



Social worker: Althea Maureen Larman

Registration number: SW81726

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 19 January 2026 to 30 January 2026

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome:
Fitness to practise impaired, conditions of practice order (12 months)

Interim order:
Interim conditions of practice 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. Ms Larman attended and was not represented.
3. Mr Larman attended the hearing as a McKenzie Friend in support of Ms Larman, and the panel noted that he is her brother.
4. Social Work England was represented by Ms Rebecca Young instructed by Capsticks LLP.
5. The panel of adjudicators conducting this hearing (hereafter "the panel") and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Alexander Coleman	Chair
Christine Moody	Social worker adjudicator
Sarah McAnulty	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Poppy Muffett & Hannah Granger	Hearings officers
Andrew Brown	Hearings support officer
Zill-e Huma	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

6. The panel 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 9 December 2025 and addressed to Ms Larman at her email address which she provided to Social Work England;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 9 December 2025 detailing Ms Larman's registered email address;
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 9 December 2025 the writer sent by email to Ms Larman at the address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents;
7. Having had regard to Rules 16, 44 and 45 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 and to all of the information before it concerning service, the panel was satisfied that notice of this hearing had been served on Ms Larman in accordance with those Rules. In reaching that conclusion, the panel considered the documentary evidence of service and took into account that Ms Larman attended the hearing and confirmed receipt of the notice. Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that service of the notice of hearing was effective and in compliance with the FTP Rules 2019 (as amended).

Preliminary matters:

8. The panel received and considered an application from Ms Larman for her brother, Mr Larman, to act as her McKenzie Friend.
9. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser that a registrant is entitled to be accompanied at a Social Work England Fitness to Practise hearing and that there is no automatic prohibition on a family member attending. However, the panel retains full discretion to determine who may be present, the capacity in which they attend, and the conditions of their attendance, in order to ensure that the proceedings remain fair, orderly, and proportionate. Where a registrant seeks assistance from a brother as a McKenzie Friend, there is no automatic right to such support and any permission is a matter for the panel's discretion, to be determined by reference to whether it would promote fairness and effective participation without undermining the proper conduct of the hearing.
10. The legal adviser further advised that, if permission is granted, the brother's role must be strictly limited to that of a lay supporter, namely providing quiet support, assisting with papers, and taking notes. He must not address the panel, make submissions, question witnesses, or answer questions on the registrant's behalf, and must remain silent unless expressly directed otherwise by the chair. He must comply with confidentiality obligations and must not record or disclose any aspect of the proceedings. The panel should set clear boundaries on his involvement, make clear that any breach may result in his exclusion, and ensure that its determination, including the capacity in which he is permitted to assist and any restrictions imposed, is clearly recorded with reasons.
11. The panel considered the application made by Ms Larman for her brother, Mr Larman, to assist her during the hearing as a McKenzie Friend. The panel took into account that Ms Larman [PRIVATE] and that she would benefit from practical and emotional support in order to participate effectively in the proceedings. The panel was satisfied that permitting Mr Larman to assist her would promote fairness and enable her to engage properly with the hearing process, and that his presence would not undermine the orderly or impartial conduct of the proceedings.
12. The panel therefore granted the application and permitted Mr Larman to act as Ms Larman's McKenzie Friend. His role was limited to providing quiet support, assisting with the organisation of papers, and taking notes. He was not permitted to address the panel, make submissions, or question witnesses on Ms Larman's behalf. The panel reminded Mr Larman of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and not to record or disclose any aspect of the proceedings, and made clear that any failure to comply with these conditions could result in his exclusion from the hearing.
13. [PRIVATE]
14. In light of this, the panel made reasonable adjustments including allowing Ms Larman additional time to read and consider documents, ensuring that questions were asked

clearly and one at a time, and permitting her to rely more fully on oral explanation where appropriate. The panel also allowed regular breaks and kept the arrangements under review throughout the hearing. The panel was satisfied that these adjustments were proportionate, did not confer any unfair advantage, and were necessary to mitigate any substantial disadvantage arising from Ms Larman's [PRIVATE] thereby enabling her to participate fully and effectively in the proceedings.

15. The panel noted that, subject to Rule 38 of Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), hearings are conducted in public in order to uphold the principle of open justice. However, the Rule 38(a) permit all or part of a hearing to be held in private where this is necessary to protect confidential or sensitive information. In light of the material before it, which included health and other sensitive personal matters, the panel, on its own motion, determined that those parts of the proceedings dealing with such issues should be heard in private. The panel was satisfied that this approach struck an appropriate balance between the principle of open justice and the need to protect the privacy of the registrant and others, and that it was necessary and proportionate in the interests of fairness.
16. At the point when Ms Larman was due to give her evidence on Thursday 22 January 2026, the panel received an email from Mr Larman requesting that the hearing be paused until the following Monday. The panel noted the following email:

"Dear Andrew,

Unfortunately, it wouldn't be in Althea's best interest to continue today. I sincerely apologise on her behalf. As also stated, we have been using my phone which is not available tomorrow as I have other appointments. I will not have any more issues on my side moving forward.

Mark Larman"

17. In these circumstances, the panel allowed Mr Larman to further detail the position above, which included [PRIVATE].
18. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser that it has broad discretion under the Social Work England (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2019 to regulate its own procedure and to adjourn or pause proceedings where necessary to ensure fairness and effective participation. The panel was advised to take into account that Ms Larman is [PRIVATE], that reasonable adjustments had been recognised, and that she had become [PRIVATE] immediately prior to the stage of giving evidence and making final submissions. The panel was advised that this should be treated as a potential impediment to effective participation rather than a matter of convenience, and that continuing in those circumstances risked undermining the fairness of the process.
19. The legal adviser further advised that, in exercising its discretion, the panel should balance the public interest in the timely disposal of proceedings against the registrant's right to a fair hearing, and that fairness and public confidence would not be served by proceeding when the registrant was, for good reason, unable to participate effectively.

The panel was advised that it was entitled to take into account the role of the McKenzie Friend as part of the registrant's support, though this was not determinative. The panel was advised that pausing the hearing and resuming on a later listed sitting day, when the registrant would be better able to participate with appropriate support, would be a fair and proportionate course.

20. The panel considered the request made on behalf of Ms Larman to pause the hearing and resume on Monday morning. The panel took into account that Ms Larman is [PRIVATE], that reasonable adjustments had been put in place, and that she had become [PRIVATE] immediately prior to the stage at which she was due to give evidence and make final submissions. The panel was satisfied that, in those circumstances, Ms Larman's ability to participate effectively was impaired and that continuing with the hearing at that stage would risk unfairness.
21. The panel also noted that Mr Larman's telephone would not be available for Ms Larman to use the following day and that her McKenzie Friend would be unable to attend. While these matters were not determinative, the panel took them into account as part of the overall context when assessing the potential impact on Ms Larman's ability to participate effectively. Having balanced the public interest in the timely disposal of proceedings against Ms Larman's right to a fair hearing, the panel determined that it was fair and proportionate to pause the hearing and to resume on the morning of Monday 26 January 2026.

Allegations:

22. The allegations arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 11 July 2023 are:

“Whilst registered as a social worker:

- 1. On or around 13 August 2021, you allowed Child A to return to the care of his mother in the community/family home, thereby failing to ensure the child's safety in that you:*
 - a. Failed to check whether a paediatric assessment had been completed: and/or*
 - b. Failed to check that an advocates meeting had taken place; and/or*
 - c. Did not seek the approval of a nominated officer before transferring Child A into the community; and/or*
 - d. Provided false information to the Local Authority solicitor that management approval had been given for the child to return home; and/or*
 - e. Failed to complete Schedule 3 of the Care Planning Procedures were complete before transferring Child A into the community.*
- 2. Your conduct at regulatory concern 1(d) was dishonest.*

The matters outlined at paragraphs 1 and 2 above individually or collectively amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct”

Admissions:

23. Rule 32c(i)(aa) Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the ‘Rules’) states:
“Where facts have been admitted by the social worker, the adjudicators or regulator shall find those facts proved.”
24. Following the reading of the allegations the panel chair asked Ms Larman whether she admit any of the allegations and whether she admit that her fitness to practise is currently impaired.
25. Ms Larman informed the panel that she admitted allegations 1(a), 1(b) and 1(e).
26. The panel therefore found allegations 1(a), 1(b), 1(e) proved by way of Ms Larman’s admissions.
27. The panel noted that Ms Larman denied allegations 1(c), 1(d) and 2. She further denied that her fitness to practise is currently impaired.
28. In line with Rule 32c(i)(a) of the Rules, the panel then went on to determine the disputed facts.

Background:

29. On 23 August 2021, Social Work England received a referral from Helen Rennocks, the Operational Lead within Children’s Services at Coventry Council, regarding the Respondent social worker, Althea Maureen Larman.
30. Ms Larman was employed by the Council as a Senior Social Worker between 8 June 2021 and 20 August 2021. She was employed as an agency worker from BWR Recruitment and has been registered as a Social Worker since the 1 August 2012.

Witnesses on behalf of Social Work England:

31. The following witnesses were called on behalf of Social Work England:
 - a. Mr Gubanski (Locum Team Manager at Coventry City Council from 26 July 2021 to 30 April 2022.)
 - b. Ms Jauhal (Solicitor for Coventry City Council at the time in question)
 - c. Ms Wilshire (An Independent Reviewing Officer at the time in question)
 - d. Ms Rennocks (the Operational Lead for the Looked After Children and Permanence Service between June 2021 - March 2024 for Coventry City Council)
32. Ms Larman gave evidence on oath and was cross examined by Ms Young and answered questions from the panel.

Submissions:

Submissions made on behalf of the Social Work England:

33. Ms Young submitted that the burden of proof rests on Social Work England and that the panel must determine the facts on the balance of probabilities. She reminded the panel that it is for Social Work England to satisfy it that it is more likely than not that the factual allegations are proved and that findings must be based on evidence rather than speculation. In relation to the dishonesty allegation, Ms Young submitted that the panel must apply the test in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd [2017] UKSC 67*, namely that the panel must first determine Ms Larman's actual state of knowledge or belief as to the facts and then decide whether, by the standards of ordinary decent people, the conduct was dishonest.
34. In her submissions, Ms Young stated that Ms Larman accepted that she did not check whether the paediatric assessment had been completed and knew it had not been received, that she did not check whether the advocates' meeting had taken place, and that she failed to complete the Schedule 3 placement with parents assessment and approval process. Ms Young indicated that she did not seek to revisit those admitted matters in detail and instead focused on the remaining factual issues, namely whether Ms Larman sought or obtained the required authorisation from a nominated officer or other appropriate manager before transferring Child A on 13 August 2021, and whether she was truthful when she told the local authority solicitor that management approval had been given and that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was aware.
35. Ms Young submitted that those issues should be determined by careful consideration of Ms Larman's communications with Mr Gubanski and Ms Wiltshire, in particular the telephone contact on 13 August 2021, the case discussion meeting on 17 August 2021, and the subsequent email correspondence on 18 August 2021. In her submissions, she contended that there was no contemporaneous evidence that Ms Larman sought "final checks" or raised that there was no safety plan in place. The note of the 13 August contact with Mr Gubanski referred only to transport costs and did not record any request for authorisation or any disclosure that key conditions had not been met.
36. Ms Young submitted that, at the meeting on 17 August, when Ms Larman was asked who had authorised the move, she did not state that she had discussed the matter in detail with Mr Gubanski or that he had been informed that a safety plan was not in place. She submitted that, if such discussions had genuinely taken place, it would reasonably be expected that they would have been raised at that meeting, given the seriousness of the concerns being expressed.
37. Ms Young further submitted that Ms Larman's email of 18 August, in which she stated that she was not aware she needed to go to senior management, was inconsistent with her later account that she had effectively sought and obtained appropriate approval before the move. In her submissions, Ms Young invited the panel to find that this contemporaneous email demonstrated that Ms Larman had not sought the necessary authorisation prior to the transfer.

38. In her submissions regarding Ms Wiltshire, Ms Young contended that the Looked After Child (LAC) review documentation and subsequent emails demonstrated that, although there may have been a general direction of travel towards Child A returning home, this was consistently expressed as conditional upon specific steps being completed, including the completion and approval of a safety and transition plan and further agreement by relevant professionals.
39. Ms Young submitted that the minutes of the LAC review and the email of 11 August made clear that any return home was subject to conditions and collective decision-making. She submitted that Ms Larman must have understood this, as she later sent plans and assessments to others after the child had already been returned, demonstrating that she knew further authorisation and scrutiny were required.
40. Ms Young further submitted that the evidence of Ms Jauhal, the local authority solicitor, was that she only became aware of the transfer on 16 August 2021 and was immediately concerned, and that she had been told by Ms Larman that management approval had been given and that the IRO was aware. In her submissions, Ms Young contended that this account was not supported by the evidence of Mr Gubanski, Ms Rennocks or Ms Wiltshire, all of whom were clear that no such approval had been given and that they had not authorised the move. She submitted that there was no documentary record of any management or nominated officer approval.
41. Ms Young submitted that, taken together with the court directions and the requirements for Schedule 3 approval, the evidence showed that Ms Larman proceeded without the required authorisation and then provided inaccurate information to the solicitor about that authorisation. She invited the panel to find the remaining factual allegations proved on the balance of probabilities and, in relation to the allegation of dishonesty, to apply the *lvey* test to the facts found established.

Submissions made on behalf of the social worker:

42. Ms Larman submitted that she had extensive experience working with children and families, having begun her career in 1989 in community-based roles before progressing through residential childcare and social work assistant posts and ultimately qualifying as a social worker with the support of senior managers. She stated that by June 2021 she was an experienced practitioner with responsibility for a number of complex cases, including several matters before the court.
43. Ms Larman informed the panel that she became the allocated social worker for Child A in June 2021 and described the case as particularly challenging due to missing documentation, which she personally retrieved from the foster carer shortly after allocation. She submitted that she worked diligently on the case alongside other professionals and remained committed to progressing it in the child's best interests. She further submitted that this period was during the COVID-19 pandemic, when services were under significant strain, staff absences were common, and much of the

work and communication with professionals and the court was conducted remotely, which added to the complexity and pressure of the case.

44. Ms Larman submitted that she attended the LAC review on 6 August 2021, at which there was discussion about the progress of the case and the next stage of planning. She stated that the meeting was broadly positive and that the IRO discussed planning for Child A. She accepted that she misunderstood what was meant by progressing to the “next stage” and believed, at the time, that this meant the child could move into the community with their mother as the next stage in the assessment. She explained that when she asked whether the case could progress, she understood the response from the IRO to mean that the move could proceed, whereas she now accepts that this was subject to conditions and further steps being completed. She submitted that this misunderstanding lay at the heart of the subsequent events.
45. Ms Larman told the panel that on 13 August 2021 she intended to carry out what she regarded as her final checks before any move took place. She left a message for her manager, Mr Gubanski, asking him to call her back. She received a call from the foster carer stating that the mother and child were unsettled and asking to move them earlier.
46. Ms Larman stated that she told both the foster carer and the mother that nothing could proceed until she had completed her final checks with her manager and obtained approval for transport funding. When Mr Gubanski returned her call, she explained that the residential assessment and the family support worker’s assessment had been completed and that the case was ready to progress into the community. She asked him to agree funding for the transport. She stated that he agreed, and she now recognises that his agreement related to funding rather than authorisation for the placement. She accepted that she misunderstood the scope of that conversation at the time.
47. Ms Larman submitted that when later asked by the local authority solicitor whether management approval had been obtained, she answered based on her genuine understanding at that time, which was that she had discussed the matter with her manager and that the plan had been supported at the LAC review. She stated that she did not intend to mislead the solicitor and that she did not fabricate any account of approval. She emphasised that she believed she was telling the truth as she understood it, and that there was no intention to deceive any professional involved in the case. She accepted that her recording was inadequate but maintained that this was not evidence of dishonesty.
48. Ms Larman further submitted that at the meeting on 17 August 2021 with a senior manager and others, she stated that she was not aware she needed to go to senior management for approval. She said this honestly and consistently with her belief at the time that the agreement she had received through discussions with the IRO and her manager was sufficient. She accepted that she failed to complete certain steps and

procedures and expressed regret for those failings, but she distinguished those failures from dishonesty. She stated that she did not knowingly place Child A at risk and that her actions were driven by what she believed to be an agreed plan to progress the case in a difficult and pressured working environment during the pandemic.

49. Ms Larman submitted that the documents and witness evidence now show that the move should not have taken place without further safeguards, and she accepted that she misunderstood the process. However, she maintained that misunderstanding is not the same as dishonesty. She reiterated that she spoke truthfully about her discussions with Mr Gubanski and the IRO as she understood them at the time, and that any inaccuracies arose from confusion and misinterpretation rather than deliberate falsehood. She therefore invited the panel to find that while she made errors of judgment and failed to follow procedures fully, she did not act dishonestly and did not deliberately mislead the solicitor or her managers.

Legal advice on facts:

50. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser that it is required at this final hearing to make findings of fact which will form the foundation for any later decisions on misconduct, impairment and sanction, and it must therefore approach the fact-finding exercise with care, applying the correct legal principles and giving clear, transparent reasons. The panel was advised that the burden of proof rests throughout on Social Work England and does not shift. The standard of proof is the civil standard, namely the balance of probabilities. In relation to each allegation and each particular, the panel must decide whether it is satisfied that it is more likely than not that the alleged fact occurred; if so, it is proved, and if not, it is not proved.
51. The panel was further advised that it must consider all the evidence in the round, addressing each allegation separately and avoiding generalised reasoning. The panel should evaluate oral and written evidence, documentary material and contemporaneous records in their proper context, and should focus on consistency, plausibility and alignment with reliable contemporaneous documentation rather than demeanour, which is not a reliable indicator of truthfulness.
52. Where dishonesty is in issue, the panel was advised to apply the two-stage approach in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd*: first, determine Ms Larman's actual knowledge or belief as to the facts at the time, and secondly, assess whether her conduct, viewed in light of that belief, was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people. The panel was reminded that dishonesty is a serious allegation requiring careful scrutiny, and that any finding must be supported by clear and convincing evidence; suspicion or inference alone is insufficient, and the panel must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that dishonesty is properly and cogently established applying the *Ivey* test.

Panel's finding and reasons on facts:

53. The panel considered that all of the witnesses were helpful and assisted it from their different professional perspectives. The panel found that each witness gave their evidence in a measured and professional manner and sought to answer questions to the best of their ability. The panel was satisfied that the witnesses were attempting to provide an accurate account of events as they understood them, based on their respective roles and involvement at the time.
54. The panel further noted that all witnesses acknowledged the difficult and pressurised working environment in which these events occurred, including the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, staff absences, and high caseloads. The panel accepted that these contextual factors affected how the case was managed and understood by those involved.

Allegation1(c)

“Did not seek the approval of a nominated officer before transferring Child A into the community”

55. The panel carefully considered all of the evidence before it in relation to Allegation 1(c), including the oral evidence of the witnesses, their written statements, the relevant local authority policies, and the contemporaneous records of events. The panel also took into account the Placement with Parents Policy, which makes clear that a child who is subject to an Interim or Full Care Order cannot be returned to the care of a parent unless a placement with parents (Schedule 3) assessment has been completed and approved by the nominated officer.
56. The panel accepted the evidence of Mr Gubanski and Ms Rennocks that this process required the completion of a Schedule 3 assessment, quality assurance by a Team Manager, and final approval by the nominated officer, Ms Rennocks. The panel was satisfied that this procedure was well established, clearly set out in policy, and accessible to practitioners. The panel further accepted Mr Gubanski's evidence that he understood Ms Larman to be aware of this process, particularly in light of her statement that she was completing a placement with parents assessment in respect of another child, which indicated familiarity with the procedure.
57. The panel was satisfied that no Schedule 3 assessment had been completed in respect of Child A prior to the move into the community and that no approval had been sought from, or granted by, the nominated officer. The panel accepted the evidence of Mr Gubanski that, as Team Manager, he did not give permission for Child A to be returned to the care of the mother in the community and, in any event, did not have the authority to do so. The panel also accepted the evidence of Ms Rennocks that, as the nominated officer, she did not give any approval for the transfer. There was no documentary evidence to support any suggestion that such approval had been sought or obtained.
58. The panel placed weight on the contemporaneous notes of the case discussion meeting held on 17 August 2021, which recorded that Ms Larman stated the move had

been discussed at the LAC review and endorsed by professionals, and that she was advised at that meeting that senior management permission and a Schedule 3 assessment were required and would not have been approved in the circumstances. The panel found that this contemporaneous account was consistent with the evidence that no authorised approval process had been followed prior to the move.

59. The panel noted that Ms Larman accepted both in her oral evidence and in her final hearing statement that at the time she did not consider “*a Schedule 3 was needed at this stage.*”
60. Having considered the evidence in the round, the panel was satisfied that Ms Larman did not seek or obtain the required approval from the nominated officer before Child A was returned to the care of the mother.
61. **The panel therefore finds, on the balance of probabilities, that Allegation 1(c) is proved.**

Allegation 1(d)

“Provided false information to the Local Authority solicitor that management approval had been given for the child to return home”

62. The panel carefully considered all of the evidence before it in relation to Allegation 1(d), including the oral evidence of the witnesses, their written statements, and the contemporaneous documentary records. In particular, the panel placed weight on the evidence of Ms Jauhal, the local authority solicitor, who stated:

“The Social Worker informed me that management (I can’t recall whether has said anyone in particular) had agreed to the move and that the independent reviewing officer Kirsty Wiltshire was aware.”
63. The panel found Ms Jauhal’s evidence to be clear and consistent, and noted that she had no apparent reason to misrepresent what she had been told. The panel also noted that Ms Jauhal raised her concerns promptly with senior management once she became aware that the child had been returned home.
64. The panel further considered the evidence of Ms Wiltshire, who confirmed that although she had discussed the case with Ms Larman on 13 August 2021, she was not aware of the move prior to it taking place and did not consent to it. The panel was satisfied that Ms Wiltshire’s account did not support Ms Larman’s assertion that the move had been approved or endorsed by the IRO.
65. The panel also took into account the evidence of Ms Rennocks, who stated:

“On 18 August 2021, I received an email from Navreet Jauhal, who stated that the Social Worker had informed her the placement had been approved by senior management.”

Ms Rennocks further stated:

“On 18 August 2021, I received an email from the Social Worker following a meeting we had on 17 August 2021... In this email, the Social Worker stated ‘I was not aware that I needed to come to senior management as you outlined in the meeting yesterday... The Social Worker would have known she needed to go to senior management to seek approval for the move... The Social Worker had incorrectly informed the solicitor dealing with the Care Proceedings that the placement had been approved by ‘senior management’.”

66. The panel considered this contemporaneous correspondence to be of particular importance, as it recorded the understanding of those involved at the time.
67. The panel accepted the evidence of Mr Gubanski and Ms Rennocks that no authorisation had been given by either of them for Child A to be returned to the care of the mother. The panel also noted that Ms Wiltshire did not corroborate any suggestion that she had approved or been aware of the move in advance. There was no documentary evidence of any management or senior management approval for the transfer. The panel found that the absence of any record of approval, together with the consistent evidence of the managers and the IRO, supported the conclusion that no such approval had been sought or obtained.
68. Taking all of this evidence together (including Ms Larman’s testimony), the panel was satisfied that when Ms Larman informed Ms Jauhal that management approval had been given, this information was not correct. The panel therefore finds, on the balance of probabilities, that Ms Larman provided false information to the local authority solicitor to the effect that management approval had been given for the child to return home.
69. **The panel therefore finds, on the balance of probabilities, that Allegation 1(d) is proved.**

Allegation 2

“Your conduct at regulatory concern 1(d) was dishonest.”

70. The panel carefully evaluated all the evidence before it in relation to the allegation that Ms Larman’s conduct at Regulatory Concern 1(d) was dishonest and applied the two-stage test in *Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd*.
71. At the first stage, the panel determined Ms Larman’s actual state of knowledge or belief at the time she informed the local authority solicitor that management approval had been given. In reaching its conclusion, the panel considered Ms Larman’s oral evidence, her written representations, and the contemporaneous records.
72. The panel noted that Ms Larman consistently maintained that she believed the move had been agreed following the LAC review and that she understood the plan to be progression to the next phase of assessment in the community. Although this belief was mistaken, the panel found it to be plausible in light of the language used at the LAC review about moving forward and progressing to the next stage. The panel also took into

account the working conditions at the time, including the pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, some reliance on remote communication, and inconsistent supervision arrangements, all of which increased the scope for misunderstanding.

73. The panel further considered Ms Larman's account of her conversation with her manager on 13 August 2021. While the panel found that this conversation did not amount to formal authorisation, it accepted that Ms Larman interpreted the discussion about progressing the case and arranging transport funding as confirmation that the move could proceed. The panel found it significant that Ms Larman openly recorded the child's move in her case notes and continued working with the family in the community the day after and recorded this in the case notes.
74. The panel also took into account that when concerns were later raised, Ms Larman expressed distress and confusion rather than seeking to justify or conceal her actions. The panel noted that Ms Larman stated that at the time she was not aware of the placement with parents' procedure and the Care Planning, Placement, and Case Review (England) Regs 2010 from which the procedure is derived. The panel was satisfied that, at the material time, Ms Larman genuinely believed that agreement had been given and did not appreciate that formal approval had not been obtained. The panel therefore found that Ms Larman's statement reflected her genuine, albeit mistaken, belief at the time. Although the panel accepts that Ms Larman gave false information, but did not do so dishonestly because she genuinely believed it to be true at the time.
75. The panel then turned to the second stage of the Ivey test and considered whether Ms Larman's conduct, viewed in light of that belief, was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people. The panel concluded that, although the information provided to the solicitor was false, it did not result from an intention to mislead. The panel placed weight on the evidence that Ms Larman did not attempt to hide the move; falsify records; or maintain a misleading account once the issue was identified. Her conduct was instead consistent with a practitioner who had misunderstood the approval process and realised only afterwards (having been pointed out to her) that she had made a serious error. The panel considered that an ordinary decent person, knowing that Ms Larman genuinely believed the move had been agreed and did not appreciate that authorisation was lacking, would not regard her conduct as dishonest.
76. Accordingly, the panel was not satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that Ms Larman's conduct at Regulatory Concern 1(d) was dishonest.
77. **The panel therefore finds, on the balance of probabilities, that Allegation 2 is not proved.**

Finding and reasons on grounds and Impairment:

Submissions made on behalf of the Social Work England:

78. In her submissions on behalf of Social Work England, Ms Young reminded the panel that it is a matter for its own judgment whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct. She referred the panel to *Roylance v General Medical Council (No.2)* [2000] 1 AC 311, where misconduct was defined as conduct falling short of what would be proper in the circumstances, judged by reference to the standards ordinarily required of a practitioner.
79. Ms Young submitted that the findings relate to a particularly vulnerable child who had suffered physical harm and who had complex needs. She emphasised that any decision to move such a child from a placement required careful planning, adherence to court directions, and the involvement of multiple professionals. She submitted that the registrant's failures involved breaches of court orders, failures to follow essential statutory and local procedures, and failures to obtain required authorisation before moving the child. These were not minor or technical breaches, but fundamental departures from accepted child protection practice.
80. Ms Young submitted that the conduct fell seriously below the standards expected of a registered social worker and constituted a significant departure from Social Work England's Professional Standards, including the duty to work within legal frameworks, to act safely, and to ensure that relevant professionals are informed of risks and decisions. She submitted that competent and responsible social workers would regard this conduct as serious and unacceptable, and that it therefore amounted to professional misconduct.
81. Turning to impairment, Ms Young submitted that the panel must consider both the personal and public components of impairment, as set out in *Cohen v General Medical Council* [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin) and *Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v Nursing and Midwifery Council and Grant* [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin). She submitted that the conduct demonstrated a failure to ensure a child's safety by not following court directions and established safeguarding procedures, creating a real risk of harm.
82. Ms Young accepted that the registrant had a long professional history and that there was no evidence of previous regulatory findings. However, she submitted that the seriousness of the failures, taken together, demonstrated a lack of understanding of fundamental child protection processes, including compliance with court directions, the need for formal authorisation, and the importance of multi-agency decision-making.
83. Ms Young submitted that although contextual pressures, including workload and the COVID-19 pandemic, may explain the environment in which the registrant was working, such pressures are common in social work practice and do not excuse failures to follow essential safeguarding procedures. She submitted that these pressures raise concern

as to how the registrant would cope in future high-pressure environments, which are an inherent part of social work practice.

84. Ms Young further submitted that the registrant has not practised for a significant period and that it is therefore difficult to assess how she would manage these responsibilities if she were to return to practice. She submitted that, while the registrant has undertaken courses, there is limited evidence of how this learning has been embedded into safe practice. Ms Young submitted that there remains a risk of repetition in the absence of clear evidence of applied learning and effective insight.
85. In conclusion, Ms Young submitted that the panel should find the registrant's fitness to practise currently impaired. She submitted that a finding of impairment is required both to protect the public and to maintain public confidence in the social work profession. The public would expect that serious failures involving a vulnerable child and breaches of court-directed safeguards would be marked by a regulatory finding of impairment to uphold proper professional standards.

Submissions made on behalf of the social worker:

86. In her submissions, Ms Larman relied on her written submissions as well as her oral submissions to the panel. She acknowledged the seriousness of the panel's findings and recognised that the events in this case had involved a vulnerable child and carried the potential for significant risk. She stated that she had reflected deeply on the circumstances, including her understanding at the time and her understanding now, and that her insight had developed significantly. She told the panel that she had learned a great deal from the process and from the hearing itself, and now had a clearer appreciation of the standards expected and the importance of working within established procedures and safeguards.
87. Ms Larman submitted that, since the events, she had actively sought to improve her professional knowledge and understanding. She explained that she had undertaken learning and reading in areas relevant to safeguarding and professional practice, including serious case reviews, and that she had engaged with courses connected to social care and health. She also described undertaking additional learning outside of formal social work training, including [PRIVATE] maintaining clarity of thought, and responding appropriately in difficult situations. She emphasised that she had reflected on how she would manage pressure more safely and effectively in the future, including by seeking support at an earlier stage and communicating more clearly.
88. Ms Larman addressed her [PRIVATE]. She also explained that she had reflected on the importance of speaking openly about her needs and ensuring the right people were aware, so that appropriate support and adjustments could be put in place.
89. Ms Larman submitted that she had reflected carefully on how she would approach similar situations differently in future. She stated that she would ensure that court directions were revisited and followed closely, that she would map out key

requirements clearly, and that she would not proceed without confirming that required processes had been completed. She told the panel that she had learned the importance of clear communication and effective escalation and that, if she could not contact a manager, she would take further steps to escalate appropriately, including contacting more senior managers where necessary and ensuring that communications were made and evidenced in writing.

90. She stated that she would ensure that key documents, plans and assessments were robust, complete, and shared with the relevant professionals in a timely manner, and that she would not work on assumptions or informal understandings where formal safeguards and approvals were required.
91. Ms Larman explained that she had not returned to social work since these events, despite making efforts to do so. She described making enquiries with agencies and being advised to wait until the regulatory process concluded. She told the panel that she had also explored return-to-practice routes, including courses and programmes that could provide mentoring, observation in practice, and support for re-entry into social work after a period away. She submitted that she remained committed to the profession and that the prolonged process had been difficult for her, but that she continued to view social work as a vocation to which she wished to return, particularly within children and families safeguarding, subject to appropriate support and supervision.
92. In response to the panel's questions, Ms Larman described work she had undertaken outside registered social work roles since the events in this case, including work supporting young people transitioning to independent living, where she said she ensured processes were followed, regularly shared young people's views through meetings, and worked with managers and other professionals. She also described more recent work in sheltered housing, where she said she had been required to follow strict health and safety procedures, record actions accurately, report risks promptly, and comply with daily evidential requirements. She indicated that she could obtain references from those roles if required.
93. Ms Larman submitted that she understood the importance of public protection and public confidence. She accepted that members of the public may be concerned by what occurred and that social workers are expected to practise safely and within proper processes. She stated, however, that she believed her insight had developed substantially and that she would be able to demonstrate safe practice through supervision, mentoring, and adherence to legal and local frameworks. She emphasised that she had learned from what went wrong, that she did not believe the failings would be repeated, and that she was committed to practising in line with Social Work England's standards.
94. Ms Larman also addressed how she would manage [PRIVATE], particularly in high-pressure environments, and that she would take steps to ensure she remained able to practise safely and effectively.

Legal advice:

95. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser that misconduct is a matter of legal characterisation of the facts found proved and requires the panel to exercise its own independent professional judgment. The panel was directed to *Roylance v General Medical Council (No 2) [2000] 1 AC 311*, which defines misconduct as conduct falling short of what would be proper in the circumstances, judged by reference to the standards ordinarily expected of a practitioner.
96. The panel was reminded that the threshold for misconduct is high and that not every breach of professional standards will meet it. A finding of misconduct requires a serious departure from the standards expected of a registered social worker. The panel was referred to *Solicitors Regulation Authority v Day & Others [2018] EWHC 2726 (Admin)* and was advised that any conclusion on misconduct must be firmly based on the facts found proved and informed by Social Work England's overarching objective of protecting the public, maintaining public confidence, and upholding proper professional standards.
97. In terms of impairment the legal adviser advised that impairment is a matter of judgment and requires consideration of both a personal and a public component. The panel was referred to *Cohen v General Medical Council [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin)*, which requires consideration of whether the conduct is remediable, whether it has been remedied, and whether it is likely to be repeated.
98. The panel was also directed to *Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v Nursing and Midwifery Council and Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)*, which establishes that impairment may be found where a registrant has acted in a way that puts service users at risk, brings the profession into disrepute, or breaches fundamental professional tenets. The panel was advised that impairment involves a forward-looking assessment of current and future risk and of the wider public interest.
99. The legal adviser further advised the panel that it should have regard to Social Work England's Impairment and Sanctions Guidance, which provides a structured framework for a proportionate and consistent approach while not fettering the panel's discretion. The panel was advised to apply the guidance alongside the legal principles and the facts found proved, with proper regard to public protection, the maintenance of public confidence, and the promotion of professional standards.
100. The panel was advised that the personal component of impairment concerns insight, remediation, and the risk of repetition, while the public component concerns the need to uphold confidence in the profession and proper standards of conduct.
101. Finally, the legal adviser advised the panel that it must decide whether the registrant is currently fit to practise without restriction. If the panel concludes that she is not fit to practise without restriction, her fitness to practise is impaired.

Panel's decision and reasons on grounds and impairment:

Misconduct:

102. The panel carefully considered the facts found proved, the submissions from both parties, the relevant Professional Standards, and the legal advice it received. The panel concluded that Ms Larman's actions fell well below the standards expected of a registered social worker and amounted to a serious departure from proper professional practice. The conduct was not limited to a minor error, oversight, or momentary lapse of judgment. It concerned core safeguarding responsibilities and the lawful management of a highly vulnerable child subject to court proceedings and statutory protections.
103. The panel found that Ms Larman breached Professional Standard 3.1 "*Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately*" by failing to work within the relevant legal and ethical frameworks and by not exercising her professional authority and judgment appropriately. In particular, she failed to comply with court directions and statutory processes governing the return of a child to parental care. These frameworks exist to ensure that decisions affecting children are taken lawfully, transparently and with appropriate oversight. Ms Larman's failure to follow them demonstrated a serious breakdown in professional judgment.
104. The panel further found that Ms Larman breached Professional Standard 3.2 "*Use information from a range of appropriate sources, including supervision, to inform assessments, to analyse risk, and to make a professional decision*" by failing to use information from appropriate sources, including LAC review, supervision and management oversight, to analyse risk and make a defensible professional decision. She did not ensure that key assessments had been completed, did not ensure that necessary authorisations were obtained, and did not adequately test or challenge her own assumptions through supervision or escalation. In a case involving previous serious injury to a very young child, the panel considered this failure to be particularly serious.
105. The panel also found breaches of Professional Standard 3.6 "*Draw on the knowledge and skills of workers from my own and other professions and work in collaboration, particularly in integrated teams, holding onto and promoting my social work identity*". Ms Larman did not draw sufficiently on the knowledge, authority and oversight of other professionals involved in the child's care, including senior managers and those responsible for authorisation. Her actions demonstrated a failure to work collaboratively within an integrated, multi-disciplinary framework. Rather than ensuring collective decision-making, she proceeded in a manner that isolated her from essential professional safeguards.
106. In addition, the panel found that Ms Larman breached Professional Standard 3.8 "*Clarify where the accountability lies for delegated work and fulfil that responsibility when it lies with me*", by failing to clarify where accountability lay for the decision to

move Child A and by acting as though responsibility for that decision rested solely with her. The decision required senior-level authorisation and formal approval processes. By proceeding without ensuring that those requirements were met, she assumed responsibility for a decision that she was not entitled to take.

107. The panel further found that Ms Larman breached Professional Standard 3.9 “*Make sure that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about identified risks and the outcomes and implications of assessments and decisions I make*”, by failing to ensure that relevant colleagues and agencies were properly informed about identified risks and the implications of her decision before the child was moved. The absence of clear communication and confirmation of authorisation meant that key professionals were not able to exercise their safeguarding roles at the point when it mattered most.
108. The panel placed significant weight on the context of the case. Child A was a very young and particularly vulnerable child who had already suffered serious injuries and was subject to court proceedings and on an interim care order. The decision to return such a child to parental care in the community without the required legal safeguards exposed the child to avoidable risk. Although no further harm occurred, the panel found that this outcome was fortuitous rather than the result of proper professional protection. The panel was satisfied that competent and responsible members of the profession would regard this conduct as serious and reprehensible.
109. The panel therefore concluded that Ms Larman’s actions, taken both individually and cumulatively, represented a fundamental failure to safeguard a vulnerable child, to comply with court directions, and to adhere to statutory and professional processes. The panel found that this conduct amounted to professional misconduct.

Impairment:

110. The panel then considered whether Ms Larman’s fitness to practise is currently impaired, having regard to both the personal and public components of impairment.
111. In respect of the personal component, the panel recognised that Ms Larman has demonstrated developing insight into what went wrong and has undertaken learning and reflection since the events. She acknowledged that her actions were wrong, that the child should not have been moved without authorisation, and that her judgment was flawed. She described training, reading and [PRIVATE] undertaken since the incident and spoke about the [PRIVATE] and workload on her decision-making. The panel accepted that her reflections were sincere and that she has taken steps to improve her understanding of professional processes.
112. However, the panel identified important limitations. Although Ms Larman’s developing insight and remorse were acknowledged, her remediation was incomplete. While she has reflected, undertaken learning and addressed underlying issues, including [PRIVATE], her learning has not been tested in social work practice. Insight exists, but it has not yet translated into demonstrated safe practice in a statutory role. Ms Larman

has not practised as a social worker since the incident and has therefore not shown that she can now apply her learning in the type of environment in which the concerns arose.

113. The panel also identified a risk of repetition. The original failings occurred in a pressured safeguarding environment, and Ms Larman expressed a wish to return to that same area of practice. Although she articulated what she would do differently in future, including seeking written authorisation, escalating concerns and relying more on supervision, those intentions have not been tested in practice. Her ability to cope with similar pressures has not been demonstrated since the incident, and the panel was not satisfied that remediation is complete or that the risk of repetition has been sufficiently reduced at this stage.
114. The panel further noted limitations in Ms Larman's insight. While she understood that what happened was serious, she had not yet fully articulated why this case was uniquely high-risk, including the child's age, vulnerability and the significance of the injuries, nor fully demonstrated how her decision-making broke down in those circumstances. This indicated that her insight, although developing, was not yet sufficiently deep or embedded to reassure the panel that similar failures would not recur.
115. The panel also placed weight on the absence of recent social work practice or strong evidence of remediation in a statutory role. Although Ms Larman had worked in loosely related roles, those roles did not involve the same legal responsibilities or safeguarding pressures. This created uncertainty about whether she can now practise safely as a social worker, which is central to the personal component of impairment.
116. In respect of the public component, the panel considered that the misconduct involved a serious breach of the trust placed in social workers to protect vulnerable children and to comply with court-directed processes. A failure to make a finding of impairment in these circumstances would undermine public confidence in the profession and in its regulation. The panel considered that members of the public would be seriously concerned if a social worker who had allowed a vulnerable child to be returned home without proper authorisation were permitted to practise without restriction.
117. The panel further considered that the misconduct breached fundamental tenets of the profession, namely safeguarding, lawful decision-making and collaborative working. The panel concluded that a finding of impairment was required not only because of the risk of repetition, but also to mark the seriousness of the conduct and to uphold proper professional standards and public confidence in both the profession and its regulation.
118. **Taking into account both the personal and public components, the panel determined that Ms Larman's fitness to practise is currently impaired.**

Decision and reasons on sanction:

Submissions made on behalf of Social Work England:

119. Ms Young submitted that sanction is a matter entirely for the panel's judgment, exercised in accordance with the statutory framework, Social Work England's guidance, and the relevant case law. She reminded the panel that the purpose of sanction is not punitive, but to protect the public, to maintain public confidence in the profession, and to uphold proper professional standards.
120. Ms Young submitted that sanctions are necessary in this case both on the basis of public protection and in the public interest. The panel had found that the conduct exposed a highly vulnerable child to a direct risk of harm. The misconduct was not limited to minor errors or oversights but involved serious safeguarding failures in respect of a child subject to court proceedings and statutory protections. The seriousness of the conduct therefore engages the core protective function of regulation.
121. Ms Young submitted that lesser sanctions, such as taking no action or imposing a warning, would be insufficient to address the risks identified by the panel. Such outcomes would fail to reflect the seriousness of the misconduct and would not provide adequate protection for vulnerable service users or maintain confidence in the profession or in Social Work England as regulator.
122. Ms Young drew the panel's attention to Social Work England's Professional Standards and Sanctions Guidance, which provides that where personal impairment is found, a sanction restricting or removing registration will normally be necessary in order to protect the public. Such measures may include conditions of practice or suspension, pending demonstration that the registrant is no longer impaired.
123. Ms Young acknowledged that Ms Larman has undertaken courses and engaged in learning since the events, but submitted that this does not yet go far enough to allay the panel's concerns. Although learning has been undertaken, it has not been tested in social work practice. Further, Ms Larman has not practised as a social worker for a number of years. In those circumstances, there remains a risk were she to return to unrestricted practice.
124. Ms Young submitted that, if the panel were minded to impose conditions of practice, it must be satisfied that the criteria for conditions are met, namely that Ms Larman has demonstrated insight, that the issues are capable of remediation, that workable and proportionate conditions can be formulated, and that the panel can be confident that she will comply with them. Ms Young submitted that the panel should consider whether conditions would be realistically workable in a pressured safeguarding environment, and whether they would sufficiently protect the public and those required to supervise her.
125. Ms Young submitted that, in the alternative, a suspension order may be more appropriate in order to allow Ms Larman time and space, away from the pressures of

frontline safeguarding work, to undertake further structured remediation and training, which could then be reviewed by a future panel. This would protect the public in the interim and provide an opportunity for further insight and consolidation of learning.

126. Ms Young further submitted that the panel must balance the impact of any sanction on Ms Larman against the overriding need to safeguard vulnerable service users. While it is accepted that restrictive sanctions may cause her financial and personal difficulty, those matters cannot outweigh the need to protect children and to maintain confidence in the profession.
127. In response to questions from the panel, Ms Young submitted that, should conditions of practice be imposed, Social Work England would invite the panel to consider conditions similar in nature to those previously imposed under the interim order. These would include requirements to notify Social Work England of any employment as a social worker, to work only under an approved workplace supervisor, to provide regular supervisory reports, to inform Social Work England of any disciplinary or regulatory concerns, and to restrict the scope of her practice so that she is not working independently or supervising others.
128. Ms Young identified the mitigating features as Ms Larman's engagement with the proceedings, her expressions of regret and apology, and the steps she has taken to undertake learning and reflection. Ms Young submitted that these factors indicate that Ms Larman may be willing to comply with regulatory requirements.
129. Ms Young identified the aggravating features as the seriousness of the misconduct, the vulnerability of the child concerned, the exposure of that child to risk of harm, the breach of safeguarding and court-directed processes, and the fact that remediation remains incomplete. Ms Young further submitted that there remains an ongoing risk to service users were Ms Larman to return to unrestricted practice at this stage.
130. Ms Young therefore submitted that a restrictive sanction is required. She invited the panel to consider, in ascending order, whether conditions of practice would be sufficient to protect the public and maintain confidence, or whether a suspension order would be the more appropriate and proportionate response at this time.

Submissions made on behalf of the social worker:

131. Ms Larman relied on her written submissions as well as the oral submissions she made to the panel.
132. Ms Larman expressed her disappointment that the matter had reached this stage, but confirmed that she understands why the proceedings have taken place and accepts the seriousness of the issues. She emphasised that she was not seeking to minimise the findings or the importance of public protection and safeguarding, but asked the panel to take into account the significant passage of time since the events and the impact this process has had upon her.

133. Ms Larman explained that she has now been out of social work practice for almost five years. She stated that during that time she has made sustained efforts to return to practice, including applying through agencies, offering to undertake voluntary work, and keeping her professional profile active. She submitted that despite those efforts she has been unable to secure a role because of the ongoing regulatory proceedings. She asked the panel to consider that this prolonged period out of practice has itself been a substantial consequence and that further restriction may significantly delay her ability to demonstrate that she has learned from what happened.

134. Ms Larman submitted that she has taken active steps to improve herself professionally since the incident. She referred to training, reading and reflective work that she has undertaken, and stated that she now better understands the importance of court directions, authorisation processes and escalation. She told the panel that the only meaningful way she can evidence that learning is by being allowed to return to supervised practice, so that she can demonstrate safe working in real cases.

135. In relation to any potential conditions of practice, Ms Larman confirmed that she would be willing to comply with conditions, including supervision and reporting requirements. She stated that she recognises the importance of supervision and team support and accepts that working under conditions would be an appropriate way to rebuild confidence in her practice. She submitted that conditions should be framed in a way that allows her to work and to evidence her progress, rather than preventing her from returning to the profession altogether.

136. Ms Larman also asked the panel to consider [PRIVATE].

137. Ms Larman submitted that she remains committed to social work and to safeguarding children and vulnerable people. She stated that she wishes to return to permanent employment in the profession, where she can receive stability, mentoring and support. She explained that she has explored further training and mentoring opportunities and has set aside resources to fund additional professional development if required.

138. Ms Larman invited the panel, when determining sanction, to balance public protection and public confidence with the opportunity for her to demonstrate that she can practise safely. She submitted that a sanction which enables her to return to supervised practice would best achieve that balance. She asked the panel to take into account the length of time already spent out of practice, the steps she has taken to learn from what happened, and her willingness to work under restrictions, when deciding what sanction is fair and proportionate.

139. Finally, Ms Larman confirmed that she understands the decision is a matter entirely for the panel. She respectfully asked the panel to consider whether a sanction which allows her to work under conditions would better serve both public protection and rehabilitation, rather than one which further delays her ability to demonstrate safe and reflective practice.

Legal advice:

140. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser that the purpose of sanction is not punitive but to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession and its regulator, and uphold proper professional standards. The panel was advised to have regard to Social Work England's Impairment and Sanctions Guidance and to apply the principle of proportionality, ensuring that any sanction is the minimum necessary to achieve those aims and is consistent with the finding of impairment.
141. The legal adviser advised that the panel must consider aggravating and mitigating factors and assess the available sanctions in ascending order: no further action, advice or warning, conditions of practice, suspension, and removal from the Register. The panel was reminded that no further action is exceptional, and that advice or warnings are unsuitable where there is a current risk to the public.
142. Conditions of practice may be appropriate where the failings are remediable, the social worker has insight, workable and monitorable conditions can be imposed, and there is no risk to the public under restriction. Suspension may be appropriate where conditions are not workable but the case falls short of requiring removal, particularly where there is some insight and willingness to remediate. A removal order is required only where no lesser sanction would sufficiently protect the public or maintain confidence in the profession and professional standards.

Panel's decision and reasons on sanction:

143. The panel considered sanction in light of its findings on misconduct and current impairment, the submissions of the parties, and the advice of the legal adviser. The panel reminded itself that the purpose of sanction is not punitive, but to protect the public, to maintain public confidence in the profession and its regulator, and to uphold proper professional standards. In reaching its decision, the panel had regard to Social Work England's overarching objective and to its Impairment and Sanctions Guidance.
144. The panel applied the principle of proportionality and considered each available sanction in ascending order. It ensured that any sanction imposed was the minimum necessary to achieve the regulatory aims of public protection and the wider public interest, and that it was consistent with the panel's findings on misconduct and impairment.
145. The panel first identified the aggravating and mitigating features of the case. In mitigation, the panel took into account that Ms Larman has demonstrated developing insight into her failings and has expressed genuine remorse. She has undertaken learning and reflection since the events and has meaningfully engaged with these proceedings. The panel also noted that there was no evidence of previous regulatory findings against her and that this was an isolated episode in an otherwise lengthy career.

146. The panel carefully considered Ms Larman’s evidence as to the personal consequences of the proceedings and of any sanction upon her and her family, including [PRIVATE]. However, the panel reminded itself that, in accordance with Social Work England’s Impairment and Sanctions Guidance, the purpose of sanction is not punitive and that the effect of a sanction upon a registrant’s personal circumstances should not ordinarily influence the assessment of the appropriate and proportionate outcome. The panel therefore attached limited weight to this factor and concluded that the public interest in protecting service users, maintaining public confidence in the profession and its regulator, and upholding proper professional standards must prevail.

147. In aggravation, the panel considered the seriousness of the misconduct, which related to safeguarding failures involving a highly vulnerable child who was subject to court proceedings and statutory protections. The panel found that the misconduct involved a failure to follow essential legal and procedural safeguards, including court-directed processes, and that this placed the child at a real risk of harm. The panel considered that such failures strike at the core of a social worker’s safeguarding responsibilities.

148. The panel took into account that the misconduct occurred in a pressured working environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided some context for Ms Larman’s actions. However, the panel also recognised that this was a safeguarding case involving a highly vulnerable child and that her failures had the potential to undermine public confidence in the profession. The panel concluded that, despite the challenging circumstances in which she was working, the seriousness of the misconduct engaged the wider public interest in maintaining confidence in social work and in its regulation.

149. The panel then considered each available sanction in ascending order of seriousness.

150. The panel determined that taking no further action would be wholly insufficient, given that a finding of impairment had been made on both personal and public grounds. Such an outcome would fail to protect the public, would not address the risk of repetition and would not adequately mark the seriousness of the misconduct.

151. The panel next considered whether a warning or advice would be appropriate. The panel concluded that this would not be sufficient because a warning does not restrict practice and would not address the risk of repetition identified. Given the nature of the safeguarding failures, and the vulnerability of the child concerned, a warning would not meet the public interest in maintaining confidence in the profession.

152. The panel then considered whether a conditions of practice order would be appropriate. The panel was satisfied that the concerns identified were capable of being remedied and that Ms Larman had demonstrated developing insight and a willingness to engage with remediation. The panel considered that appropriate, proportionate and workable conditions could be formulated to address the risks identified, including the need for supervision, oversight, and structured professional development. The panel was also satisfied that compliance with conditions could be monitored and that restricted practice would reduce the risk of repetition and protect the public.

153. The panel considered whether a suspension order was necessary. It concluded that suspension would be disproportionate at this stage, given that Ms Larman has demonstrated some insight, has engaged meaningfully with the process, and has expressed a commitment to remediation. The panel considered that the public interest would be better served by allowing Ms Larman the opportunity to return to practice in a restricted and supervised way, rather than excluding her entirely from the profession, where there remains a realistic prospect of safe practice.

154. The panel also considered whether a removal order was required. It concluded that removal would be disproportionate in this case, as the misconduct, while serious, did not demonstrate that Ms Larman's practice was fundamentally incompatible with continued registration, and the failings were remediable with appropriate conditions in place.

155. Accordingly, the panel determined that a conditions of practice order for a period of 12 months was the appropriate and proportionate sanction. The panel considered that a 12 month period should be sufficient for Ms Larman to demonstrate remediation and a return to safe unrestricted practice. The panel concluded that such an order would protect the public by restricting Ms Larman's practice, would support her remediation and professional development, and would maintain public confidence in the profession by marking the seriousness of the misconduct.

156. **The panel therefore imposed a conditions of practice order for 12 months, subject to the following conditions:**

1. You must notify Social Work England within 7 days of any professional appointment you accept or are currently undertaking and provide the contact details of your employer, agency or any organisation with which, you have a contract or arrangement to provide social work services, whether paid or voluntary.
2. You must allow Social Work England to exchange information with your employer, agency or any organisation with which you have a contract or arrangement to provide social work or educational services, and any reporter or workplace supervisor referred to in these conditions.
3. a. At any time you are providing social work services, which require you to be registered with Social Work England, you must agree to the appointment of a reporter nominated by you and approved by Social Work England. The reporter must be on Social Work England's register. The reporter may be the same individual as the workplace supervisor (condition 9).
b. You must not start or continue to work until these arrangements have been approved by Social Work England.
4. You must provide reports from your reporter to Social Work England every three months and 14 days prior to any review. Social Work England will make these reports available to any workplace supervisor referred to in these conditions on request.

5. You must inform Social Work England within 7 days of receiving notice of any formal disciplinary proceedings taken against you from the date these conditions take effect.
6. You must inform Social Work England within 7 days of receiving notice of any investigations or complaints made against you from the date these conditions take effect.
7. You must inform Social Work England if you apply for social work employment / self-employment (paid or voluntary) outside England within 7 days of the date of application.
8. You must inform Social Work England if you are registered or subsequently apply for registration with any other UK regulator, overseas regulator or relevant authority within 7 days of the date of application [for future registration] or 7 days from the date these conditions take effect [for existing registration].
9. a. At any time you are employed, or providing social work services, which require you to be registered with Social Work England; you must place yourself and remain under the supervision of a workplace supervisor nominated by you, and agreed by Social Work England. The workplace supervisor must be on Social Work England's register.
b. You must not start or continue to work until these arrangements have been approved by Social Work England.
10. You must provide reports from your workplace supervisor to Social Work England every three months, and 14 days prior to any review. Social Work England will make these reports available to any reporter referred to in these conditions on request.
11. You must keep your professional commitments under review and limit your social work practice in accordance with your workplace supervisor's advice.
12. You must not supervise or be responsible for the work of any other social worker or student social worker.
13. You must not work as an independent social worker and must only work as a social worker at/from premises where other social workers are employed.
14. You must work with your workplace supervisor or reporter, to formulate a personal development plan, specifically designed to address the shortfalls in the following areas of your practice:
 - Communication with colleagues and relevant agencies
 - Adhering to court orders
 - Working within legal and ethical frameworks

- Understand accountability and reporting
- Working in effective collaboration with colleagues

15. You must provide a copy of your personal development plan to Social Work England within 4 weeks from the date these conditions take effect and an updated copy 2 weeks prior to any review.

16. If you do not secure social work employment, you must provide a reflective piece and log of your CPD activity specifically designed to address the shortfalls in the following areas of your practice:

- Communication with colleagues and relevant agencies
- Adhering to court orders
- Working within legal and ethical frameworks
- Understand accountability and reporting
- Working in effective collaboration with colleagues

You must provide a copy of your reflective piece and log of your CPD activity to Social Work England 2 weeks prior to any review.

17. You must provide a written copy of your conditions, within 7 days from the date these conditions take effect, to the following parties confirming that your registration is subject to the conditions listed at (1) to (16), above:

- Any organisation or person employing or contracting with you to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary.
- Any prospective employer who would be employing or contracting with you to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary (at the time of application).
- Any organisation, agency or employer where you are using your social work qualification/knowledge/skills in a non-qualified social work role, whether paid or voluntary.
- Any locum, agency or out-of-hours service you are registered with or apply to be registered with in order to secure employment or contracts to undertake social work services whether paid or voluntary (at the time of application).
- You must forward written evidence of your compliance with this condition to Social Work England within 14 days from the date these conditions take effect.

18. You must permit Social Work England to disclose the above conditions, (1) to (17), to any person requesting information about your registration status.

Interim order

157. The panel next considered an application by Ms Young for an interim order for a period of 18 months to cover the appeal period before the final order becomes effective. Ms Young also applied for the existing interim order to be revoked.
158. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser on its power to make an interim order under paragraph 11(1)(b) of Schedule 2 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018.
159. The panel noted that Ms Larman waived her right to the statutory notice period in respect of the application to revoke the existing interim order.
160. The panel was mindful of its earlier findings and determined that it would be wholly incompatible with those findings not to impose an interim order. The panel considered paragraph 207 of the impairment and sanctions guidance, which provides that *“an interim order may be necessary where the adjudicators have decided that a final order is required, which restricts or removes the ability for the social worker to practise...without an interim order, the social worker will be able to practise unrestricted until the order takes effect. This goes against our overarching objective of public protection”*.
161. The panel had identified a risk of repetition if Ms Larman were permitted to practise without restriction. The panel therefore concluded that an interim order was necessary to ensure the protection of the public and to maintain public confidence in the profession and in the regulatory process.
162. In determining the appropriate form of interim order, the panel concluded that an interim conditions of practice order was sufficient and proportionate to address the identified risks during the appeal period. The panel determined that the interim conditions of practice order should be in the same terms as the final conditions of practice order imposed by this panel. The panel explained that the purpose of the interim order was to cover the appeal period and to ensure that Ms Larman could not practise unrestricted pending the final order taking effect.
163. Accordingly, the panel determined that an 18-month interim conditions of practice order was necessary and proportionate.
164. The panel directed that this interim order will come to an end when the appeal period expires unless an appeal is filed with the High Court. If no appeal is lodged, the final order of removal shall take effect upon expiry of the appeal period.

Right of appeal:

165. 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.

166. 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.

167. 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.

168. 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:

169. 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

170. 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:

171. 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.](https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-with-regulators/decisions-about-practitioners)