

Social worker: Burcin Bruce

Registration number: SW23890

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review hearing

Date of hearing: 11 November 2025

hearing venue: Remote

Final order being reviewed: Suspension order (expiring 23 December 2025)

hearing outcome: Extend the current suspension order for a further four months with effect from the expiry of the current order

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the third review of a final suspension originally imposed for a period of 9 months by case examiners on 22 September 2023, by way of accepted disposal under paragraph 9(2)(c) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 (the Regulations). The final order was reviewed on 14 May 2024 and 10 February 2025, with the outcome on both occasions that the suspension order was extended for a period of 9 months.
2. Ms Bruce attended and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Mr Brooks of Counsel, case presenter instructed by Capsticks LLP.

Adjudicators	Role
Paul Grant	Chair
Charlotte Scott	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Jo Cooper	Hearings officer
Molly-Rose Brown	Hearings support officer
Louise Cotton	Legal adviser

Preliminary matters:

4. Ms Bruce indicated that she needed to leave the hearing by 11am because she had prior arrangements for her birthday celebration which could not be cancelled. The Chair asked her if she intended to make an application for the hearing to be adjourned. She confirmed that she did not, and that she was content to leave after making her submissions and consented to receiving the panel's decision in writing. All submissions were completed by 10.30am.
5. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to holding part of the hearing in private. The panel was satisfied that, pursuant to rule 38 of the Fitness to Practice Rules 2019, parts of the hearing should be held in private. This was limited to those parts of the meeting and subsequent written decision in which there was mention of Ms Bruce's family life [PRIVATE]

Review of the current order:

6. This final order review hearing is taking place under Paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) and Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).
7. The purpose of this review is to review the current order, which is due to expire at the end of 23 December 2025. The order subject to review is a suspension order.

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

8. Regulatory Concern 1

Whilst registered as a social worker, you failed to demonstrate the expected level of competence and capability in that you:

- a) Failed to maintain timely and sufficient records;
- b) Failed to complete reports, care and placement plans and a later life letter in a timely manner or at all;
- c) Failed to complete statutory reviews within the agreed timescales;
- d) Failed to recognise the importance of keeping information confidential;
- e) Failed to recognise the importance of maintaining professional boundaries;
- f) Failed to recognise and respond to risk relating to covid-19.

9. Regulatory Concern 2

Whilst registered as a social worker, you failed to provide the appropriate level of care and support in the case of Child A and Child B in that:

- d) You did not provide the foster carers with the necessary information, including EHC plans, to allow them to appropriately care for the children;
- e) You failed to action a referral to the Attach service in a timely manner.

The previous final order review panel on 10 February 2025 determined the following with regard to impairment:

10. “27. The panel noted that the previous review panel found that Ms Bruce had failed to provide the panel with any evidence of remediation or development of insight. Therefore, the previous review panel considered that there remained a risk of repetition. This panel noted that there is no evidence that Ms Bruce has acted upon the recommendations of the previous panel as to what might assist a future reviewing panel. She has not attended the hearing as recommended. There is no evidence that she has:

- a. undertaken any, let alone any significant steps, which would facilitate a safe and effective return to the register without restriction.
- b. kept her social work skills and knowledge up to date.
- c. undertaken and reflected on relevant training courses (online or otherwise).
- d. taken other steps to address the concerns which led to the making of the current order of suspension.

28. The panel noted that Ms Bruce's lack of engagement means that she has not demonstrated remediation, insight or remorse. She has not discharged the persuasive burden to demonstrate that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. This is despite

the clear guidance from the case examiners when the suspension was initially imposed, and from the previous review panel in their determination, as to the types of things that she would need to do in order to be able to demonstrate remediation.

29. The panel therefore considered that there remained a risk of repetition of the types of issue which led to Ms Bruce's referral to Social Work England. The panel concluded that Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remains impaired by reason of lack of competence or capability".

The previous final order review panel on 10 February 2025 determined the following with regard to sanction:

11. "No action

33. The panel further considered whether to revoke the suspension or to allow it to lapse.

34. The panel has found that Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remains impaired. The allegations found proved in relation to competence/capability were wide ranging, and there has been no evidence provided to demonstrate that the public would be protected if Ms Bruce returned to unrestricted practice. Taking no further action would not be appropriate.

Warning

35. The panel considered whether to impose a warning order.

36. The panel noted that this sanction would not restrict Ms Bruce's ability to practise and was therefore not appropriate where there is a current risk to public safety. The deficiencies identified with Ms Bruce's practice had the potential to have wide-ranging adverse consequences and therefore some restriction on her practice is required. The panel concluded that issuing a warning would be inappropriate and insufficient to meet the public interest.

Conditions of practice order

37. The panel next considered whether to replace the current suspension order with a conditions of practice order.

38. Conditions would not be workable, and therefore would not be appropriate, because of the lack of any engagement by Ms Bruce with Social Work England.

Suspension order

39. The panel considered whether the current suspension order should be extended for a further period of time.

40. A suspension order would prevent Ms Bruce from practising during the suspension period, which would therefore protect the public and the wider public interest. It would

not prevent Ms Bruce from taking steps to demonstrate that she has insight, has reflected and has taken steps to remediate. It is therefore proportionate.

41. The panel concluded that the appropriate sanction is a suspension order.

42. The panel determined that the suspension order should be imposed for a period of nine months. The panel was satisfied that this period was appropriate because Ms Bruce is unlikely to be able to take the remediation steps required in a lesser period. Therefore, the suspension period reflects the amount of time that Ms Bruce may need to reflect on the panel's findings and devise a plan of action targeted towards a return to the register.

...

Removal order

46. The panel considered whether a removal order may be appropriate however, it noted that a removal order was not available to the panel as Ms Bruce's fitness to practise was originally found impaired on the basis of lack of competence or capability, as set out in regulation 25(2) (b) of the Regulations, and she had not yet been suspended from practice or subject to a conditions of practice final order (or a combination of both) for a continuous period of two years immediately preceding the day when the removal order would take effect."

Social Work England submissions:

12. The panel noted the written submissions from Social Work England as outlined in the notice of hearing dated 03 October 2025:

"Subject to any evidence of remediation received prior to the review, Social Work England invite the Panel to find that the Social Worker's fitness to practise remains impaired for the same reasons given by the Case Examiners, and by the panel at the previous two Final Order Reviews.

To date no evidence has been received to demonstrate that the concerns raised by the Case Examiners and the previous panels have been addressed. This is despite the previous panels extending the Suspension Order to allow the Social Worker more time to address the deficiencies identified.

There has been no evidence of remediation to undermine the finding that the Social Worker's fitness to practise is impaired. The Social Worker has provided no evidence that they are now safe to practice, or that any of the concerns raised by either the Case Examiners or the previous panels have been addressed.

In light of the continued lack of engagement by the Social Worker the panel are invited to replace the existing Suspension Order with a Removal Order".

13. The panel heard submissions from Mr Brooks, in which he expanded on the written submissions. He emphasised that following the accepted disposal in 2023, the case

examiners were of the view that 9 months was the minimum period for remediation to be demonstrated, with an expectation that Ms Bruce would act and provide evidence of remediation and insight into the difficulties that had brought her before the regulator, but to date there has been no written evidence from her before the panel.

14. Mr Brooks submitted that the same position was put at both final order reviews, and that Ms Bruce had failed to produce evidence despite guidance from Social Work England. He submitted that the second final order review panel made recommendations to Ms Bruce in respect of what she could provide to show that she had addressed the concerns, but that no significant steps have been taken or evidence put before the panel. He submitted that whilst there was a file note indicating that Ms Bruce intended to send evidence, nothing has been received. He further submitted that Social Work England had emailed Ms Bruce five times in preparation for this final order review asking her to provide her evidence, and she had not done so.
15. Mr Brooks submitted that Ms Bruce has not followed any of the guidance of previous panels, indicating that there has been no change, and the appropriate sanction now is therefore a removal order.
16. Mr Brooks submitted that all information provided by Ms Bruce at the hearing was a self-assessment, and noted that she had not asked her employer to complete the reference document provided by Social Work England. He further submitted that the burden of proof rests on Ms Bruce to show that her practice is no longer impaired, and that whilst she had apologised she had provided no evidence of remediation.

Social worker submissions:

17. Ms Bruce chose not to give evidence but made oral submissions, setting out that:
 - a. Following a tragic event, she was not able to do her job. [PRIVATE]. She followed advice and had a career change, working in retail. She continued training, and started working for a charity called Oxfordshire Youth, which is a pilot programme.
 - b. She is now a senior progression coach and has done more than 20 training courses in house via social care. She has been put forward to do additional training in youth work level 2. Her current role involves supporting young people who are leaving care, unaccompanied asylum seekers, or who cannot live with their families. She described drawing up support plans and risk assessments, assisting the young people with benefits and housing, assisting with applications for asylum and working to strict timescales. She said that she works in a position of trust, holding 17 cases for outreach, 13 of which are active, and being required to undertake weekly and monthly visits. She said that she has an excellent reference from her employer and can provide contact details.

- c. She should have responded and apologised to the panel for not having done so. She said that she had not been in a position to respond. [PRIVATE] She said that she had not felt that she had enough evidence and could not think what to put, but that she now has lots of training certificates from the last 2 years.
- d. She had no idea where to start when putting in evidence, because she has done lots of things, and she fully understands that the panel may require written evidence. She said that she was asking for legal and practical support “to move this forward”, because she wants to remain as a social worker. She said “Now I am in a position where I explain everything in person, I just want to make it work really”.

18. In addressing impairment, she submitted that her skills are not impaired, because she said that she has “all in place” at work and is managing timescales and recording information, undertaking very clear communication with the young people using the service, maintaining safeguarding, monitoring support plans and risk assessments. She said that she follows all county and city council safeguarding policies and requirements. Ms Bruce submitted that “there are no concerns in respect of my practice and my manager can provide evidence of this. I do not put anyone at risk, we are on top of everything, I meet all deadlines”. She emphasised that “I am capable of doing this and can provide confirmation of this through my employer. I rebuilt and regained my confidence and want to remain on the register”.
19. In response to the sanction sought by Social Work England, she submitted that being a social worker is her identity, and it would be very unfair to remove this from her, especially after all the hard work and dedication she has put in on her own.

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

20. 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’.
21. The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the original Case Examiner decision and the two previous review panels. The panel also took account of the submissions made by Mr Brooks on behalf of Social Work England and those made by Ms Bruce. The panel noted that Ms Bruce had not provided any documents.
22. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser, which included reference to Social Work England’s ‘*Impairment and sanctions guidance*’ (“Sanctions guidance”) and the sequence of decision making set out by Blake J in *Abrahaem v General Medical*

Council [2008] EWHC 183, namely that the panel must firstly address whether the social worker's fitness to practise is impaired before considering sanctions, and that the panel must consider whether all of the concerns raised in the original finding of impairment have been sufficiently addressed to the panel's satisfaction, taking into account that there is a persuasive burden on the practitioner at a review to demonstrate that she has fully acknowledged why past professional performance was deficient and through insight, application, education, supervision, or other achievement sufficiently addressed the past impairments

23. In reaching its decision, the panel was mindful of the overarching objective and 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.
24. The panel first considered whether Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remains impaired. It kept in mind that there had already been an accepted disposal on the basis that Ms Bruce's fitness to practise was impaired on the statutory grounds of lack of capability or competence, involving failures in statutory requirements to children "looked after" and in the public care of the local authority. The panel asked itself whether Ms Bruce had demonstrated that she had taken sufficient steps to allay the concerns of the previous panels.
25. The panel noted that the two previous final order review hearing panels had found that Ms Bruce's practice remained impaired by reason of lack of competence or capability, noting that she had not engaged at either of those hearings, such that she had not demonstrated remediation, insight or remorse, or discharged the burden to show that her fitness to practice is no longer impaired.
26. The Panel noted that the last reviewing panel, in extending the order of suspension, had given Ms Bruce another chance to engage and address the deficiencies of her practice, setting out at paragraphs 43 onwards of the final order review decision guidance on how she could show insight and remediation, as follows:

"43. The panel flags that there is still an opportunity for Ms Bruce to engage and work towards remediation. At the next review hearing Ms Bruce will have been suspended for a continuous period of over two years. A future review panel will therefore have the option of removal from the register available to it, if Ms Bruce's fitness to practise is found to remain impaired. Ms Bruce should have regard to the recommendations in the following paragraph, if she is to put herself in the best possible position to avoid removal.

44. This panel cannot bind a future panel. However, a future reviewing panel would expect Ms Bruce to attend the review hearing and it would be of assistance to that panel if she were able to provide evidence that she had undertaken significant steps that would facilitate a safe and effective return to the register without restriction. This may include:

- a. Evidence that she has kept her social work skills and knowledge up to date,*

b. Evidence of and reflection on relevant training courses (online or otherwise) and

c. Evidence that she has addressed the concerns which led to the making of the initial, and then extended, order of suspension.

45. The panel notes from the papers before it, that Ms Bruce was sent a very helpful email by Social Work England on 27 March 2024. This set out detailed and helpful information for Ms Bruce on how she could go about taking steps to demonstrate insight and show remediation. Social Work England will be able to send a further copy of that email to Ms Bruce if she has not retained a copy”.

27. The panel noted that Ms Bruce did not provide any updated documents for the hearing, though she set out in submissions that she did have evidence of courses that she had undertaken, and that her employer would give her a reference, as well as describing her current job role. The panel considered that the last final order review panel had been very specific in directing Ms Bruce as to how she could demonstrate insight and remediate her shortcomings, and on the evidence presented she has not done so, because there was no independent evidence from her employer or course providers to verify her submissions. The panel found it concerning that Ms Bruce had not provided any written evidence despite having had multiple reminders and opportunities to do so.
28. The panel considered the oral submissions made by Ms Bruce. The panel noted that whilst Ms Bruce had described her current job role, she had not provided any reflection or insight into the impact or seriousness of the original concerns. Whilst Ms Bruce indicated that she understood the importance of accurate record-keeping in a timely fashion, she had not provided evidence of her reflections on how her previous failings in professional practice would impact on service users and colleagues, what she has since learned and how she would act differently in the future. The panel did not have any coherent reflection on the original concerns, or coherent information about what she has done to address those failings, or to reflect on why the original failings took place. She told the panel that there had been tragic events, but there was no evidence of how she would prevent her practice from deteriorating again in similar circumstances.
29. The panel therefore concluded that there was minimal evidence of any change in circumstances since the last review and there remained concerns about the lack of insight demonstrated by Ms Bruce. Consequently, there was no reliable evidence provided to the panel that the risk of repetition has reduced.
30. The panel noted that members of the public would be concerned to learn that Ms Bruce has to date not provided any written evidence about what went wrong and how she has remedied her practice in the time that has passed since the accepted disposal. Adherence to statutory timescales, maintaining confidentiality and full and accurate record keeping are required for safe social work practice and deficiencies expose members of the public to the risk of harm. Failure to maintain these standards undermines public confidence in the profession.

31. The panel therefore decided that Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remains impaired on the statutory grounds of lack of capability or competence.

Decision and reasons:

32. Having found Ms Bruce'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 along with all the information and accepted the advice of the legal adviser.
33. The panel considered the written and oral submissions made on behalf of Social Work England, within which they invited the panel to consider imposing a removal order. The panel noted the oral submissions made by Ms Bruce that a removal order would be very unfair, especially after all the hard work and dedication she has put in on her own. The panel also took into account the 'Impairment and sanctions guidance' published by Social Work England.
34. The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction is not to punish Ms Bruce, but to protect the public and the wider public interest. The public interest includes maintaining public confidence in the profession and Social Work England as its regulator and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Ms Bruce's interests with the public interest, noting that she had provided information about difficult personal circumstances and that she had attended the hearing for the first time and sought to offer some explanations.

Take no further action, issue advice or a warning/allow the current suspension order to lapse upon its expiry

35. The panel decided that taking no action, issuing advice or issuing a warning would not adequately address the serious nature of Ms Bruce's behaviour nor the risk of repetition. Further these sanctions would not adequately protect the public as they would not restrict Ms Bruce's practice. The deficiencies identified with Ms Bruce's practice had the potential to have wide-ranging adverse consequences and therefore some restriction on her practice is required in order to meet the public interest.

Impose a new order, namely conditions of practice

36. The panel considered whether a conditions of practice order could be imposed. A conditions of practice order would enable Ms Bruce to resume practice as a social worker, while ensuring that there were safeguards in place to ensure that the deficiencies in her practice were addressed and monitored. As explained in Social Work England's impairment and sanctions guidance, conditions of practice commonly apply in cases of lack of competence.

37. The panel noted that the concerns about Ms Bruce's practice are readily remediable, because they are not attitudinal in nature and with support they could be addressed.
38. However, the panel has already concluded that Ms Bruce has not evidenced insight or remediation to date. Further, the panel concluded that it could not formulate any workable conditions today which would sufficiently protect the public and the wider public interest because Ms Bruce had not provided any corroborating evidence from her employer to demonstrate her job role, her employer's understanding of the risks she poses and their willingness and ability to support her. Consequently, the panel could not be confident that Ms Bruce can and will comply with any conditions imposed.

Extend the current suspension order:

39. The panel considered whether the current suspension order should be extended for a further period of time, noting that a suspension order would prevent Ms Bruce from practising during the suspension period, which would therefore protect the public and the wider public interest.
40. The panel considered that such an order would give Ms Bruce a period of time to provide evidence of the things that she had set out in her oral submissions, whilst continuing to protect the public.
41. The panel took into account that Ms Bruce had attended and engaged with the hearing, and offered her apologies for her previous failures to engage. The panel further considered that it is in the public interest to give social workers the opportunity to return to practice where that can be achieved, and Ms Bruce had made oral submissions setting out that she is now doing relevant work, has undertaken training, and wants to return to practice.
42. The panel therefore concluded that she should be granted a further opportunity to provide proper evidence in this regard, and that the appropriate and proportionate sanction is therefore a suspension order.
43. The panel determined that the suspension order should be extended for a period of four months. The panel was satisfied that this period was appropriate because the panel took the view that the conduct of concern is remediable, and four months will allow Ms Bruce a reasonable period of time in which to provide Social Work England with the written evidence of the things which she had referred to during the hearing, such as a testimonial from her current employer, details of her current employment and evidence of her completed training. Further, this is a realistic period of time to allow her to provide a reflective piece of writing. Therefore, the suspension period reflects the amount of time that Ms Bruce may need to reflect on the panel's findings and devise a plan of action targeted towards an unrestricted return to the register.
44. This panel cannot bind a future panel. However, a future reviewing panel would expect Ms Bruce to attend the next review hearing and to provide evidence that she has undertaken significant steps that would facilitate a safe and effective return to the

register without restriction. Based on the submissions made by Ms Bruce, a future reviewing panel would be greatly assisted by:

- (i) Evidence that she has kept her social work skills and knowledge up to date, such as training course completion certificates (online or otherwise) and evidence of CPD completed;
- (ii) Evidence of her current role, including a copy of the job description and a reference or testimonial from her current employer setting out her performance in the role and their awareness of the concerns;
- (iii) A reflective piece of writing, reflecting on the findings made against her, the steps that she has taken to show remediation and insight, and her reflections on the learning/CPD/training courses she has undertaken, including their relevance to the original concerns, how her learning has been relevant to the original findings and its impact on her current practice.

Impose a new order, namely removal order:

45. The panel was satisfied it could consider that a removal order was available to the panel as Ms Bruce's fitness to practise was originally found impaired on the basis of one or more grounds as set out in regulation 25(2)(b) and she had been suspended from practice for a continuous period of two years immediately preceding the day when the removal order would take effect.
46. The panel noted that a removal order is a sanction of last resort where there is no other means of protecting the public or the wider public interest. The panel took the view that a removal order would not be appropriate because, whilst Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remains impaired, she has, in attending this final order review hearing taken the first steps in engaging with the Regulator. The panel noted that Ms Bruce had said that she can provide evidence of current competency and remediation, and considered that she should be offered a further opportunity to do so. The panel wanted to take the opportunity to highlight to Ms Bruce that she has been given a number of opportunities to provide evidence of the steps she has taken to remediate her practice, which she has not taken advantage of. There can be no guarantee that a future panel will afford Ms Bruce further opportunities if she does not heed the advice of this and previous reviewing panels.
47. The panel therefore concluded that a removal order is not the appropriate and proportionate order at the current time.

Right of appeal:

48. 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.

49. 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.

50. 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.

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

Review of final orders:

52. 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).

53. 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

54. 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>