or all of the actions you identified in your case record dated 18 September 2020 and your email to the allocated social worker dated 21 September 2020 in a timely manner or at all:</i> <i>a. You did not follow up your contact to Person I's allocated social worker to determine Person I's views and wishes;</i> <i>b. Make a referral to Person I's GP to assess Person I's mental health and for onward referral to appropriate support services.</i> <i>2. You did not:</i> <i>a. Attempt to visit Person I;</i> <i>b. Contact a manager on or around 18 September 2020 in circumstances where Person I was not contactable by telephone.</i>

Schedule B

<i>1</i>	<i>Croydon Council</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Camden Clinical Commissioning Group</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Haringey Council</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>Southampton City Council</i>

11. At the final hearing, the adjudicators made the following findings on grounds:

- The matters set out in Paragraph 1 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct, except in so far as they relate to – items B2(c) and (d), D2(f), and G2(c) and (d) in Schedule A.
- The matters set out in Paragraphs 2 and 3 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct, in so far as they relate to Haringey Council and Southampton Council.

The previous final order review panel on 4 November 2024 determined the following with regard to impairment:

“The panel first considered whether Mrs Akom’s fitness to practise remained impaired in the sense that her misconduct remained a risk to the health, safety and well-being of the public. [...]

In considering the risk of Mrs Akom’s conduct being repeated, the panel considered, in particular, Mrs Akom’s conduct since the case examiners’ decision, the extent to which she had developed insight into her misconduct and the extent to which she had taken steps to remedy it.

With regard Mrs Akom’s conduct since the final hearing, the panel noted that, although,

Until recently, no significant concerns appeared to have been raised about Mrs Akom’s performance whilst at her current employer.

The reference from the Head of Partnerships at her current employer which had been provided for the purposes of the current review referred to an internal review of a case in which a risk had not been identified. However, the reference stated that it was yet to be decided whether the matter should proceed to a formal internal investigation. Moreover, Mrs Akom had stated in her oral evidence that, although her colleague who first handled the case had not identified the risk in question, she had identified that risk but had failed to take the required action.

With regard to insight, the panel considered that Mrs Akom’s written and oral submissions evidenced a significant degree of insight into:

- *the failings in her practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her;*
- *the effects, or potential effects, of those failings on service users, colleagues, her employer and the social work profession;*
- *the action required in order to avoid a repetition of those failings.*

However, although the failings in Mrs Akom’s practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her were remediable and although she had developed significant insight into her misconduct, the panel were concerned by the absence of any independent evidence which demonstrated that she had remedied those failings in her practice. In particular, the panel considered that:

- *There was a lack of independent certification of the training which Mrs Akom had undertaken and a lack of evidence that that training both addressed the failings in her practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her and kept her knowledge and skills as a social worker up to date, particularly in the field of safeguarding.*

- *There was a lack of reflection on Mrs Akom's part about what she had learned from her training and how she could apply it in practice to remedy the failings in her practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her.*
- *There was no independent evidence, such as a testimonial from her manager, which commented on her performance at work in the light of those failings and on her success in remedying those failures. Indeed the reference which had been submitted by Mrs Akom indicated that there may still be concerns about her ability to identify, or act on, signs of risk.*

In arriving at its conclusions regarding remediation, the panel noted that, although she was not working as a social worker, her current role nevertheless involved working within a framework of policies and procedures which required her to take certain steps within certain timescales and which was therefore an appropriate environment in which to demonstrate remediation of the failings to take prompt and appropriate action which had led to the findings of misconduct against her.

Accordingly, given the panel's conclusions regarding remediation, the panel concluded that, despite the progress which she had made in terms of insight, there still remained a significant risk of her previous misconduct being repeated.

Given the risks posed to service users by Mrs Akom's misconduct, and given the risk of that misconduct being repeated, the panel determined that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in terms of the need to protect the health, safety and well-being of the public and, in particular, of any service users in her care.

The panel next considered whether Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in terms of the "public component", that is in terms of the need to maintain public confidence and proper professional standards. [...]

Given the nature of Mrs Akom's misconduct and its potential for exposing service users to a risk of harm and given the panel's conclusions regarding the continuance of the risks posed by that misconduct, the panel considered that reasonable members of the public who were aware of the lack of evidence of remediation of the failings in her practice which had led to that misconduct would be extremely concerned if she were to be allowed to practice without restriction. Accordingly, the panel concluded that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in terms of the need to maintain public confidence in social workers.

Similarly, given the panel's conclusions regarding the continuance of the risks posed by Mrs Akom's misconduct and the consequent risk to service users, the panel considered that professional standards for social workers would be compromised if Mrs Akom were allowed to return to unrestricted practice. The panel therefore concluded that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in terms of the need to maintain proper professional standards for social workers."

The previous final order review panel on 4 November 2024 determined the following with regard to sanction:

“As the panel had found that Mrs Akom’s misconduct still posed a risk to the health, safety and well-being of service users, it did not consider that making a warning order would be appropriate, as that measure would not restrict her ability to practise as a social worker and would therefore not adequately manage that risk. For the same reason, the panel did not consider that a warning order would be sufficient to maintain public confidence and proper professional standards.

The panel next considered at length whether a conditions of practice order would be appropriate in the present circumstances. In so doing the panel had regard to the circumstances in which a conditions of practice order may be appropriate, as set out in paragraphs 114 and 115 of the Guidance. On balance, and notwithstanding that Mrs Akom’s misconduct involved performance issues, the panel considered that such an order would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

Given the absence of evidence of the extent to which Mrs Akom had remedied the failings in her practice which had led to the finding of misconduct against her, the panel was not satisfied that the risk which those failings posed to service users had been reduced to a level where it was capable of being managed by conditions of practice which would not be so restrictive as to be tantamount to a suspension.

Although Mrs Akom’s engagement with the fitness to practice process had improved, she had still provided certain documents for this review after the deadline specified in the notice of this hearing and the documents which she had provided, in particular the reference, did not correspond to the recommendations made by the previous panel. The adjudicators at the final hearing had commented on a lack of effort on her part and the present panel consider that, to some extent, this still remained the case. Accordingly, the panel had doubts about Mrs Akom’s ability to comply with any conditions which it might impose.

The panel also noted that conditions of practice might not be workable in Mrs Akom’s present employment as it was not clear that arrangements could be made for her to be supervised by a registered social worker. However, this was not determinative in the panel’s conclusion that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate.

At the other end of the range of measures available to it, the panel considered that a removal order would be excessive and disproportionate, given that Mrs Akom was engaging with the fitness to practise process, had demonstrated insight into her misconduct and had expressed a clear determination to return to social work. In this regard, the panel noted that paragraph 141 of the Guidance states that it is in

the public interest to support a trained and skilled social worker to return to practice, if this can be achieved safely.

As stated above, the panel had concluded that (i) a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate but that the present case fell short of requiring removal from the register, and (ii) Mrs Akom had developed insight into her misconduct and there was evidence to suggest that she was willing and able to remedy the failings in her practice which underlay her misconduct. Therefore, in line with paragraphs 136 and 137 of the Guidance, the panel determined that extending the current final suspension order would, in the circumstances of the present case, be the appropriate and proportionate order.

In terms of duration of the extended order, the panel considered that an extension of six months was appropriate as this would allow time for Mrs Akom to provide the information and documents which the panel has suggested below.

In arriving at its decision, the panel recognised that continuing to place a restriction on Mrs Akom's ability to practise as a social worker could have an adverse effect on her, both financially and professionally. However, in the circumstances of the present case, the panel considered that any detriment which might be caused to Mrs Akom by such a restriction was outweighed by the need to protect the health, safety and well-being of service users and to maintain public confidence and proper professional standards. [...]

The panel considered that the next reviewing panel would be assisted by the following:

- Independent evidence of Mrs Akom having undertaken training to address the failings in her practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her and to keep her knowledge and skill as a social worker up to date.*
- A new reflective piece from Mrs Akom reflecting on her training and how she will apply it to her work in her current role and, should she return to social work practice, as a social worker.*
- A reference from Mrs Akom's manager at her current employment, which (i) confirms their knowledge of the allegations and findings against Mrs Akom at the final hearing and (ii) comments on her performance in her current role in the light of the failings in her practice which formed the subject of those findings and the extent to which those failings have been remedied.*

12. These recommendations are very similar to those made by the two previous reviewing panels.

Social Work England submissions:

13. The panel was provided with written submissions from Social Work England in advance of the hearing. These were also included in the notice of hearing, as follows:

“Subject to evidence of full insight and remediation received after the notice of hearing is sent, Social Work England invite the Panel to impose a Removal Order, on the grounds that such an Order is necessary for the protection of the public and to uphold public confidence in the profession and the regulator.

The Social Worker has not engaged with any of the recommendations made by the previous Panel. On 25 February 2025, the Case Review Officer wrote to the Social Worker attaching a letter regarding any evidence she may wish to submit in advance of the review hearing. The Social Worker responded the following day to confirm that she had no updated evidence to provide.

The previous Panel determined that any future Panel would be assisted by the following:

- Independent evidence of the Social Worker having undertaken training to address the failings in her practice which had led to the findings of misconduct against her and to keep her knowledge and skill as a social worker up to date.*
- A new reflective piece from the Social Worker reflecting on her training and how she will apply it to her work in her current role and, should she return to social work practice, as a social worker.*
- A reference from the Social Worker’s manager at her current employment, which (i) confirms their knowledge of the allegations and findings against the Social Worker at the final hearing and (ii) comments on her performance in her current role in the light of the failings in her practice which formed the subject of those findings and the extent to which those failings have been remedied.*

At the date of this Notice, the Social Worker has not provided any evidence to address the concerns the Panel raised, or to engage with the recommendations made. The risk of repetition has not changed. There is no further evidence of the Social Worker’s insight, reflection, or remediation.

The Social Worker has now been given four opportunities to demonstrate full remediation. On repeated occasions the Social Worker has engaged, to a limited degree, but not availed herself of the further opportunity to provide the required evidence as set out in the Panels’ clear recommendations.

In addition, the Social Worker’s non-social work employment has been terminated for gross misconduct, including safeguarding risks and a failure to following company policy on giving high standards of service and working with honesty and integrity.

Social Work England reserve the right to reconsider this position if the Social Worker provides evidence in advance of the Final order Review. Absent further evidence it is submitted that, if the Social Worker is unwilling or unable to remediate, then the appropriate sanction is now a Removal Order”.

14. The panel heard oral submissions from Ms Adjei-Ntow on behalf of Social Work England. She referred the panel to the original regulatory concerns found proved, which included serious failings in safeguarding in relation to multiple service users across two local authorities, and dishonestly failing to inform two prospective employers about an active fitness to practise investigation.
15. Ms Adjei-Ntow asserted that Mrs Akom had failed to fully respond to the previous review panel’s three recommendations. First, Mrs Akom had not provided any independent evidence of having undertaken any training to address the regulatory concerns. Second, although Mrs Akom had provided a new reflective statement, it did not address training undertaken by Mrs Akom. Third, there was no reference from a current employer.
16. Ms Adjei-Ntow submitted that Mrs Akom had been given repeated opportunities to demonstrate insight and remediation. She submitted that Mrs Akom had engaged with the review process but had not provided the evidence recommended by previous panels. In addition, Ms Adjei-Ntow drew the panel’s attention to the recent correspondence indicating that Mrs Akom had been dismissed for gross misconduct by her most recent employer for failures in terms of safeguarding risks and non-compliance with policies relating to honesty and integrity.
17. Overall, Ms Adjei-Ntow submitted that the evidence available indicated that Mrs Akom had not remediated the regulatory concerns despite multiple opportunities to do so. She asserted that there was no evidence to indicate that Mrs Akom was likely to make any further progress towards remediation. On that basis, Ms Adjei-Ntow submitted that Mrs Akom’s fitness to practise remained impaired and a removal order would be appropriate in this case.

Social worker submissions:

18. The panel was provided with written submissions from Ms Akom in advance of the hearing, as follows:

“1. Reflection Following the Last Review

Since the review conducted on 4th of November, 2024 a series of significant events have taken place in my professional life. A few days after the review, I was suspended from work on 7th November 2025 for three months, and my employment was formally terminated on the 24th February after a Disciplinary hearing for Gross misconduct.

Since then, I have been actively applying for various roles. Unfortunately, I have not been successful in securing employment. I have been open and transparent with potential employers, disclosing the circumstances surrounding my suspension and subsequent termination. I have attended two interviews with my previous employer, (Social Interest Group – SIG) where I also disclosed the suspension from Social Work England and the termination of my contract. However, these did not result in a job offer.

I recognise and deeply regret the mistakes that led to my suspension and termination. I understand the serious implications of failing to follow key processes, particularly around safeguarding and risk management. I acknowledge that such failures can have far-reaching consequences-not only damaging the trust of service users, but also compromising the integrity of the organisations I represent. In the worst cases, such failures can lead to significant harm or even fatalities.

Reflecting on my training with We Are With You, I now more fully grasp the emotional and psychological toll such incidents can have on service users, colleagues, and myself. My suspension and job loss have had a profound impact on my mental health, my family, and my sense of professional identity. I have felt helpless, disappointed, and let down-both by my actions and by the outcomes they have led to. The loss of trust from managers, service users, and the organisation has been deeply painful.

However, this experience has also served as a powerful motivator for growth. I believe that with regular supervision, effective mentorship, and targeted training, I can rebuild my confidence and competence as a social worker. Mentorship in particular would provide me with the opportunity to learn from experienced professionals, develop accountability, and gradually regain the ability to work independently while still seeking support when needed.

I humbly request the opportunity to return to service with renewed integrity, compassion, and a strong commitment to upholding safeguarding policies and professional standards. I am determined to make a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable people and restore trust in my professional practice.

2. Reflection on Safeguarding and Supervision During Employment at We Are With You

During my time working with We Are With You, I would like to note that there was never a point, either in formal supervision or otherwise, where serious safeguarding concerns were raised with me directly. Over the course of my employment, which lasted one year and five months (including three months under suspension), I consistently aimed to adhere to the expectations of my role and to the areas of practice regularly highlighted during supervision.

At the end of my probationary period, I was informed that I had passed, which affirmed to me that I was on the right track professionally. However, I later came to learn that the concerns raised in the investigation leading to my suspension and eventual termination did not reflect the pattern of feedback I had previously received. This inconsistency has been particularly difficult to reconcile, especially as it appeared that the context of my work and prior performance was not fully considered prior to the decision to suspend me.

The investigation report itself points out that some critical elements may not have been taken into account before the suspension was enforced. While I fully accept and take responsibility for the need to improve in certain areas, I also believe that more open communication, clearer guidance, and earlier intervention through regular, reflective supervision could have helped mitigate the risks and supported my development more effectively.

Moving forward, I am committed to using this experience as a learning opportunity to grow, strengthen my safeguarding practice, and enhance my professional standards. I remain passionate about making a meaningful impact in social work and supporting vulnerable individuals with care, diligence, and integrity.

Thank you for considering my reflection.

3. Additional Reflection on Employment Termination and Organisational Context

Following the disciplinary hearing and the subsequent investigation report from We Are With you, several gaps were identified within the organisation that, in hindsight, may have contributed to the challenges I experienced in my role.

The report highlighted that there were missed opportunities by the company to provide adequate support while I was working with them. While I accept full responsibility for the actions that led to my suspension and termination, I also acknowledge that a lack of structured support significantly impacted my ability to navigate the situation effectively.

The report also referenced my suspension from Social Work England, despite the fact that the issues were not directly related. However, the employer viewed them as indicative of a similar pattern of concern, which contributed to the decision to terminate my employment. I believe that, had I been given an opportunity to fully explain the context of the Social Work England suspension and received targeted support, the situation could have been better managed.

Furthermore, there were operational challenges, such as staff shortages, lack of regular supervision, and limited training beyond standard e-learning modules. These factors contributed to the gaps in my practice, particularly in areas such as safeguarding, timely interventions, and risk management.

I now recognise that, with the right support mechanisms, such as consistent supervision, practical training, and a structured mentorship programme, I would have had a stronger foundation to carry out my responsibilities more effectively. I am committed to learning from these experiences and addressing the areas that led me to this position.

Given another opportunity, I am determined to rebuild trust through accountability, improved practice, and a clear focus on safeguarding and professional standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this reflection”.

19. Mrs Akom gave oral evidence to the panel. In summary, she stated that:

- a. She acknowledged the findings of the original panel and that these failings amounted to a serious falling short of the professional standards for social workers;
- b. She deeply regretted those failures and the impact that they would have had on service users, her colleagues and her employers;
- c. Her dismissal from her most recent employer was for a similar failing to the original regulatory concerns because it related to a failure to promptly follow up on a safeguarding risk relating to a child;
- d. She regretted those failures;
- e. She was under immense pressure in that (non-social work) role due to a high caseload, and she did not receive the support that she needed in terms of training, supervision and mentorship;
- f. She now realises that she could have handled the situation better by prioritising the safeguarding risk ahead of other work and, if not feeling sufficiently supported by managers, by following appropriate channels to escalate those concerns with her employer;
- g. She believes that going forward she needs further training on safeguarding and effective communication, and close supervision and mentorship; and
- h. She would like to be given the opportunity to return to social work practice in order to support vulnerable people.

20. In response to questions from Ms Adjei-Ntow, Mrs Akom confirmed that:

- a. Having reviewed safeguarding policies, she has realised that she should have acted immediately when faced with a safeguarding risk, prioritising this piece of work above all others;

- b. If given the opportunity to practise again as a social worker, she would be honest with her manager at the outset about her need for training, close supervision and mentorship in relation to safeguarding; and
- c. If this panel recommends that she provides independent evidence of training undertaken, she is willing to do so.

21. In response to questions from the panel, Mrs Akom confirmed that:

- a. She has not provided any certificates to evidence any relevant training undertaken;
- b. She has identified that she needs further training in relation to safeguarding, perhaps specifically in relation to abuse and the different stages of safeguarding, but she has not yet identified any specific training courses to undertake;
- c. She has identified that she needs further training in relation to effective communication in the workplace, but she has not yet identified any specific training courses to undertake; and
- d. She has been applying for jobs but has not yet been successful in securing a new role. She considers that the Social Work England suspension, which she discloses to prospective employers, makes it more difficult for her to secure work.

Panel decision and reasons:

- 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 decisions 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' (SG).
- 23. The panel took into account all of the documentary evidence before it, including new evidence, and the submissions of Social Work England and Mrs Akom.
- 24. 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 took into account the advice it received from the legal adviser as to the proper approach it should adopt. In particular, that:
 - i. The purpose of this review is to consider current impairment based on the agreed disposal, the extent to which Mrs Akom has engaged with the regulatory process, the scope and level of her insight, and the risk of repetition;

- ii. The persuasive burden is on Mrs Akom;
- iii. In terms of whether the regulatory concerns have been sufficiently, and appropriately remediated, relevant factors include whether Mrs Akom:
 - a. fully appreciates the gravity of the previous panel's finding of impairment;
 - b. has kept her skills and knowledge up to date;
 - c. is likely to place service users at risk if she were to return to unrestricted practice;
- iv. The panel should take into account any information that it has received relating to Mrs Akom's ability to practise safely and effectively and the wider public interest which includes promoting and maintaining proper professional standards of behaviour and promoting and maintaining public confidence in the profession;
- v. It is only if the panel decides that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remains impaired, that it should go on to consider what, if any, sanction to impose by reference to the Regulations, and by applying the guidance set out in the SG and the principle of proportionality which requires Mrs Akom's interests to be balanced against the interests of the public.

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

- 26. The panel first considered whether Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remains impaired. In considering the question of current impairment, the panel undertook a comprehensive review of the final suspension order in light of the current circumstances.
- 27. The panel considered what had happened since the last review on 4 November 2024 and whether Mrs Akom had engaged with the recommendations of the previous panel. The panel noted that the previous panel had recommended, in outline, that Mrs Akom:
 - a. Provide independent evidence of training undertaken to address the regulatory failings found proved and to show that she was keeping her knowledge and skills up to date;
 - b. Provide a new reflective statement reflecting on the training undertaken and how that could be applied in practice should she return to social work practice; and
 - c. A reference from her current employer, acknowledging the regulatory failings proved against Mrs Akom and commenting on her performance in her current role in light of those earlier findings.
- 28. The panel noted that Mrs Akom had acknowledged in her oral evidence that she had not provided any independent evidence of any training undertaken. On that basis, the panel considered that it could not have any confidence that Mrs Akom had addressed the regulatory concerns by way of learning via training courses, nor that Mrs Akom had

undertaken any training to maintain her knowledge and skills whilst subject to the Social Work England suspension.

29. The panel noted the lengthy, new reflective statement provided by Mrs Akom. The panel considered that it effectively demonstrated remorse and also demonstrated some insight, in that Mrs Akom acknowledged the regulatory findings against her and identified the relevant areas of her practice that she needed to improve. However, the panel considered that the statement did not address the matters that the previous panel had asked for it to, namely training undertaken. Furthermore, the panel considered that the reflective statement set out only very limited steps that had been taken by Mrs Akom to remediate the regulatory concerns. Mrs Akom had stated that she had thought deeply about the things that she had done wrong and that she had reviewed safeguarding and other policies. However, Mrs Akom had not identified any concrete steps that she could undertake independently in order to start to properly address the risks that arose in consequence of her misconduct. The panel noted that Mrs Akom appeared to indicate that she needed help from an employer to provide her with training, supervision and mentoring. She had not independently taken action herself at this stage to find ways in which she could make improvements to her knowledge and skills, whilst looking for work and whilst subject to the Social Work England suspension. The panel was concerned that this new reflective statement did not appear to have moved matters on in terms of Mrs Akom's insight or remediation. There was little, if any, progress to note and Mrs Akom did not appear to be able to take responsibility for her own professional learning and development.
30. The panel noted that there was no reference from a current employer, but acknowledged that Mrs Akom was not currently in employment.
31. The panel noted that an update had been provided in respect of Mrs Akom's most recent employment. However, that update was that she had been dismissed for gross misconduct on 24 February 2025 from her role as a Recovery Worker at We Are With You. The panel had been provided with the dismissal letter, which indicated that the previous employer had found that Mrs Akom had failed, on a number of occasions over a period of time, to make a safeguarding referral to Children's Services in respect of a child who was at risk because their parent was using a Class A drug. The panel noted that Mrs Akom, in her oral evidence to the panel, had acknowledged that this failing was similar in nature to the failings found proved by the original panel in November 2022.
32. The panel noted that no new character testimonials had been provided for the consideration of the panel.
33. Given the lack of evidence of any significant development in Mrs Akom's level of insight and the evidence that similar conduct to that found by the substantive panel (a failure to act promptly to safeguard service users) appeared to have been repeated in a non-registered role, the panel was not reassured that the risk of repetition had reduced. Indeed, the panel considered that the risk to the public had increased because, despite the opportunity to strengthen her knowledge and skills in the relevant areas, Mrs Akom

had not done so and service users had been put at further risk of harm. The panel concluded that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in relation to public protection.

34. The panel also considered the public interest. Given the nature and seriousness of the regulatory failings found against Mrs Akom, including dishonesty, the failure to demonstrate effective development of full insight and remediation, and the increased risk to the public due to the repetition of conduct similar to the misconduct found proved, the panel concluded that a finding of current impairment was also required to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold professional standards. It considered that a well informed member of the public would be shocked if there were to be no finding of current impairment in circumstances where unsafe practice appeared to have been repeated for a future employer as recently as the past year. Whilst this was in a role that did not require social work registration, it was in a trusted position whilst working with vulnerable people in a substance misuse rehabilitation scheme.
35. The panel therefore concluded that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remains impaired on the basis of public protection and in the wider public interest.

Panel decision and reasons on sanction:

36. Having found Mrs Akom's fitness to practise is currently impaired, the panel then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case.
37. The panel considered the submissions made by Social Work England, in which the panel was invited to impose a removal order. The panel considered the submissions made by Mrs Akom, in which the panel was invited to give Mrs Akom a further opportunity to demonstrate that she was safe to return to unrestricted practice as a social worker.
38. The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction is not to punish Mrs Akom, but to protect the public and the wider public interest.
39. The panel bore in mind Social Work England's overarching objective which is to protect the public which is achieved by:
- a. protecting, promoting and maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing of the public;
 - b. promoting and maintaining public confidence in social workers in England; and
 - c. promoting and maintaining proper professional standards for social workers in England.

40. The panel was mindful that it must select the least restrictive sanction necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Mrs Akom's interests with the public interest.

Decision on whether to revoke order/make no further order

41. The panel considered whether to revoke the current final order or allow it to lapse without making any further final order.
42. Given that Mrs Akom's fitness to practise remained impaired in terms of public protection and the wider public interest, the panel decided that it would not be appropriate to revoke the current order or allow it to lapse without making any further final order. Allowing Mrs Akom to return to unrestricted practice as a social worker would not adequately address the risks in this case – to public protection, to the upholding of proper professional standards, and to maintaining public confidence in the profession.

Decision on whether to issue advice or warning on expiry of suspension order

43. The panel then considered whether to issue advice or a warning. The panel noted paragraph 87 of the SG which indicates that advice might be appropriate where a regulatory concern has arisen due to a misunderstanding on the part of the social worker, and paragraph 88 of the SG which indicates that a warning might be appropriate where a breach of standards is not serious enough to lead to a finding of impairment, or where it is serious enough but the failings have been addressed.
44. The panel considered that this was not a case where advice or a warning would be appropriate. The regulatory concerns found proved against Mrs Akom were serious and amounted to misconduct. Further, there remains a risk of repetition of the misconduct and her fitness to practise remains impaired.
45. The panel therefore concluded that advice or a warning would be inappropriate in this case because it would not adequately address the risks in this case – to public protection, to the upholding of proper professional standards, and to maintaining public confidence in the profession.

Decision on whether to impose a conditions of practice order on expiry of suspension order

46. The panel went on to consider a conditions of practice order.
47. The panel noted paragraph 114 of the SG which indicated that conditions of practice may be appropriate where: the social worker has demonstrated insight; the failure or deficiency in practice is capable of being remedied; appropriate, proportionate, and workable conditions can be put in place; decision makers are confident the social worker can and will comply with the conditions; and the social worker does not pose a risk of harm to the public by being in restricted practice.

48. The panel considered that none of these factors applied in this case. Mrs Akom had failed to demonstrate full insight into the regulatory findings against her. Although Mrs Akom stated that she was willing to do so, she had failed to engage with the clear recommendations of the previous panels. The panel also had concerns about whether Mrs Akom would be willing and able to effectively and fully comply with conditions of practice, given her very limited progress in terms of developing full insight and remediation, and given her dismissal from her most recent employer for failings in safeguarding and following company policies.
49. The panel considered that, given the serious nature of the regulatory concerns (including safeguarding failures leading to a risk of harm to service users, and dishonest conduct), it also could not formulate workable conditions. The panel considered that for conditions to be effective in managing the serious risks identified, they would need to require such close supervision as to be tantamount to a suspension.
50. The panel was also concerned that, due to the nature and seriousness of the regulatory concerns, conditions of practice would not adequately address the risks identified in terms of upholding of proper professional standards and maintaining public confidence in the profession.
51. The panel therefore decided that imposing a conditions of practice order would be inappropriate in this case.

Decision on whether to extend the period of suspension order

52. The panel noted paragraph 138 of the SG: *“Suspension is likely to be unsuitable in circumstances where (both of the following): the social worker has not demonstrated any insight and remediation; and there is limited evidence to suggest that they are willing (or able) to resolve or remediate their failings”*. The panel considered that this was the case here. Mrs Akom had failed to demonstrate full insight and had failed to demonstrate any meaningful steps towards remediation. Mrs Akom had failed to engage with the recommendations of previous panels in that she had provided a limited reflective piece, but had failed to provide any of the other information suggested. Furthermore, the evidence from Mrs Akom’s most recent employer indicated that there may have been repetition of similar conduct to the misconduct found proved and so the risk of repetition had actually increased since the last review. The panel was concerned that this repetition was of conduct that put vulnerable service users at a clear risk of harm. Taking all of this evidence together, the panel concluded that Mrs Akom appeared to be either unwilling or able to take the necessary steps to remediate her misconduct.
53. The panel therefore considered that extending the current suspension might be appropriate but had concerns that there had already been three extensions to the final suspension order (in November 2023, May 2024 and November 2024) and those had not resulted in any meaningful progress on Mrs Akom’s part.

Decision on whether to impose a removal order

54. The panel noted the following paragraphs of the SG:

“146. In the absence of improved insight or other remediation upon review, a removal order may be an appropriate sanction”;

“148. A removal order must be made where the decision makers conclude that no other outcome would be enough to (do one or more of the following): protect the public; maintain confidence in the profession; maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England”; and

“149. A removal order may be appropriate in cases involving (any of the following): [...] persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of their actions or consequences; social workers who are unwilling and/or unable to remediate [...]”.

55. The panel noted its earlier findings that Mrs Akom had failed to develop any full insight or demonstrate any meaningful remediative steps. The panel noted that Mrs Akom had been subject to a final suspension order since 21 November 2022 – a period of approximately two and half years. The panel noted that the order had been reviewed at regular intervals and on each occasion Mrs Akom had been given the opportunity to demonstrate that she had understood the concerns found proved and that she had taken effective steps to ensure that such conduct was not repeated. Previous panels had also given Mrs Akom guidance and recommendations about how she might wish to undertake relevant remediative steps and how they could be presented to future panels. The panel noted that, although Mrs Akom had engaged with the regulatory process in a procedural sense, she had failed to fully engage with the findings made against her. She had shown a persistent failure to develop full insight and to demonstrate meaningful steps towards remediation, likely indicating that she was either unwilling or unable to do so.

56. On that basis, the panel concluded that no outcome other than a removal order would be sufficient to maintain confidence in the profession and to maintain proper professional standards. Whilst the original failings were remediable, Mrs Akom had failed to remediate them despite repeated opportunities to do so. This persistent failure undermined proper professional standards and public confidence in the profession.

57. The panel applied the principle of proportionality. The panel acknowledged that there is a public interest in experienced social workers returning to unrestricted practice where it is safe to do so. The panel took into account that a removal order is the most serious sanction available, and is a sanction of last resort. It also took into account the impact that a removal order would have on Mrs Akom. She would be removed from the register of social workers and would no longer be able to practise as a social worker. That might have a serious, adverse impact on Mrs Akom in terms of her professional reputation and finances. However, given the circumstances of this case – serious failings in fundamental areas of social work practice (safeguarding and honesty) in which Mrs

Akom has not been able to demonstrate full insight and any meaningful remediation over an extended period of time – the panel concluded that the interests of the public significantly outweighed Mrs Akom’s own interests. The panel was also mindful that the reputation of the profession is more important than the fortunes of any individual member of it.

58. The panel therefore concluded that the appropriate and proportionate action to take in this case was to impose a removal order.

59. Pursuant to paragraph 15(1)(b) of Schedule 2 to the Regulations, the removal order will take effect from the expiry of the current suspension order, that is from the end of 15 June 2025.

Right of appeal:

60. 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.

61. 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.

62. 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.

63. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).

Review of final orders:

64. 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).

65. 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

66. 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>.