

Social worker: Kwame Ibegbuna

Registration number: SW122948

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 15 December 2025 to 19 December 2025

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome:

Fitness to practise impaired, suspension order (12 months)

Interim order:

Interim suspension order (18 months)

Introduction and attendees:

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

Adjudicators	Role
Kerry McKevitt	Chair
Christine Moody	Social worker adjudicator
Moriam Bartlett	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Poppy Muffett	Hearings officer
Chiugo Eze	Hearings support officer
Natasha Shotunde	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

4. The panel of adjudicators (hereafter “the panel”) was informed by Ms Kennedy that notice of this hearing was sent to Mr Ibegbuna on 12 November 2025 by email to an email address provided by the social worker (namely their registered email address as it appears on the Social Work England register). An automatic message stated that the email was undelivered. A statement of service dated 1 December 2025 sets out the history of communication with Mr Ibegbuna, with the last email Social Work England received from Mr Ibegbuna being on 23 October 2024. Social Work England then attempted to communicate with Mr Ibegbuna by post to his registered address and that post was returned undelivered. A tracing agent was instructed, who confirmed Mr Ibegbuna had been registered at the address but was unable to identify an updated address in the United Kingdom. Enquiries at Companies House identified Mr Ibegbuna as a director of a company linked to the same address held for Mr Ibegbuna by Social Work England. A scoping letter was sent by email to the email address on the business website. No response was received.
5. Ms Kennedy submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served in accordance with the rules.
6. The panel of adjudicators had careful regard to the documents contained in the final hearing service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the notice of the final hearing dated 12 November 2025 and addressed to Mr Ibegbuna at his email address which they provided to Social Work England;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 12 November 2025 detailing Mr Ibegbuna’s registered address and email address;

- A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming the attempts to serve the notice and locate Mr Ibegbuna;
 - Past communication between Mr Ibegbuna and Social Work England, including his responses to the allegations that he sent by email.
7. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
 8. The panel determined that Social Work England made every effort to serve notice on Mr Ibegbuna and that, although he may not be aware of this hearing, he is aware of these proceedings evidenced by his previous engagement and submissions to Social Work England. The panel noted that it is Mr Ibegbuna's responsibility to keep his details up to date with Social Work England and he has not done so.
 9. Having had regard to Rules 44-45 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), Regulation 16(1) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (the Rules) and all of the information before it in relation to the service of notice, the panel was satisfied that notice of this hearing had been served on Mr Ibegbuna in accordance with Rules 44-45.

Proceeding in the absence of the social worker:

10. The panel heard the submissions of Ms Kennedy on behalf of Social Work England. Ms Kennedy submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served, Mr Ibegbuna was aware of the allegations and there has been no engagement by Mr Ibegbuna since October 2024. Ms Kennedy further submitted that social workers have a duty to keep in contact with Social Work England. Mr Ibegbuna has not updated his contact details despite being aware of proceedings and therefore he has voluntarily absented himself. Finally, Ms Kennedy submitted that the witnesses are available and any delay could impact on their memories. Ms Kennedy therefore invited the panel to proceed in the interests of justice and the expeditious disposal of this hearing.
11. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the factors it should take into account when considering this application. This included reference to Rule 43 of the Rules and the cases of *R v Jones [2002] UKHL 5*; *General Medical Council v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162*. The panel also took into account Social Work England's guidance 'Service of notices and proceeding in the absence of the social worker.'
12. The panel considered all of the information before it, together with the submissions made by Ms Kennedy on behalf of Social Work England. The panel also noted that Mr Ibegbuna previously sent his responses to the allegations to Social Work England and therefore they could test the evidence that Social Work England will present.
13. The panel determined that Mr Ibegbuna had voluntarily absented himself from these proceedings, having been aware of them as seen in his last communication with Social Work England in October 2024. The panel had no reason to believe that an adjournment would result in Mr Ibegbuna's attendance. Having weighed the interests of Mr Ibegbuna regarding his attendance at the hearing with those of Social Work England and the

public interest in an expeditious disposal of this hearing, the panel determined to proceed in Mr Ibegbuna's absence.

Preliminary matters:

14. Ms Kennedy made an application to amend the date in allegation 1(a) from "24 August 2024" to "24 August 2023". Ms Kennedy submitted that the application is to correct a typographical error as Mr Ibegbuna was no longer working at the Bradford Children and Families Trust in 2024. Ms Kennedy further submitted that the amendment would not cause prejudice to Mr Ibegbuna.
15. The panel accepted the advice from the legal adviser regarding Rule 32 and the panel's power to regulate their own proceedings and the requirement of fairness.
16. The panel granted the application to amend allegation 1(a) of the allegation as it determined that there was no prejudice to Mr Ibegbuna in amending a typographical error.
17. Ms Kennedy made an application for part of the proceedings to be heard in private due to Mr Ibegbuna referring to the health matters relating to himself and his family members in his response.
18. The panel accepted advice from the legal adviser regarding Rule 38(ii). The panel determined that the hearing will be partly held in private when health matters are being considered.

Allegations:

19. The allegations arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 9 September 2024 are:

While employed as a social worker with Bradford Children and Families Trust:

1. *In relation to Child A, you:*

- a) *Did not record a visit on 24 August ~~2024~~ 2023 within the required timeframes.*
- b) *Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:*
 - i) *24 August 2023;*
 - ii) *29 August 2023.*

2. *In relation to Child B, you:*

- a) *Did not carry out and/or record the following visits and/or calls within the required timeframes:*
 - i) *24 August 2023;*

ii) 25 August 2023;

iii) 30 August 2023.

b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

i) 24 August 2023;

ii) 25 August 2023;

iii) 30 August 2023.

3. In relation to Child C, you:

a) Did not carry out and/or record a visit on 23 August 2023 within the required timeframes.

b) Did not provide adequate detail in relation to the following visits:

i) 20 July 2023;

ii) 23 August 2023.

c) Did not complete the assessment for the case by the revised deadline of 31 August 2023.

d) Did not complete one or more of the following required actions for the case by 2 August 2023:

i) Safety Plan; and/or

ii) Direct Work with Child C.

4. In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

a) Did not record the following visits within the required timeframes:

i) 21 July 2023

ii) 25 July 2023

iii) 8 August 2023

iv) 18 August 2023

b) Did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

i) 21 July 2023

ii) 25 July 2023

iii) 8 August 2023

iv) 18 August 2023

- c) Recorded that a visit took place on 18 August 2023 when it did not.*
- d) Your actions in 4(c) above were dishonest in that you sought to give the impression that the visit had taken place on 18 August 2023 when you knew it had not.*
- e) Did not complete the assessment by the deadline of 25 August 2023.*

5. *In relation to Child G, you:*

- a) In relation to a home visit on 10 August 2023 did not record the visit within the required timeframes*
- b) On 8 September 2023, you:*
 - i) attended the property of Child G when you no longer worked for the Trust;*
 - ii) were in the company of one or more individuals who had no professional reason to be there;*
 - iii) Offered to take Child ~~A~~ G out. (Later amended by application, see paragraph 45 of this decision).*

The matters outlined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and/or 5 of the allegation amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

Admissions:

- 20. Mr Ibegbuna was not in attendance for the panel chair to be able to ask him if he admitted any of the allegations and whether he admitted that his fitness to practise is currently impaired.
- 21. The panel noted the contents of the Social Worker's Response Bundle.
- 22. In line with Rule 32(c)(i)(a) of the Rules, the panel then went on to determine the disputed facts.

Background:

- 23. On 19 September 2023, Social Work England received a referral from Bradford Children and Families Trust ("the Trust") regarding Mr Ibegbuna ("the Social Worker"). Mr Ibegbuna was employed at the Trust from 10 July 2023 to 6 September 2023, approximately two months as an agency worker. It is alleged that, during his employment, the Social Worker:
 - a. Failed to complete tasks within expected timescales;

- b. Dishonestly falsified records in respect of home visits and children being seen;
- c. Breached professional boundaries by visiting the home of a former service user, Child G, on 8 September 2023 when he was no longer their allocated social worker, and offering to take Child G out when there was no professional reason to do so.

Summary of evidence:

Social Work England

- 24. Ms Kennedy drew the panel's attention to all the relevant documents including, but not limited to, the statement of case, the final statement bundle, the final exhibits bundle and the social worker's response bundle.
- 25. Oral evidence was given by the following witnesses:
 - a. Zahida Ishaq, registered social worker and Service Manager at Bradford Children and Families Trust;
 - b. Saika Parveen, registered social worker and Team Manager at Bradford Children and Families Trust at the time of the allegations;
 - c. Shabnam Nazir, social worker and Practice Supervisor at Bradford Children and Families Trust;
 - d. Service User A, Mother of Child D, E and F;
 - e. James Hobson, IT Business Partner at Bradford Children and Families Trust at the time of the allegations.

- 26. The written and oral evidence included the following summary in respect of each child:

Child A

- 27. A referral for Child A was received on 17 August 2023. Ms Saika Parveen (Team Manager and Mr Ibegbuna's line manager) stated that Child A should have been seen by Mr Ibegbuna by 24 August 2023. A case note created by Mr Ibegbuna indicates that the Social Worker carried out an unannounced home visit on 24 August 2023. However, the case note was not created until 5 September 2023 which was outside of the required timeframes of 48 hours set out in the Trust's recording policy.
- 28. In respect of the case notes for visits recorded on 24 August 2023 and 29 August 2023, Ms Parveen's and Ms Ishaq's evidence was that the case notes appeared incomplete and lacked the necessary detail.

Child B

- 29. Child B's case was allocated to Mr Ibegbuna on 18 August 2023 and he had five working days from the date of referral to visit the child, as per the details contained in the

management and oversight form, which would have been 24 August 2023. Mr Ibegbuna recorded an attempted visit on 24 August 2023, but there was no response. Mr Ibegbuna recorded the next action was to reattempt contact within the next 48 hours. Mr Ibegbuna recorded having had a phone call on 25 August 2023, with child B's mother. Ms Parveen's evidence was that Mr Ibegbuna did not complete the visit in the five working day deadline as they were not considered a completed visit as the child and family were not seen.

30. Mr Ibegbuna recorded a home visit on 30 August 2023, outside of the five working day deadline set out in Management Oversight and Case Allocation. The case note states: "Child seen – case not[sic] to be updated shortly". Ms Parveen contended that the case note lacked any of the details as set out in Recording Policy and was not updated before Mr Ibegbuna left the Trust on 6 September 2023, and therefore not updated within 48 hours.
31. The case notes for the 24 August 2023 and 25 August 2023 were created by Mr Ibegbuna on 5 September 2023, outside of the 48 hour deadline for recording case records as set out in the Recording Policy.
32. Ms Parveen and Ms Zahida Ishaq (Service Manager) contended that the level of detail in the case notes of 24 August 2023, 25 August 2023 and 30 August 2023 lacked sufficient detail and were not in line with the recording policy.

Child C

33. Mr Ibegbuna undertook a school visit to Child C on 20 July 2023. However, he did not undertake a home visit until 23 August 2023. Given the risks relating to Child C, Ms Ishaq would have expected Mr Ibegbuna to be visiting Child C once every two weeks. Further, she noted that in the 20 July 2023 case record Mr Ibegbuna had recorded that he would undertake an unannounced visit to the mother on 21 July 2023, however, there is no record of this visit being undertaken.
34. Mr Ibegbuna recorded seeing Child C on 23 August 2023 and that Child C's mother was absent. Mr Ibegbuna recorded that he would follow up with the mother on 24 August 2023 for a full home visit. However, there is no record of the 24 August 2023 follow up arrangement being completed. In addition, Mr Ibegbuna recorded the 23 August 2023 home visit on 4 September 2023, twelve days after the visit is recorded to have taken place and outside of the 48 hour timeframe. Furthermore, there were concerns that Mr Ibegbuna did not provide adequate detail in relation to those two visits.
35. Mr Ibegbuna was said to have not complete the assessment for Child C's case by the revised deadline of 31 August 2023 nor to have completed the safety plan and/or direct work with Child C.

Child D, E, F

36. The case note for the 21 July 2023 attempted home visit was not created until 25 July 2023, outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The case notes for visits on 25 July, 8 August and 18 August 2023 were created on 29 August 2023, outside of the 48 hour timeframe.
37. It is alleged that Mr Ibegbuna did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes recorded for 21 July 2023, 25 July 2023, 8 August 2023 and 18 August 2023. It is also alleged that Mr Ibegbuna recorded a visit on 18 August 2023 which did not take place and his actions in recording the visit as such were dishonest.
38. The assessment in this case was not completed by Mr Ibegbuna by 25 August 2025 or at all.

Child G

39. Mr Ibegbuna visited Child G on 10 August 2023 and recorded the visit on 29 August 2023, over 48 hours from the visit.
40. Child G's mother called the Trust on 8 September 2023 reporting that Mr Ibegbuna was attending her property, after she was aware that he no longer worked at the Trust, and attempted to take Child G out. She also sent photographs of Mr Ibegbuna.

Mr Ibegbuna's Response

41. Mr Ibegbuna's responses to the allegations was sent in two emails to Social Work England on 27 November 2023. They are also included in a call note between Social Work England staff and Mr Ibegbuna on 27 November 2023. In summary, they include:
 - a. He alleges that he was subjected to verbal abuse from senior colleagues, insensitivity and harassment. This included being ridiculed in front of other people and being screamed at and abused in the office. He alleged that the abuse was racism.
 - b. In respect of attending the home of Child G, that he worked as an intermediary facilitator with young men at risk of county lines violence, and that at no point did he enter or attempt to enter anyone's home with another person. In addition, he stated that he was incredibly anxious that he was in the local area to a home he had previously worked in and did not want to cause further upset.
 - c. He alleges that he received no training and experienced IT issues that impacted his ability to work and that his concerns about IT issues went unheeded.
 - d. [PRIVATE]
42. A panel of adjudicators at a case management meeting on 14 November 2025 determined that the following hearsay evidence was admissible: "what Shabnam Nazir

and Saika Parveen were told by Child G's mother and the photos of Mr Ibegbuna." The application was granted on the basis that it was fair to admit.

43. At the close of the oral evidence, the panel heard an application by Ms Kennedy to amend allegation 5(b)(iii) from "Child A" to "Child G", submitting that the error is typographical and no prejudice will be suffered by Mr Ibegbuna by the late amendment.
44. The panel then heard closing submissions on the facts by Ms Kennedy.

Legal advice

45. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser on the application to amend allegation 5(b)(iii), drawing the panel's attention to Rule 32. The panel agreed to the application to amend allegation 5(b)(iii).
46. In respect of the facts, the legal adviser reminded the panel that the burden of proving each allegation rests with Social Work England and the panel must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities. The legal adviser reminded the panel that all evidence must be considered in the round, that it is for the panel to determine how much weight, if any, to attach to the hearsay evidence, and referred to the following cases on the question of dishonesty: *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords* [2017] UKSC 67, Group Seven Ltd and Anor v Notable Services LLP and ors [2019] EWCA Civ 614, Lawrance v General Medical Council [2015] EWHC 586 and *Lavis v Nursing and Midwifery Council* [2014] EWHC 4083.
47. In respect of allegations (4)(a)(iv) and (4)(b)(iv) (not recording a visit on 18 August 2023 within the required timeframes), the legal adviser stated that, logically, as this was the visit that Social Work England assert did not happen (allegation 4(c)), if the panel find that the visit did not happen, there would not be a requirement for that visit to have been recorded. The legal adviser invited the panel to consider dealing with the question of whether the visit took place (allegation 4(c)) before determining whether the visit was recorded in the required timescales (allegation 4(a)(iv)) and adequately/accurately recorded (allegation (4)(b)(iv)).

Finding and reasons on facts:

Allegation 1: In relation to Child A, you:

a) Did not record a visit on 24 August 2023 within the required timeframes.

48. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen. It also accepted the documentary evidence of the Recording Policy at the Trust, which states that "the case record should be completed within a maximum 48 hours of the visit. Significant events should be recorded immediately".
49. The panel considered the case note that showed that Mr Ibegbuna did not record the visit on 24 August 2023 until 5 September 2023, which is outside of the required timeframes. The panel found allegation 1(a) **proved**.

Allegation 1: In relation to Child A, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

i. 24 August 2023.

50. The panel considered the case notes for 24 August 2023. It also considered the evidence of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen, who stated that they expected there to be more detail in the case note about the conversation Mr Ibegbuna had with the mother or the child.
51. The panel found that the case note was confusing and lacked detail. In particular, it did not include the voice of the child even though the note claimed that Mr Ibegbuna had seen the child. The panel found allegation 1(b)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 1: In relation to Child A, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

ii. 29 August 2023.

52. The panel considered the evidence of Ms Parveen and the case note, which, in the detailed notes section states: “Child seen. Full case note to be updated”. In her oral evidence, Ms Parveen described the case note as a “ghost visit” (a ghost visit being an incomplete case note used as a placeholder).
53. The panel found that the case note was incomplete and lacked detail of the visit. There was no evidence that the case note had been updated. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Parveen and Ms Ishaq that social workers should not write “ghost” case notes and that it was not normal practice. The panel found allegation 1(b)(ii) **proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

a) Did not carry out and/or record the following visits and/or calls within the required timeframes:

i. 24 August 2023.

54. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen, namely, the social worker was required to visit Child B within five working days. The panel also accepted their evidence that social workers were expected to continue to try and visit the child within the timeframe, even when the initial visit is not successful.
55. The panel considered the written statements and exhibits of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen which showed that the five working days started from 18 August 2023 (the date of the referral), therefore the visit had to be completed by 24 August 2023.
56. After the evidence was heard, the panel sought clarification from Ms Kennedy on how Social Work England defines “carry out” in this part of the allegation. Ms Kennedy submitted that “carry out” refers to undertaking a completed visit.

57. The panel accepted the definition of “carry out” submitted on behalf of Social Work England. As the attempted visit on 24 August 2023 was not completed, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna did not carry out the visit. In addition, the panel found that he did not record the visit within the required 48 hour timeframe, as the case note shows that the visit was recorded by Mr Ibegbuna on 5 September 2023. The panel found allegation 2(a)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

- a) Did not carry out and/or record the following visits and/or calls within the required timeframes:

- ii. 25 August 2023.

58. The panel found 2(a)(ii) proved on the basis that Mr Ibegbuna did not carry out the visit to Child B within the required timeframe of five days, as the visit had to be completed by 24 August 2023. The panel considered the case note for 25 August 2023, which is a telephone call with the Child B’s mother. That is not a visit to the child therefore, he did not carry out the visit.
59. The panel also found that Mr Ibegbuna did not record the telephone call within the required 48 hour timeframe, as the case note for the 25 August 2023 telephone call was created by Mr Ibegbuna on 5 September 2023. The panel found allegation 2(a)(ii) **proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

- a) Did not carry out and/or record the following visits and/or calls within the required timeframes:

- iii. 30 August 2023.

60. The panel considered the case note for this home visit on 30 August 2023, in which it states “Child seen”. The panel found that this visit was the first visit to the child, outside of the required timeframe of five days. As the case note was written on 1 September 2023, it was within the 48 hour timeframe for completing case notes. The panel found allegation 2(a)(iii) proved only to the extent that the visit to the child was not carried out within the required timescales. The panel found allegation 2(a)(iii) **proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

- b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

- i. 24 August 2023

61. The panel considered the written evidence of Ms Ishaq who stated that, “the social worker has provided insufficient content in the record as he could have included for example the mobile number used, the time he visited, or whether the curtains were drawn or gate open.” The panel also considered the case note, which included a note that a voicemail was left.

62. The panel determined that the case note was adequate. As this was a failed visit, unless there was something important that was seen outside of the address, the panel determined that a general description of the property was not necessary. In relation to providing the mobile number used, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna stating that a voicemail had been left was adequate. The panel found allegation 2(b)(i) **not proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

ii. 25 August 2023;

63. The panel considered the written evidence of Ms Parveen and Ms Ishaq, who stated that Mr Ibegbuna had recorded seeing Child B's bedroom when he could not have done as it was a telephone call. The panel considered the case note, which clearly shows that it was about a telephone call with Child B's mother. The panel noted that the indication that Mr Ibegbuna saw Child B's bedroom is from a drop down menu on the case note that indicates that Child B's bedroom was seen.
64. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's case note was adequate. Mr Ibegbuna was clear on what took place during the telephone conversation. It is also clear from the case note that it was a telephone call and not a home visit. The panel found that the error mentioned above did not make this case note inadequate. The panel found allegation 2(b)(ii) **not proved**.

Allegation 2: In relation to Child B, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

iii. 30 August 2023.

65. The panel considered the case note, which states in the detailed notes section "Child seen – case note to be updated shortly". Similar to allegation 1(b)(ii), this case note is lacking in detail. The panel found allegation 2(b)(iii) **proved**.

Allegation 3: In relation to Child C, you:

a) Did not carry out and/or record a visit on 23 August 2023 within the required timeframes.

66. The panel considered the written evidence, case note and the management oversight and case allocation document in respect of Child C, noting that a visit was due to be completed by 26 July 2023 (within five working days). The panel also considered the oral evidence of Ms Parveen, who stated:
- a. That the visit took place because the police had gone to see the child at school and the social worker had to attend that visit unexpectedly.
 - b. She would have expected the child to have been seen at home with their mother.

67. The panel accepted Ms Parveen’s oral evidence that although the initial visit to the child took place at the school, she would have expected Mr Ibegbuna to follow up with a visit at the child’s home. The panel also noted that the case note for the 20 July 2023 school visit includes the following: “Social worker to undertake unannounced visit to mother’s home by 21 July 2023”.
68. The panel agreed with Ms Parveen and the case note in that Mr Ibegbuna should have followed up with a visit to the child’s home on 21 July 2023. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna did not conduct a visit to the child within the required timeframe as he did not visit the child at home. In addition, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna recorded the visit of 23 August 2023 on 4 September 2023, which is outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The panel found allegation 3(a) **proved**.

Allegation 3: In relation to Child C, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in relation to the following visits:

i. 20 July 2023;

69. The panel considered the evidence of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen, who stated that the case note was not on the correct template. They pointed to a list of information that should be contained in the case note, which is detailed in the recording policy, and stated that the list was the template.
70. The panel considered Mr Ibegbuna’s case note in respect of 20 July 2023 visit carefully. The panel found that the case note was detailed, child focused and included the voice of the child. The fact that it did not follow the list did not suggest that the recording was inadequate, as it did contain the necessary information. The panel found allegation 3(b)(i) **not proved**.

Allegation 3: In relation to Child C, you:

b) Did not provide adequate detail in relation to the following visits:

ii. 23 August 2023.

71. The panel considered the case note in respect of the 23 August 2023 carefully. The panel found that the case note is very minimal and lacks details about the child. The panel would have expected more information about the child in this case note as Mr Ibegbuna purports to have seen Child C. The panel found this case note to be inadequate. The panel found allegation 3(b)(ii) **proved**.

Allegation 3: In relation to Child C, you:

c) Did not complete the assessment for the case by the revised deadline of 31 August 2023.

72. The panel considered the documentary and oral evidence. When questioned about bringing the deadline forward, Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen both said in oral evidence that this would have been agreed by the social worker. The panel found that the deadline

was revised, according to the case supervision record. The panel noted Mr Hobson's evidence that when a case audit was conducted it was identified that Mr Ibegbuna had not completed an assessment for Child C. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna did not complete the assessment for the case by the revised deadline of 31 August 2023. The panel found allegation 3(c) **proved**.

Allegation 3: In relation to Child C, you:

d) Did not complete one or more of the following required actions for the case by 2 August 2023:

- i. Safety Plan; and/or**
- ii. Direct Work with Child C.**

- 73. The panel considered the evidence of Ms Parveen, who stated that safety plans were plans drawn up with the child and the parents to reduce risk to the child and maintain their safety. She stated that a safety plan would usually be prepared in the first visit or second visit with the family.
- 74. Ms Parveen was asked about the deadline of 2 August 2023 as this was not specifically included in the case notes. Ms Parveen stated that the 2 August 2023 was the 10 day checkpoint which was when they expected most of the actions (including the direct work and the safety plan) to have been completed.
- 75. The panel found that 2 August 2023 was the 10 day checkpoint, and that the 10 day checkpoint, which was not completed, included the safety plan and direct work with the child. The panel found allegation 3(d)(i) and (ii) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

a) Did not record the following visits within the required timeframes:

- i. 21 July 2023**

- 76. The panel considered the case note for the 21 July 2023 visit carefully. This states that it was created on 25 July 2023 by Mr Ibegbuna. This is outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The panel found allegation 4(a)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

a) Did not record the following visits within the required timeframes:

- ii. 25 July 2023**

- 77. The panel considered the case note for the 25 July 2023 visit carefully. This states that it was created on 29 August 2023 by Mr Ibegbuna. This is outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The panel found allegation 4(a)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

a) Did not record the following visits within the required timeframes:

iii. 8 August 2023

78. The panel considered the case note for the 8 August 2023 visit carefully. This states that it was created on 29 August 2023 by Mr Ibegbuna. This is outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The panel found allegation 4(a)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

- a) Did not record the following visits within the required timeframes:

iv. 18 August 2023

79. The panel considered the advice of the legal adviser at paragraph 47 above. The panel decided to determine allegation 4(c) and 4(d) before reaching a determination in relation to this allegation. As they found that the visit did not happen (allegation (4)(c)) and that Mr Ibegbuna's actions were dishonest (allegation (4)(d)), they found that allegation 4(a)(iv) was **not proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

- b) Did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

i. 21 July 2023

80. The panel considered the case note carefully. The case note describes a failed visit.
81. The panel determined that the case note was adequate. Similar to allegation (2)(b)(i), this was a failed visit. In line with the panel's decision on allegation 2(b)(i), unless there was something important that took place or was visible during the failed visit, there was nothing more that needed to be added. The panel found allegation 4(b)(i) **not proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

- b) Did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

ii. 25 July 2023

82. The panel considered the evidence of Ms Parveen, who stated that she would have expected more detail, including who was present, what was discussed, direct work with the children, what was agreed at the end of the visit and follow up. She also stated that Mr Ibegbuna had not used the template. She clarified that the template was a list of headings in the recording practice guidance and that she would have expected Mr Ibegbuna to copy and paste those headings.
83. The panel considered the case note for the visit on the 25 July 2023 carefully. The panel found that the case note was detailed and included the voice of the child highlighted in blue. The panel noted that whilst it could have included more, it included what was necessary. The panel found allegation 4(b)(ii) **not proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

b) Did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

iii. 8 August 2023

84. The panel considered the oral evidence of Ms Parveen, who stated that the case note should have included the template and should have included more about the children he saw. She stated that the voice of the child was missing, nor does it include anything that was discussed with the children. She also stated that it should have made reference to why Mr Ibegbuna had not seen Child E alone. Finally, she stated that he added detailed information about his conversation with the mother but should have included direct work with the children.
85. The panel considered the case note carefully. The panel noted that the case note includes “Child E and Child D both seen but were leaving the home upon arrival of SW.” It noted that the table at the top of the case note indicates that Child F and Child D were seen alone but Child E was not. However, the panel concluded that the note was adequate. The note includes detail on the conversation Mr Ibegbuna had with the mother, and it is understandable that the note does not include direct work with the children as they were leaving the address upon his arrival. The panel found allegation 4(b)(iii) **not proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

b) Did not provide adequate and/or accurate detail in case notes for visits recorded for:

iv. 18 August 2023

86. The panel considered the advice of the legal adviser at paragraph 47 above. The panel decided to determine allegation 4(c) and 4(d) before reaching a determination in relation to this allegation. As they found that the visit did not happen (allegation (4)(c)) and that Mr Ibegbuna’s actions were dishonest (allegation (4)(d)), they found that allegation 4(b)(iv) was **not proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

c) Recorded that a visit took place on 18 August 2023 when it did not.

87. The panel considered the oral evidence of Service User A, as well as her witness statement and exhibits. She was adamant that the purported visit on 18 August 2023 did not take place. The panel noted that Service User A stated that she did not keep a list of visits written in a calendar. However, her oral evidence was supported by messages between her and Mr Ibegbuna. Those messages included the following:
- a. A message from Mr Ibegbuna on 10 August 2025 stating “Hi Service User A yes I can come tomorrow. Please let me know if 3pm works”. Service User A responds with “Hiya yes tomorrow is good”.

- b. Messages between Mr Ibegbuna and Service User A on 11 August 2023 regarding Mr Ibegbuna being on an emergency visit. He states that she is his next visit after he has completed the emergency visit. In response, Service User A asks for a “rough time” and Mr Ibegbuna states “Text me your postcode pls and I’ll tell you now” and “Once the police leave here I can set off”.
 - c. There are no other messages between Service User A and Mr Ibegbuna until 17 August 2023, when Service User A asks Mr Ibegbuna for an update. He responds on 18 August 2023 and provides an update, which they both discuss. There is no mention of a visit on that date.
 - d. The next messages between them are on 21 August 2023 with no mention of a visit on that date.
88. The panel also considered the case note. It found that the case note was, in essence, a “ghost” record, as it merely states “Children seen” and “Full case to be updated.” The panel found that there is no evidence to support Mr Ibegbuna in any assertion that he did visit the children on that date. The panel found on the balance of probabilities that this visit did not take place. As such, the panel found allegation 4(c) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

- d) Your actions in 4(c) above were dishonest in that you sought to give the impression that the visit had taken place on 18 August 2023 when you knew it had not.
89. The panel considered the test for dishonesty in *Ivey v Genting*[2017], namely that the panel must ascertain (subjectively) the actual state of the individual’s knowledge or belief as to the facts and, when his actual state of mind is established, whether his conduct was dishonest by applying the objective standards of ordinary decent people.
90. The panel noted that Mr Ibegbuna made the case note on 29 August 2023, only 11 days after the alleged visit. The panel found that this was not so long ago to suggest that he would have mistaken that a visit took place when he did not. In addition, he had contact with Service User A on the 18 August 2023 as shown in the text messages, and there was nothing in those messages to indicate that they met.
91. The panel considered the case of *Lavis v Nursing and Midwifery Council*[2014], and determined that, without the benefit of Mr Ibegbuna’s oral evidence or a written explanation regarding this case note, any other potential explanations for the creation of the note would be speculative.
92. The panel found allegation 4(d) **proved**.

Allegation 4: In relation to Child D, E and F, you:

- e) Did not complete the assessment by the deadline of 25 August 2023.

93. The panel considered the case supervision record for Child D, E and F, in which it states that the assessment is to be completed by Mr Ibegbuna by 25 August 2023. The panel considered the written evidence of Ms Ishaq, who confirmed that the assessment was not completed by the time Mr Ibegbuna left the Trust. The panel noted Mr Hobson's evidence that when a case audit was conducted it was identified that Mr Ibegbuna had not completed an assessment for Child D, E and F. The panel found allegation 4(e) **proved**.

Allegation 5: In relation to Child G, you:

- a) In relation to a home visit on 10 August 2023 did not record the visit within the required timeframes

94. The panel considered the case note for the 10 August 2023 visit carefully. It states that it was created by Mr Ibegbuna on 29 August 2023, which is outside of the 48 hour timeframe. The panel found allegation 5(a) **proved**.

Allegation 5: In relation to Child G, you:

- b) On 8 September 2023, you:

- i. attended the property of Child G when you no longer worked for the Trust.

95. The panel considered the hearsay evidence of Child G's mother, who informed Ms Nazir that Mr Ibegbuna had attended her address. The panel also considered Mr Ibegbuna's written response sent to Social Work England by email on 27 November 2023, in which he stated the following:

"Regarding attending a home, I have worked for long periods independent as an intermediary facilitator. I have worked with young men that are at risk of county lines violence - alongside the British transport police, local councils & other initiatives. This is well documented..."

*"At no point did I enter or attempt to enter anyone's home *with another person*. Nor would I do so. I was however incredibly anxious that I was in the local area to a home I had previously worked in - and was very anxious that I did not cause further upset."*

96. The panel considered the photos of Mr Ibegbuna that Child G's mother provided to Ms Nazir's colleague. The panel also considered the written evidence of Ms Parveen, which states that she immediately tried to call Mr Ibegbuna upon being made aware of his visit. Mr Ibegbuna responded by text later that day at 15:49, stating that he was in the area undertaking Child Criminal Exploitation intermediary work and went to Child G's property as he "was mindful of my proximity to the family & wanted to inform them my presence had nothing to do with them".
97. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna did attend the property of Child G. Mr Ibegbuna admitted to being in the area at the time in his email dated 27 November 2023. Ms Parveen's evidence of what Mr Ibegbuna informed her about attending the property

corroborates with his written account in which he states that he was “incredibly anxious that I was in the local area of the home”. The panel found allegation 5(b)(i) **proved**.

Allegation 5: In relation to Child G, you:

b) On 8 September 2023, you:

- ii. were in the company of one or more individuals who had no professional reason to be there;**

98. The panel considered the evidence carefully. The panel noted that the only account of Mr Ibegbuna attending the home with “individuals who had no professional reason to be there” was the hearsay evidence of Child G’s mother. Two photographs from Child G have also been admitted into evidence: the first being a car and people in the background and the second being a photo of Mr Ibegbuna. Without the direct evidence of Child G’s mother, the panel was unable to say that any of the individuals in the first photograph are connected to Mr Ibegbuna or if they are at Child G’s mother’s address. The panel were unable to find this allegation proved on the balance of probabilities because there was insufficient evidence. The panel found allegation 5(b)(ii) **not proved**.

Allegation 5: In relation to Child G, you:

b) On 8 September 2023, you:

- iii. Offered to take Child G out.**

99. The panel considered the evidence carefully. The only evidence that Mr Ibegbuna offered to take Child G out comes from the hearsay evidence of Child G’s mother. In Ms Nazir’s oral evidence, she recalled Child G’s mother being distressed, and stated that Child G’s mother said:

“...’your social worker is at my door asking for my son but he has no reason to be there.’ I asked why he was there. She said ‘He wants my son, he wants my son.’”

100. When asked to clarify this inconsistency with her written statement, which states that the mother of Child G said “he asked to take her son out”, Ms Nazir stated that she could not remember the exact words that Child G’s mother said. Ms Nazir confirmed in her oral evidence that there was no contemporaneous record of that telephone call and that she did not know if Child G’s mother was asked to make a statement about this.

101. The panel determined that there was insufficient evidence to find, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr Ibegbuna asked to take Child G out. The sole and decisive evidence on this is hearsay evidence, of which Ms Nazir is unsure of whether Child G’s mother alleged that Mr Ibegbuna asked or offered to take Child G out. The panel considered that, if Mr Ibegbuna did ask to take Child G out while no longer working for the Trust, it would have been a serious incident that required contemporaneous notes and safeguarding. As there is no evidence that any of this happened, the panel cannot find that Mr Ibegbuna asked to take Child G out. Allegation 4(b)(iii) is **not proved**.

Finding and reasons on grounds:

102. Ms Kennedy submitted that Mr Ibegbuna's actions amounted to misconduct, referring the panel to the definition of misconduct in *Roylance v General Medical Council (No. 2)* [2000] 1 AC 311. Ms Kennedy referred to the breaches of parts of Social Work England's professional standards contained in her statement of case.
103. The panel accepted the legal advice on misconduct.
104. In order to determine whether the facts proved amounted to misconduct, the panel considered Mr Ibegbuna's actions fell into three categories: a) poor record keeping, b) dishonesty and c) breaching professional boundaries.

Poor record keeping

105. In respect of the facts found relating to poor adherence to timescales and poor record keeping (allegations 1(a), 1(b)(i), 1(b)(ii), 2(a)(i), 2(a)(ii), 2(a)(iii), 2(b)(iii), 3(a), 3(b)(ii), 3(c), 3(d)(i), 3(d)(ii), 4(a)(i), 4(a)(ii), 4(a)(iii), 4(e) and 5(a)), the panel considered the evidence of Ms Ishaq, Ms Parveen, Mr Hobson and Mr Ibegbuna's written response. The panel found that there were systemic failures in the operation at the Trust, with widespread recording issues being acknowledged by Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen in oral evidence. There was also an absence of, or an inadequate, induction for Mr Ibegbuna. In evidence, Ms Ishaq differentiated between the induction for agency workers and for permanent staff, stating that agency workers are expected to "hit the ground running", suggesting that they do not need as thorough an induction as permanent staff. The panel find this concerning, given that agency staff may be new to the organisation and would still need to be inducted on the processes and procedures.
106. The panel also found that the complete absence of professional supervision (as opposed to case supervision) that Mr Ibegbuna received throughout his employment was unacceptable. Professional supervision is part of Social Work England's Professional Standards and the Trust had a duty to supervise Mr Ibegbuna.
107. Finally, the panel noted the evidence of Ms Ishaq and Ms Parveen regarding Mr Ibegbuna's caseload. This included that he had a caseload of 27 cases, where the limit at the Trust was 22 cases, that some of the caseload he had inherited was already outside of timeframes and some had been reallocated twice. The panel agreed that Mr Ibegbuna's case load was higher than would be expected in that team.
108. However, the panel had to weigh the above against Mr Ibegbuna's own individual professional duties. As an experienced social worker, he should have known the importance of good record keeping. He would or should have been able to draft good quality case notes, regardless of whether he was new to the organisation. He should have also known that leaving "ghost" case notes was poor practice, which was compounded by Mr Ibegbuna failing to actually update those case notes.
109. The Trust's failings do not outweigh the expectations and responsibilities of an experienced social worker. Mr Ibegbuna had a personal responsibility to ensure that he

was aware of the policies and procedures of the Trust. If Mr Ibegbuna had issues with timeliness or an excessive case load, he should have raised this with the Trust. Furthermore, Mr Ibegbuna agreed to bring an assessment deadline forward and failed to meet this.

110. Not only did Mr Ibegbuna fail to complete case records and assessments on time, he also failed to complete visits with children within the timescales. The panel felt that Mr Ibegbuna's failure to visit Child C at home after the school visit on 20 July 2023 until 23 August 2023, over a month after the initial visit, was a particularly serious failure. Mr Ibegbuna could have left Child C at significant risk of harm. If Mr Ibegbuna was unable to visit the child at home on 21 July 2023 as detailed in the case note, he should have informed his supervisors to ensure that another social worker could conduct that visit or facilitated his conducting of the visit.
111. [PRIVATE]
112. [PRIVATE]
113. Overall, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's poor record keeping and inability to meet timescales amounted to misconduct.

Dishonesty

114. In respect of Mr Ibegbuna dishonestly recording a visit with Children D, E and F on 18 August 2023 (allegations (4)(c) and 4(d)), the panel determined that falsifying records in relation to a child is misconduct. Mr Ibegbuna's actions went beyond carelessness or negligence. They were deliberate. Mr Ibegbuna has a duty to be honest. In addition, the case note could have given a false impression to other social workers that the children had been seen and were safe when they had not been, which could have put the children at risk of significant harm.

Professional boundaries

115. In respect of Mr Ibegbuna breaching professional boundaries by attending Child G's address on 8 September 2023 (allegation 5(b)(i)), the panel considered the evidence to determine why Mr Ibegbuna attended the address. Mr Ibegbuna's written response states that he worked with young men that are at risk of county lines violence as an intermediary facilitator. He denies attending the address "*with another person*."
116. The panel then considered Ms Parveen's written evidence. Once Ms Parveen was informed that Mr Ibegbuna had attended Child G's address, she attempted to contact Mr Ibegbuna on the same day. She exhibits a text message from Mr Ibegbuna, in which he stated that he was undertaking "CCE" (Child Criminal Exploitation) intermediary work and that:

"I was mindful of my proximity to the family & wanted to inform them my presence had nothing to do with them."

117. The panel found this was not a good reason. If Mr Ibegbuna had concerns about the impact of his presence in the locality, he should have contacted the Trust.
118. Mr Ibegbuna deliberately attended the address of Child G when he no longer worked for the Trust. He had no professional reason to do so. His actions clearly caused Child G's mother distress as she had been informed that he had been removed from the case. The panel found that this behaviour also amounted to misconduct.
119. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's actions had breached the following paragraphs of Social Work England's professional standards:
- 2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.
 - 2.3 Maintain professional relationships with people and ensure that they understand the role of a social worker in their lives.
 - 3.11 Maintain clear, accurate, legible and up to date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions.
 - 3.12 Use my assessment skills to respond quickly to dangerous situations and take any necessary protective action.
- As a social worker, I will not:
- 5.2 Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker while at work, or outside of work.
 - 5.3 Falsify records or condone this by others.
 - 6.7 Cooperate with any investigations by my employer, Social Work England, or another agency, into my fitness to practise or the fitness to practise of others.
120. The panel was satisfied that Mr Ibegbuna's actions as set out in allegations 1(a), 1(b)(i), 1(b)(ii), 2(a)(i), 2(a)(ii), 2(a)(iii), 2(b)(iii), 3(a), 3(b)(ii), 3(c), 3(d)(i), 3(d)(ii), 4(a)(i), 4(a)(ii), 4(a)(iii), 4(e), 5(a), 5(b)(i) were sufficiently serious in nature to amount to misconduct.

Finding and reasons on current impairment:

121. Ms Kennedy submitted that Mr Ibegbuna's fitness to practise is currently impaired, referring to Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanction guidance' and the relevant case law. She conceded that Mr Ibegbuna's record keeping could be remediated, but questioned whether he had insight into all of his actions. She submitted that the reflective work, certificate of courses completed and testimonials are insufficient to show that Mr Ibegbuna is not currently impaired.
122. The panel accepted advice from the legal adviser, who reminded the panel of the case of *Meadow v GMC* [2007] EWCA Civ 1390 and the principles set out in *Council for Healthcare and Regulatory Excellence v NMC and Grant* [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin). The panel was reminded to consider the following questions; a) If Mr Ibegbuna has in the past acted and/or is liable in the future to act so as to put a service user at unwarranted

risk of harm; and/or b) has Mr Ibegbuna in the past and/or is he liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute; and/or c) has Mr Ibegbuna in the past breached and/or is he liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the profession. The legal adviser referred the panel to Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance' and explained the personal and public elements of impairment. The legal adviser referred the panel to the relevant sections of the guidance on harm caused (or risk of harm), insight and dishonesty in professional practice.

123. When considering the question of impairment, the panel took into account the Social Worker Response Bundle, submissions on behalf of Social Work England, the relevant case law and Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanction guidance'.

Personal element

124. In respect of the factors in *CHRE v Grant*, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's actions put children at risk of significant harm. The best interests of the children should have been at the centre of his work. Late, inaccurate, poor quality and false record keeping puts children at risk of significant harm. The panel noted that there is no evidence that Mr Ibegbuna's actions caused children actual harm, however, it took into account the following at paragraph 16 of Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanction guidance':

"Risk of harm and the impact of a social worker's actions can be as important as actual harm caused. This is because continuing to act in a way that risks public safety could cause actual harm in the future, whether or not it has in the past."

125. The panel took into account Mr Ibegbuna's initial engagement with the investigation. This appears to have included the following:

- a. Communicating with Social Work England.
- b. Instructing solicitors.
- c. Obtaining four testimonials.
- d. Drafting a reflective piece.
- e. Undertaking online training "focused on ensuring a more inclusive and supportive work environment".
- f. Undertaking training in "data submission and delivery".
- g. Private coaching.

126. However, as Mr Ibegbuna stopped engaging with Social Work England on 23 October 2024 which is over a year ago and failed to update his contact details as required by a registered social worker, his non-engagement calls his insight into question. On the evidence before it, the panel are unable to assess whether Mr Ibegbuna understands the severity of his actions.

127. The panel determined that the misconduct relating to poor record keeping was remediable. The panel had no information regarding Mr Ibegbuna's current employment and the panel has not had sight of any testimonial evidence from a current line manager. Furthermore, there was no evidence from Mr Ibegbuna in relation to his current practice particularly in record keeping.
128. The panel determined that the misconduct relating to dishonesty and breaching professional boundaries was less easily remedied given that these are attitudinal in nature.
129. The panel found that any references to Mr Ibegbuna's remorse in the written documents was limited.
130. The panel determined that there was a risk of repetition of the misconduct due to Mr Ibegbuna's lack of insight, limited expressions of remorse and limited remediation. The information Mr Ibegbuna has provided for the courses he purports to have taken is limited. He has not stated what was included in the courses, therefore, the panel has seen no evidence that the courses were suitable for issues with his practice or what he learned from them.
131. In regards to Mr Ibegbuna's dishonesty and breach of professional boundaries, there is no evidence to show remorse, remediation or any reduction in the risk of repetition.
132. Regarding the testimonials, the panel noted that the authors were made aware of the allegations and that the testimonials were positive. However, the panel found they were of limited value. None of the testimonials are from someone who was working at the Trust at the time of the allegations. In addition, none of the testimonials are recent, therefore, they do not evidence Mr Ibegbuna's current fitness to practise.
133. Due to the above, the panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's fitness to practise is currently impaired on personal grounds.

Public element

134. In regards to the public element, the panel considered whether a finding of impairment is necessary to promote and maintain public confidence and/or proper professional standards for social workers in England. A finding of impairment is necessary on the public element for the following reasons:
 - a. Mr Ibegbuna's repeated errors in record keeping and visiting children.
 - b. Mr Ibegbuna's breach of professional boundaries.
 - c. Mr Ibegbuna's dishonesty in recording a visit to Child D, E and F on 18 August 2023 that did not take place.
135. The public expect social workers to safeguard children with honesty, integrity and professional boundaries. Mr Ibegbuna's actions went against those expectations. The panel found that Mr Ibegbuna's dishonesty and breach of professional boundaries brought the profession into disrepute. In addition, his repeated failure to record

accurately, adequately and timely, as well as his failure to visit children within the timescales, a finding of impairment is necessary to both promote and maintain public confidence and proper professional standards for social workers in England.

Decision and reasons on sanction:

136. The panel heard submissions from Ms Kennedy on sanction. Ms Kennedy provided an overview of the relevant principles and submitted the following as mitigating and aggravating factors:

Mitigating

- a. Mr Ibegbuna submitted some evidence of training and some character references, although she submitted that they are of limited value as he has not reflected what he has learned.
- b. [PRIVATE]
- c. Systemic failures at the Trust which were acknowledged by the witnesses, inadequate induction, absence of professional supervision and a case load that was higher than expected for social workers at that Trust.

Aggravating

- a. That his conduct was a pattern of behaviour over a sustained period.
 - b. That he lacks insight, remorse and remediation.
 - c. That he put service users at risk of harm.
137. Ms Kennedy submitted that a conditions of practice order is not appropriate as it would not address the breaches of the standards, in particular those in relation to dishonesty and the breach of professional boundaries. Ms Kennedy submitted that a suspension order was inappropriate due to Mr Ibegbuna's lack of insight and ability to remediate the concerns. She submitted that a removal order was the appropriate sanction in this case.
138. The panel accepted the advice from the legal adviser, who reminded the panel that its overarching objective is the protection of the public, which includes safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of service users, maintaining public confidence in the social work profession, and upholding the standards expected of registered social workers. The panel was advised that sanctions are not intended to punish the social worker but are imposed to protect the public and to serve the wider public interest. The panel must act proportionately, balancing the interests of the social worker with the public interest, and ensuring that any sanction imposed is the minimum required to meet the regulatory objectives. The panel were advised to consider the sanctions in ascending order of seriousness.

139. The legal adviser directed the panel to Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance', outlining the available outcomes and the guidance on determining which sanction is necessary and proportionate to protect the public.
140. When considering the question of sanction, the panel took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'. The panel found the following mitigating and aggravating factors in this case:

Mitigating factors

- a. Contextual factors, including:
 - i. The fact that Mr Ibegbuna's case load was higher than expected at the Trust.
 - ii. Mr Ibegbuna had inherited cases that had already passed timescales, with some having been reallocated more than once.
 - iii. Mr Ibegbuna's lack of supervision which has been acknowledged by witnesses from the Trust.
 - iv. The lack of appropriate induction provided to Mr Ibegbuna during his time at the Trust.
 - v. The systemic failures within the Trust generally (e.g. poor record keeping practice).
- b. Absence of previous fitness to practise concerns.

Aggravating factors

- a. Mr Ibegbuna's actions caused a risk of harm to people who use social work services.
 - b. Mr Ibegbuna has demonstrated limited insight.
 - c. Mr Ibegbuna has shown insufficient evidence of remediation.
 - d. Mr Ibegbuna has demonstrated limited remorse.
 - e. Mr Ibegbuna has failed to engage with this process since 23 October 2024.
 - f. Mr Ibegbuna was an experienced social worker. He should have been aware of proper professional standards, including timely and accurate record keeping, and his duty to act with honesty and to maintain professional boundaries.
141. The panel did not find that there was enough evidence to suggest a sustained pattern of behaviour given the contextual factors and systemic issues outlined above, as well as the short length of time that Mr Ibegbuna worked at the service. However, in respect of the dishonesty and failure to maintain professional boundaries, the panel recognised

that those behaviours reflected attitudinal concerns rather than issues of competence or an isolated error.

142. Having addressed the above factors, the panel considered each available sanction in ascending order. The panel concluded that taking no further action, or issuing advice or a warning, would be wholly inappropriate given the seriousness of the findings.
143. The panel next considered whether a conditions of practice order would be appropriate. The panel found that, if Mr Ibegbuna's misconduct was restricted to poor adherence to timescales and poor record keeping, a conditions of practice order may have been appropriate. However, a conditions of practice order would not address his dishonest conduct or breaching off professional boundaries, given his lack of engagement and insight, there is no indication that Mr Ibegbuna would comply with any conditions imposed.
144. The panel then went on to consider whether a suspension order or removal order would be the proportionate sanction. The panel recognised that the misconduct was serious, put children at risk of harm, was dishonest and involved a failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
145. However, the panel found a number of factors that supported a less restrictive outcome. The panel noted that dishonesty is always serious, however in this case, the dishonesty was limited to a single incident.
146. The panel also noted that, in relation to his failure to maintain professional boundaries, there is no evidence that Mr Ibegbuna attended Child G's address to seek any personal gain or to intentionally cause any harm. The panel's view was that his behaviour was a serious lapse in judgement.
147. The panel considered the guidance on removal orders in the 'Impairment and sanction guidance' and found that Mr Ibegbuna has not demonstrated a persistent lack of insight, nor has he persistently behaved in a dishonest manner.
148. The panel bore in mind the need to impose the least restrictive sanction possible in order to protect the public and therefore determined that a suspension order would be the appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case. The panel is satisfied that the public will be protected by Social Work England's fitness to practise procedures which require a review of a final suspension order. If Mr Ibegbuna continues to fail to engage, it will be open to that panel to determine what sanction is the most appropriate at that stage.
149. In respect of the length of the suspension order, the panel considered that a 12 months suspension would be sufficient to uphold public confidence and professional standards in the profession. It will demonstrate that such misconduct is serious and against the fundamental tenets of the profession. The panel also considered that the length of the suspension would be sufficient to protect the public.
150. For all of the above reasons, the panel imposes a suspension order for 12 months.

Interim order:

151. In light of its findings on sanction, the panel next considered an application by Ms Kennedy for an interim suspension order for 18 months to cover the appeal period before the final order becomes effective.
152. The panel took the advice of the legal adviser.
153. The panel next considered whether to impose an interim order. It was mindful of its earlier findings and decided that it would be wholly incompatible to find that an interim suspension order is not necessary to protect the public during the appeal period.
154. Furthermore, the panel were unable to revoke the current interim suspension order as Mr Ibegbuna has not waived the right to the requisite notice period. However, the panel is satisfied that there is nothing in the Social Worker Regulations 2018 that prevent two interim orders existing simultaneously.
155. Accordingly, the panel concluded that an interim suspension order is necessary for the protection of the public. When the appeal period expires this interim order will come to an end unless an appeal has been filed with the High Court. If there is no appeal, the final order of suspension for 12 months shall take effect when the appeal period expires.

Right of appeal:

156. Under Paragraph 16(1)(a) of Schedule 2 of the regulations, the social worker may appeal to the High Court against the decision of adjudicators:
 - 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.
157. Under Paragraph 16(2) of Schedule 2 of the regulations 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.
158. Under Regulation 9(4) of the regulations this order may not be recorded until the expiry of the period within which an appeal against the order could be made, or where an appeal against the order has been made, before the appeal is withdrawn or otherwise finally disposed of.
159. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practice Rules 2019 (as amended).

Review of final orders:

160. Under Paragraph 15(1), 15(2) and 15(3) of Schedule 2 of the regulations:

- 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), and a final order does not have effect until after the expiry of that period

161. Under Rule 16(aa) of the rules 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:

162. Please note that in accordance with section 29 of the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002, a final 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>.