



Social worker: Sarah Edmunds

Registration number: SW125804

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Early Review Hearing

Date of hearing: 26 February 2026

Hearing venue: Remote

Final order being reviewed:

Conditions of practice order (expiring 04 June 2026)

Hearing outcome:

Conditions of practice order revoked (with immediate effect)

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is an early review of a final conditions of practice order under paragraph 15(2) of schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”) originally imposed for a period of 12 months on 5 June 2025, following accepted disposal by Ms Edmunds following the Case Examiners’ decision.
2. Ms Edmunds attended and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Ms Hazelwood, case presenter from Social Work England.
4. The panel of adjudicators conducting this hearing (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Jacqueline Nicholson	Chair
Christine Anne Rice	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Paige Swallow	Hearings officer
Cat Conway	Hearings support officer
Scott McDonnell	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

5. The panel was informed by Ms Hazelwood that notice of this hearing was sent to Ms Edmunds by email on 4 February 2026 to an address provided by Ms Edmunds (namely their registered email address as it appears on the Social Work England Register). Ms Hazelwood submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served.
6. The panel had careful regard to the documents contained in the final order review service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the notice of the final order review hearing dated 4 February 2026 and addressed to Ms Edmunds at their email address which they provided to Social Work England;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 4 February 2026 detailing Ms Edmund’s registered address;
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 4 February 20206 the writer sent by email to Ms Edmund’s at the email address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents.
7. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.

8. Having had regard to Rules 44 and 45 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 Ms Edmunds in accordance with those Rules.

Proceeding with the hearing when notice of it had been provided less than 28 calendar days before the hearing:

9. Ms Hazelwood informed the panel that notice of the hearing had been provided less than 28 calendar days before the hearing.
10. Ms Hazelwood informed the panel that Ms Edmunds had consented to the shorter notice period and invited the panel to hear the final order early review today.
11. The panel heard advice from the legal adviser that in accordance with Rule 14 a fitness to practise hearing can be heard with less than 28 calendar days notice before the commencement of the fitness to practise hearing if the registered social worker consents to a shorter period, which was the case here.
12. The panel noted Rule 14 and that Ms Edmunds consented to the shorter notice period and decided to conduct the hearing today.

Review of the current order:

13. This early final order review hearing is taking place under Paragraph 15(2) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) and Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).
14. Under paragraphs 15(2)(a) to (f), the regulator may review a final order early 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, and may—
 - confirm the order
 - extend, or further extend, the period for which the order has effect, provided that the extended period does not exceed in the case of conditions of practice order, three years
 - reduce the period for which the order has effect
 - substitute any order which the adjudicators or the case examiners could have made on the date on which they made the order
 - revoke the order, and in the case of a suspension order may make the revocation subject to the social worker satisfying such requirements as to additional education or training and experience as apply to them
 - revoke or vary any condition imposed by the order

15. The decision on a review under sub-paragraph (2) takes effect from the date on which the regulator completes the review notwithstanding any appeal against that decision.

16. The legal adviser highlighted that the meaning of 'new evidence' is not defined in the rules and regulations but Social Work England's 'Early Review Guidance' does explore the meaning of the term stating that new evidence:

- "Must raise a realistic prospect that the order originally imposed is no longer appropriate or proportionate to address those concerns. It must be genuinely new evidence, which was not and could not have been made available to the decision makers when they imposed the order;"
- "New evidence almost certainly will be about events which have happened since the order was imposed;" and that
- "The new evidence must be verifiable."

17. The purpose of this review is to review the current order, which is due to expire at the end of 4 June 2026. The order subject to review is a conditions of practice order, the conditions of which are as follows:

Conditions 1- 13 (inclusive) should be in place for a 12-month period. In accordance with paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018, the regulator must review the conditions of practice order before its expiry. The social worker and/or Social Work England can seek early review if new evidence becomes available to suggest the current order needs to vary, replaced or removed.

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 referred to in these conditions.

3a) 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.

3b) 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 3 months and at least 14 days prior to any review.

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) You must work with your reporter, to formulate a personal development plan, specifically designed to address the shortfalls in the following areas of your practice:

- **Managing risk and recording your analysis of this.**
- **Understanding where the accountability lies for decisions made about children who are looked after by the local authority, particularly in relation to changes made to care plans, decisions that need to be discussed and agreed in court, and providing a clear rationale for decisions made about who the child can spend time with.**

10) 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.

11) You must read Social Work England's 'Professional Standards' (July 2019), and provide a written reflection to Social Work England 3 months after these conditions take effect, focusing on how your conduct, in terms of assessing risk and working collaboratively with other professionals to make decisions about children spending time with their parent, was allegedly below the accepted standard of a social worker.

You should outline what you should have done differently and how you might have used legal and policy frameworks to assist you.

12) 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 (11), above:

- Any organisation or person employing or contracting with you to undertake social work services 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).

- 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.

You must forward written evidence of your compliance with this condition to Social Work England within 10 days from the date these conditions take effect

13) You must permit Social Work England to disclose the above conditions, (1) to (12), to any person requesting information about your registration status.

Background:

- Ms Edmunds was an Advanced Practitioner in a family support and protection team during the period relevant to the concerns and became the allocated social worker for Baby A on 16 May 2023.
- Baby A was subject to an interim care order. Baby A had been placed in foster care a few days after birth, and contact with person A (Baby A's birth mother) was restricted from March 2023 to supervised contact within a family contact centre. [PRIVATE]
- A Family Time Referral Form for Baby A, dated 24 March 2023, outlines that the case was in care proceedings, that contact with person A was to be supervised in the centre, and that the level of supervision and reporting required is "high risk".
- Ms Edmunds arranged that contact should be changed to contact in the community. No records were made of this decision, a risk assessment was not completed, there was no evidence of consultation with others by Ms Edmunds, nor was a rationale recorded.
- Person A absconded with Baby A who was returned unharmed.
- A complaint was raised by Ms Edmund's employer, Southend –on- Sea City Council. The complaint was received on 6 December 2023.

24. The regulatory concerns related to a change in contact arrangements made in August 2023 which allegedly placed Baby A at risk of harm. The concerns about Ms Edmunds's practice alleged that they failed to use relevant information to assess risk and inform their decision making, amounting to a failure to safeguard Baby A.
25. The complaint was considered by Social Work England's case examiners.

The case examiners' decision

26. The case examiners decided that there was a realistic prospect of the adjudicators finding of regulatory concerns being found proven:

Whilst registered as a social worker;

1. You failed to safeguard service user, Baby A, in that;

- 1.1 You failed to use relevant information regarding risk to inform your decision making, when permitting community contact between Baby A and their mother.

- 1.2 You failed to use relevant information regarding risk, to continually assess the risk mum posed to Baby A.

Grounds of impairment:

The matters outlined in regulatory concerns (1.1) & (1.2) amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

27. The case examiners also decided that those concerns could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct and that Ms Edmunds's fitness to practise could be found to be impaired. A final order of conditions was made in accordance with an accepted disposal agreed by Ms Edmunds.

Social Work England submissions:

28. The panel heard submissions from Ms Hazelwood as to the background to the Case Examiners' decision and events since the accepted disposal including Ms Edmunds' compliance with the conditions imposed. Ms Hazelwood invited the panel to revoke the conditions of practice order with immediate effect.
29. Ms Hazelwood informed the panel that Ms Edmunds is currently subject to a 12-month Conditions of Practice Order that came into effect on 5 June 2025, following accepted disposal.
30. At that stage the Case Examiners considered there remained a risk of repetition as a result of Ms Edmunds's insight and remediation being incomplete and inconsistent, and their lack of appreciation of the level of risk indicated by the information available

to them. The Case Examiners were “not satisfied that Ms Edmunds has acknowledged the extent of the potential risk of harm their alleged actions presented to Baby A”.

31. Ms Hazelwood informed the panel that Ms Edmunds has since submitted extensive reflections, evidence of continued professional development, audits of her work and feedback on the same.
32. Ms Hazelwood also informed the panel that Ms Edmunds initially requested early review at the beginning of July 2025, but at that stage Social Work England determined the threshold for calling an early review was not met and that there was insufficient evidence of compliance with all the conditions to exercise their discretion to call an early review. Specifically, the personal development plan (PDP) (conditions 9 and 10) was incomplete and there had been no reports from Ms Edmunds’s employer (condition 4).
33. Ms Edmunds has now provided a completed PDP, dated 18 November 2025 and updated on 5 February 2026. It appears to show all the identified training and development needs have been met. This is supported in the feedback within the employer reports.
34. Ms Hazelwood submitted that the two reports from the reporter, dated 1 September 2025 and 2 December 2025, (supplemented by references to written and verbal feedback from other colleagues) are overwhelmingly positive and confirm that Ms Edmunds has been observed to “consistently evaluate potential risk to children allocated to her, applying both formal tools and professional judgment. Her case files demonstrate that risks are clearly documented in notes and reports” She is described as excellent and a “dedicated and reflective practitioner”.
35. Ms Hazelwood submitted that the “Reflection on Standards 2”, dated 1 July 2025, expands on the level of insight shown at the Case Examiner stage. It appears to address the concerns held by the Case Examiners that Ms Edmunds did not appreciate the full extent and seriousness of her failings. Ms Edmunds lists what she should have done differently and is frank in her acceptance that she failed to act as she should.
36. She also reflects on the impact on the family, the risks to the child and the impact on her employer and the profession. The reflection is extensive and arguably far more accepting of fault and responsibility than the previous reflections. The reflection is supported by evidence of further learning and CPD, and additional reflection on that.
37. In light of the new evidence provided by Ms Edmunds, Ms Hazelwood invited the Panel to consider if the regulatory concerns have now been fully remediated.
38. Ms Hazelwood submitted that if the Panel are satisfied that insight and remediation are now complete, and there is no longer a risk of repetition then they are invited to find that Ms Edmunds’s fitness to practise is no longer impaired and to revoke the Order with immediate effect.

Social worker submissions:

39. Ms Edmunds added to her written submissions, CPD log, PDP and reflections and submitted orally that she had worked hard since accepting disposal of this matter by a final order.
40. She had sought to better herself and undertaken training on risk assessment and decision making.
41. Ms Edmunds had completed CPD and PDP and learnt from her experience. She had taken a negative experience and turned it into a positive experience.
42. Ms Edmunds referred the panel to the positive feedback that she had received and that she had been promoted to Team Leader from January 2026 on a fixed term basis.
43. Ms Edmunds submitted that she supported her team to identify risk and she supported others in their learning.
44. Ms Edmunds informed the panel that she was committed and passionate about her role. She submitted that her practice was no longer impaired and she invited the panel to revoke the conditions of practise order.

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

45. In considering the question of current impairment, the panel undertook a comprehensive review of the final order in light of the current circumstances. It took into account the assessment of the Case Examiners. However, it has exercised its own judgement in relation to the question of current impairment. The panel also took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'.
46. The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the assessment of the Case Examiners and the extensive new documentation provided by Ms Edmunds, PDP's, reflective pieces, CPD, reporters reports, reports from team manager, service manager and quotes from colleagues. The panel also took account of the submissions made by Ms Hazelwood on behalf of Social Work England and Ms Edmund's submissions at today's hearing.
47. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. The panel was reminded that a social worker's fitness to practise is impaired if they pose a risk to public safety, or if their conduct or performance undermines the confidence the public is entitled to place in all social workers in England. A social worker's fitness to practise may also be impaired if their actions make it necessary to send a public message about the standards expected of social workers.
48. If the panel decided that Ms Edmund's practice is currently impaired then it should then consider what sanctions are available and refer to Social Work England's "Sanctions

Guidance”. The panel must start from the least restrictive sanction. Insight and remediation are important factors.

49. The panel first considered whether Ms Edmund’s fitness to practise remains impaired.
50. The panel decided that Ms Edmund’s fitness to practise is not currently impaired.
51. The panel noted that the Case Examiners had assessed that Ms Edmunds had shown limited insight and had demonstrated insufficient remediation.
52. Since accepting the final order Ms Edmunds had accepted what she had done wrong and had worked hard in her practice. She had embraced the process.
53. Ms Edmunds had completed CPD and PDP and shown insight. She had apologised to Person A. Ms Edmunds reflective pieces and PDPs show that she has implemented new ways of working and uses different models of risk assessment applying learning to practice. Specifically the personal development plans, were designed towards addressing the areas of weakness. The panel consider that they clearly set out steps taken to address the areas previously identified in the conditions e.g. management of risk, professional analysis and importance of fully completing records. The panel found that together with the CPD completed Ms Edmunds shows very good understanding of accountability in decisions made about children who are looked after by the local authority.
54. Ms Edmunds had implemented new ways of working and used different models of risk assessment.
55. The panel concluded that Ms Edmunds had remediated. The original concerns were not attitudinal and Ms Edmunds had accepted that she had fallen below the required standards.
56. Ms Edmunds had shown full insight and remorse.
57. She presented no ongoing risk and now met the standards of the profession. The panel assessed therefore that no member of the public would be concerned if Ms Edmunds returned to unrestricted practise.

Decision and reasons:

Revoke the conditions of practise order with effect immediately

58. Having found that Ms Edmunds’s fitness to practise was no longer impaired due to her extensive reflection and remediation the panel decided to revoke the conditions of practise order with immediate effect.

The Professional Standards Authority

59. Please note that in accordance with section 29 of the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002, a review decision made by Social Work England's panel of adjudicators can be referred by the Professional Standards Authority ("the PSA") to the High Court. The PSA can refer this decision to the High Court if it considers that the decision is not sufficient for the protection of the public. Further information about PSA appeals can be found on their website at:

<https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-with-regulators/decisions-about-practitioners>