

Social worker: Sarah Jayne
Castle

Registration number: SW3745

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review Meeting

Date of meeting: 30 May 2025

Meeting venue: Remote meeting

Final order being reviewed:
Suspension order (expiring 12 July 2025)

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

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the sixth review of a final suspension order originally imposed for a period of 6 months by a panel of adjudicators on 17 June 2022.
2. Ms Castle did not attend the meeting and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Capsticks LLP and their written submissions are set out within the notice of hearing letter.

Adjudicators	Role
Gill Mullen	Chair
Julie Brown	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Jo Cooper	Hearings officer
Molly-Rose Brown	Hearings support officer
Gerard Coll	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

4. The panel of adjudicators (the panel) 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 28 April 2025 and addressed to Ms Castle at her email address which she provided to Social Work England;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 28 April 2025 detailing Ms Hall's registered address;
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 28 April 2025 the writer sent the notice of hearing and related documents by email to Ms Castle at the address referred to above.
5. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
6. Having had regard to 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 Castle in accordance with rules 16, 44 and 45 of Social Work England's Fitness to Practice Rules (as amended) (the rules).

Proceeding with the final order review as a meeting:

7. The notice of final order review informed Ms Castle 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 4 pm on 13 May 2025. 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.'

8. The panel had no information to suggest that Ms Castle or anyone on her behalf had responded to that notice.
9. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser with regard to rule 16(c) 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. The panel also accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the factors it should take into account when considering proceeding as a meeting in the absence of all parties including reference to the case of *General Medical Council v Adeogba* [2016] EWCA Civ 162. The panel also took into account Social Work England guidance Service of notices and proceeding in the absence of the social worker.
11. 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).

Preliminary matters: meeting partly in private

12. The panel observed that earlier reviews had been held partly in private on the grounds of the right to respect for Ms Castle's private and family life, on the application of Social Work England with Ms Castle's consent. The panel noted that there may be necessary references to Ms Castle's health or private life in the course of deciding this review.
13. The panel accepted the legal adviser's advice. In principle, Social Work England hearings take place in a way that permits public scrutiny, including having access to published determinations. That measure of transparency is an essential part of open justice which will promote public confidence in the regulator and the process. However, in accordance with rule 38(a)(i), a hearing is to be held in private where the physical or mental health of the registered social worker is being considered, and the panel may decide to hold part or all of the proceedings in private where they consider it appropriate having regard to the vulnerability, interests or welfare of any participant in the proceedings, or the public interest in the effective pursuit of the regulator's overarching objective. That would, in this case, have the effect of the public having

access to only part of the determination which falls outside of the discretionary private section.

14. The panel was satisfied that it was appropriate and in compliance with the relevant rule that this review decision should be published subject to redactions of private matters in order to protect the private life of Ms Castle [PRIVATE]. Other aspects of the hearing would be publicly available.

Review of the current order:

15. This final order review hearing takes place under Paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended).
16. The current order is due to expire on 12 July 2025 as the last extension of the Suspension Order for six months came into effect on 13 January 2025.

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

“1. On or around 4 February 2018 you failed to safeguard Child A in that you:

a. Were informed by a resident at the Children’s Home, that Child A had shared and/or featured in a video on YouTube;

b. Viewed a YouTube video, which featured Child A;

c. Viewed a YouTube video, which featured Child A referencing her low mood and/or harming herself;

d. Did not assess the level of risk upon receiving information which suggested that there was an increased risk of harm;

e. Delayed recording the information shared with you on any recording logs and / or relevant IT systems.

2....(not proved)

3. You failed to maintain professional boundaries in that:

a. On or around 1 August 2016 you attended hospital to support Child C who was no longer under your care as a social worker.

b. (not proved).

c. On or around 1 August 2016 you inappropriately transported Child C home in your own vehicle.

d. You allowed your 14-year-old son to stay in the same room overnight with his 14-year-old girlfriend, Child D, whose family was known to social care.

4. (not proved)

5. *Your actions at allegations 1 – 4 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.*

By virtue of your misconduct, your fitness to practise is impaired.”

The previous final order review panel on 2 December 2024 determined the following with regard to impairment:

17. *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.’*
18. *The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the original panel and previous review panels. The panel also took account of the written submissions by Capsticks LLP made on behalf of Social Work England. The panel considered the oral evidence and submissions from Ms Castle and the documentary evidence she has provided.*
19. *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.*
20. *The panel first considered whether Ms Castle’s fitness to practise remains impaired.*
21. *The panel took into account all the information it heard from Ms Castle [PRIVATE]. The panel accepted that these difficulties have impacted on Ms Castle’s ability to engage fully with this process, for example not attending the most recent review.*
22. *The panel was encouraged that Ms Castle has obtained employment at Connection Support where she has the opportunity to work on skills and undertake training, which is related to social work practice and to some of the issues which were the subject of the original misconduct, namely safeguarding and professional boundaries.*
23. *The panel concluded that Ms Castle has now made some steps towards remedying her past misconduct. However, as submitted by Ms Woolfson, the panel concluded that Ms Castle’s remediation is developing but is still at an early stage. The panel concluded that Ms Castle needs to demonstrate further reflection and demonstrate how she has embedded her learning in her practice and applied it in practical way. The panel noted that Ms Castle has not addressed all the recommendations identified by previous review panels and that clearer focus on these would have assisted her.*
24. *The panel assessed that the level of risk posed by Ms Castle had not reduced sufficiently since the previous review hearing. The allegations found proved against her were serious and related to safeguarding of children. Until recently there had been little*

contact by Ms Castle with Social Work England. She has now begun to engage again and indicated her desire to return to social work practice. She has undertaken some training, but the panel concluded that her insight, reflection, and remediation are still at an early stage. The panel did not have evidence of Ms Castle having embedded her learning and insight into her practice.

- 25. The panel considered that a risk of repetition remained if Ms Castle was permitted to practise without restriction, given her incomplete remediation. The panel was also mindful that as Ms Castle has not practiced as a social worker for four years and has not demonstrated that she has sought to keep her general skills and training up to date.*
- 26. The panel determined that there remained a risk of repetition of the conduct found if Ms Castle was permitted to practise without restriction. For those reasons, the panel therefore concluded that her fitness to practise remained impaired in relation to public protection.*
- 27. The panel decided that a fully informed member of the public would be greatly concerned if Ms Castle was permitted to practise without restriction. It concluded that confidence in the profession would be undermined if a finding of current impairment were not made.*

The previous final order review panel on 2 December 2024 determined the following with regard to sanction:

- 28. The panel next considered whether a suspension order would be sufficient to protect the public and wider public interest.*
- 29. The panel decided that a further period of suspension would permit Ms Castle further time to ensure that she provides evidence of insight and remediation, of further training, and in particular to demonstrate how her learning, including in respect of addressing safeguarding and boundary issues, is embedded into her practice.*
- 30. The panel decided that a suspension order of six months would be sufficient to address these issues.*
- 31. The panel considered whether a removal order was required, the panel was satisfied that Ms Castle is now committed to remediating her past misconduct and wishes to continue her social work career. The panel was also mindful of the evidence presented of the difficult health situation Ms Castle has faced in recent years and what she has said about how this has impacted on her ability to engage with this process. In the light of Ms Castle's recent engagement and the progress she has begun to make, the panel concluded that removal was not necessary and would be disproportionate.*
- 32. The panel considered that it is important for the purpose of the next review hearing for Ms Castle to pro-actively address the evidence she needs to provide to demonstrate her fitness to practise. The onus is upon her to do so. Whilst this panel cannot bind a*

future reviewing panel, it was of the view that Ms Castle should concentrate her efforts on the specific recommendations set out by previous panels, as confirmed in Social Work England's recent letter of 1 October 2024. These recommendations were comprehensive. They are repeated below for ease of reference, with some further points added by this panel to further assist Ms Castle:

- a. A reflective piece demonstrating insight into the matters found proved that is, demonstrating an understanding of how similar situations should and would be approached by Ms Castle in the future;*
- b. Evidence of any training undertaken, whether provided by an employer or self-directed learning, in relation to safeguarding and maintaining professional boundaries;*
- c. Evidence of how training and learning undertaken by Ms Castle to ensure that her social work skills and knowledge (more generally, not just in relation to safeguarding and maintaining professional boundaries) have been kept up to date during her period of suspension; this panel recommends that Ms Castle should seek to demonstrate by providing evidence of and as far as it is possible whilst she is suspended, that she has kept her knowledge and skills up to date. This might include, for example, reading professional journals; or undertaking courses equivalent to CPD.*
- d. Information about Ms Castle's current work and how she has used her reflections on the past misconduct and any remedial work and training to improve her practice: this panel also recommends that Ms Castle identifies a current registered social worker to peer review the learning Ms Castle undertakes. She should also where possible provide actual examples from her practice, verified by her current manager;*
- e. A reference from Ms Castle's current employer confirming knowledge of the final hearing panel's findings against Ms Castle and commenting upon the quality of her current work (in particular in relation to safeguarding and maintaining professional boundaries if applicable to her current employment context); this panel recommends that for the next review this should be an up to date letter commenting on Ms Castle's performance and skills in her current role; and*
- f. References in respect of any other paid or unpaid role currently undertaken by Ms Castle confirming knowledge of the final panel hearing panel's findings against Ms Castle and commenting upon the quality of her work (in particular in relation to safeguarding and maintaining professional boundaries if applicable to the role in question).*

Submissions:

Social Work England

33. The written submissions on behalf of Social Work England were as follows:

Subject to any evidence of further insight or remediation received after the notice of hearing is sent, or any evidence of why the social worker has not been able to engage, Social Work England invite the panel to consider imposing a Removal Order, on the grounds that such an Order is necessary for the protection of the public and is in the wider public interest.

The social worker has not made any contact with Social Work England since the last review of the Suspension Order. The Case Review Officer sent correspondence to the social worker on 14 January 2025 and 4 March 2025 in relation to the Suspension Order, referring specifically to any evidence the social worker may wish to provide in advance of the upcoming review hearing. This included a professional reference template.

[PRIVATE]. The panel accepted that these difficulties may have impacted on the social worker's ability to engage fully with this process, for example not attending a prior review. The previous Review Panel determined that the social worker's remediation was developing but was still at an early stage. The panel concluded that the social worker needed to demonstrate further reflection and demonstrate how she had embedded her learning in her practice and applied it in practical way. The panel noted that the social worker had not addressed all the recommendations identified by previous review panels and that clearer focus on these would have assisted her. With that in mind, the panel considered that the appropriate and proportionate order would be a Suspension Order, as opposed to a Removal Order.

At the date of this Notice, the social worker has not provided any further evidence to address the concerns the panel raised, or to engage with the recommendations that were set out for her to address. The risk of repetition has not changed. There is no evidence of the social worker's insight, reflection, or remediation.

As is currently stands, there is no evidence that the social worker is willing (or able) to satisfactorily address her failings. Therefore, subject to any further evidence received prior to the next review, and evidence of future intention; Social Work England invite the panel to consider imposing a Removal Order. This will be the sixth review of the Order and repeated extensions of the Suspension Order have not resulted in consistent engagement or evidence of full remediation.

Social Work England reserve the right to reconsider this position if the social worker provides evidence in advance of the Final Order Review.

The social worker

34. There were no submissions for or on behalf of Ms Castle.
35. 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 panel. 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 most up to date published Impairment and sanctions guidance (ISG).
36. The panel 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 maintaining public confidence in the profession.
37. The panel acknowledged that the Registrant carried the persuasive burden of satisfying the committee that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. In *Abrahaem v General Medical Council* [2008] EWHC 183 (Admin) at Paragraph 23 the court said that a review has to consider that;
- '...there is a persuasive burden on the practitioner at a review to demonstrate that he or she has fully acknowledged why past professional performance was deficient and through insight, application, education, supervision, or other achievement has sufficiently addressed the past impairments.'*
38. The Supreme Court said in *Khan v GPhC* [2017] 1 WLR 169 SC (Sc):
- 'The focus of a review is upon the current fitness of the Registrant to resume practice, judged in the light of what he has, or has not, achieved since the date of the suspension. The review committee will note the particular concerns articulated by the original committee and seek to discern what steps, if any, the Registrant has taken to allay them during the period of his suspension. The original committee will have found that his fitness to practise was impaired. The review committee asks: "Does the Registrant's fitness to practise remain impaired?"'*
39. The panel therefore first considered whether Ms Castle's fitness to practise remains impaired today.
40. The panel was careful to approach the matter of current impairment objectively and taking into account Ms Castle's obligation to satisfy the panel that she was no longer impaired. The panel was concerned that its observations would not be misperceived as a criticism of Ms Castle who has had challenging personal circumstances to deal with. The focus of the issue is the protection of the public. A social worker who has not addressed an ongoing risk of harm to service users (the personal impairment limb) or the wider public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards for social workers and of maintaining public confidence in the profession (the public interest limb) may

give the panel little option but to find that fitness to practise remains impaired on both limbs.

41. The panel observed that Ms Castle has not responded to Social Work England since the last review on 2 December 2024. Ms Castle had attended that review and appeared to be willing to engage with her regulator and the panel's suggestions. Since then, there appears to have been no contact from Ms Castle at all. There had been two attempts by Social Work England to contact Ms Castle leading up to the date of this review. There had been no response. Ms Castle has therefore failed to demonstrate any positive and constructive action, engagement, education, or training, up to date CPD, submitted testimonials or a reflective piece or any other indication of a willingness to resolve the risks that her unremediated practice poses to the public.
42. Taking into account all of the available information, the panel was unable to be satisfied that Ms Castle had met the persuasive burden of satisfying the panel that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. The panel concluded that there remains a continuing risk to the public.
43. In all of these circumstances, the panel was satisfied that Ms Castle's fitness to practise remains impaired today.

Decision and reasons on sanction:

44. Having found that Ms Castle'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 submissions made by Social Work England on this matter and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. The panel also took into account the Impairment and sanctions guidance (ISG) published by Social Work England.
45. The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction is not to punish Ms Castle, but solely 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 recognised that it must be fair to Ms Castle by balancing Ms Castle's interests with the public interest and also must apply the principle of proportionality, imposing the least restrictive sanction that is equally effective in protecting the public.
46. The panel considered what aggravating and mitigating factors applied at this point of the review process.

Mitigating factors at review:

47. The panel considered carefully the potential mitigating factors including those set out at paragraph 81 of the ISG. Regrettably, the factors which applied had already been dealt with and exhausted at earlier panel hearings and none were evidenced in the period of complete disengagement since 2 December 2024.

Aggravating factors at review:

48. The panel considered carefully the potential aggravating factors including those set out at paragraph 82 of the ISG. The panel considered that in light of the absence of any contact at all from Ms Castle, the factors which still applied included:

- lack of insight or remorse
- lack of remediation
- harm or risk of harm to people who use social work services

49. The panel therefore had to evaluate the degree of risk to the public, in the current circumstances, which it considered to be high. In particular, the unresolved risks arising from Ms Castle's inability to improve her current impairment in relation to the serious safeguarding concerns in this case was a highly material factor in considering which of the sanctions was appropriate and proportionate.

Take no further action, issue advice or a warning

50. The panel decided that taking no action, issuing advice or issuing a warning would not address the serious nature of Ms Castle's misconduct. Nor would they adequately protect the public as they would not restrict Ms Castle's practice. The panel noted that there were serious safeguarding issues in this case and a sanction which did not result in a restriction of practice would not guard against the risks which exist and would not command the confidence of the public in Ms Castle's regulator to take these matters seriously.

Conditions of practice order

51. The panel next considered whether a conditions of practice order could be imposed rather than extending the current suspension Order.

52. The panel noted that there had been no recent engagement by Ms Castle. In these circumstances, the panel could have no confidence that Ms Castle would agree to a conditions of practice order and would work within the demands of such an order. A conditions of practice order would necessarily require Ms Castle to engage with supervision and to submit progress and monitoring reports. Ms Castle's complete disengagement following the last review suggested to the panel that Ms Castle was unwilling or unable to comply with such conditions. Further, the panel had no information regarding Ms Castle's current employment or [PRIVATE]. That did not provide the panel with the necessary confidence that conditions of practice would be an effective and productive sanction. The panel was not satisfied that workable conditions could be formulated to adequately protect the public or address the wider public interest concerns.

53. The panel concluded that a conditions of practice order could not be made in light of all of these circumstances.

Suspension order

54. The panel next considered whether a suspension order would be sufficient to protect the public and wider public interest.
55. The panel accepted that a further period of suspension would permit Ms Castle to evidence insight and remediation and to undertake targeted and relevant training and CPD. In particular, a period of suspension might facilitate an opportunity for Ms Castle to address the serious safeguarding and boundary issues that had been identified. However, this sanction has been offered already and, as far as the panel can assess, has not been effective or purposeful. There had been no meaningful attempt by Ms Castle to address these issues.
56. The panel decided that a suspension order would not be an appropriate or a proportionate means to protect the public.

Removal order:

57. The panel gave careful consideration to the factors which are relevant in deciding upon a Removal Order including those set out at paragraphs 148 and 149 of the ISG. The factors which were highly material to this decision included;
- Ms Castle's persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of her actions or consequences
 - The evidence of disengagement which suggests that she is unwilling and/or unable to remediate.
58. Ms Castle has not practised in a registered capacity for some time. The certificates which she had supplied on an earlier review were now two years out of date. On the last review, the panel had provided Ms Castle with practical and achievable options to demonstrate her capacity and willingness to remediate, which had not been taken up consistent with an unwillingness to do so. Ms Castle's insight in earlier reviews had been valuable but limited and has not been improved upon.
59. In all of the circumstances, the panel came to the decision that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction which would serve to protect the public, including maintaining the trust and confidence of the public, was a removal order with effect from the expiry of the current suspension order on 12 July 2025.
60. The panel therefore directs that a removal order be imposed on Ms Castle's registration with effect from the expiry of the current suspension order on 12 July 2025.

Right of appeal:

61. 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>.