



# Social worker: Burcin Bruce

## Registration number: SW23890

### Fitness to Practise

## Final Order Review Meeting

Date of meeting: 12 March 2026

Meeting venue: Remote

Final order being reviewed:  
Suspension order (expiring 22 April 2026)

Meeting outcome:  
Impose a new order namely removal order with effect from the expiry of the current order

## Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the fourth review of a final suspension order originally imposed for a period of 9 months by case examiners on 22 September 2023, by way of accepted disposal under paragraph 9(2)(c) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 (the Regulations). The final order was reviewed on 14 May 2024 and 10 February 2025, with the outcome on both occasions that the suspension order was extended for a period of 9 months. On 11 November 2025 the final order was reviewed and the suspension order was extended for a period of 4 months.
2. Ms Bruce did not attend and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Capsticks LLP and their written submissions are set out within the notice of hearing letter.
4. The panel of adjudicators conducting this review (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

<b>Adjudicators</b>	<b>Role</b>
Jacqueline Nicholson	Chair
Liz Murphy	Social worker adjudicator

<b>Hearings team/Legal adviser</b>	<b>Role</b>
Paul Harris	Hearings officer
Liam Dixon	Hearings support officer
Helen Gower	Legal adviser

## Service of notice:

5. The panel of adjudicators 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 11 February 2026 and addressed to Ms Bruce at her email address which she provided to Social Work England;
  - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 11 February 2026 detailing Ms Bruce’s registered email address;
  - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 11 February the writer sent by email to Ms Bruce at the address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents.
6. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice.
7. Having had regard to all of the information before it in relation to the service of notice, the panel was satisfied that notice of this hearing had been served on Ms Bruce in

accordance with Rules 16, 44 and 45 of Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the “Rules”).

### Proceeding with the final order review as a meeting:

8. The notice of final order review informed Ms Bruce that the review would take place as a meeting. The notice stated:

*“If you would like to attend before the adjudicators in order to make oral submissions, please confirm your intention by no later than 4pm on 25 February 2026. Unless we hear from you to the contrary, we shall assume that you do not want to attend a hearing and Social Work England may decide to deal with the review as a meeting. If Social Work England do hold a meeting, the adjudicators will be provided with a copy of this letter setting out Social Work England’s submissions and a copy of any written submissions you provide.”*

9. The panel received no information to suggest that Ms Bruce had responded to the notice of final order review. Ms Bruce attended the final order review hearing on 11 November 2025, but has not subsequently engaged with Social Work England.

10. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser with regard to Rule 16(c) of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) which provides:

*“Where the registered social worker does not state within the period specified by the regulator whether they intend to attend before the regulator, the regulator may determine whether to make an order by means of a meeting.”*

11. The panel also accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the factors it should take into account when considering whether it was fair and appropriate to conduct the review in the absence of Ms Bruce. This included reference to the cases of *R v Jones [2002] UKHL 5*; *General Medical Council v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162*. The panel also took into account Social Work England guidance ‘Service of notices and proceeding in the absence of the social worker’.

12. The panel considered the circumstances of Ms Bruce’s absence. It noted that she had communicated with Social Work England with regard to her attendance at the review hearing which took place on 11 November 2025. Although Ms Bruce attended the hearing on 11 November 2025, there is otherwise a pattern of non-engagement with Social Work England. Ms Bruce did not respond to any correspondence from the case review team following the hearing on 11 November 2025. The panel inferred that Ms Bruce’s absence is voluntary and it considered that an adjournment was unlikely to secure her attendance. Although Ms Bruce may be disadvantaged by not attending this hearing, the panel decided that her interests were outweighed by the public interest. There is a public interest in the expeditious disposal of the review, particularly as the

current order is due to expire on 22 April 2026. In all the circumstances the panel was satisfied that it would be fair and appropriate to conduct the review in the form of a meeting in accordance with Rule 16(c).

### Review of the current order:

13. This final order review hearing is taking place under Paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) and Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).
14. The purpose of this review is to review the current order, which is due to expire at the end of 22 April 2026. The order subject to review is a suspension order.

### The allegations agreed with the case examiners for accepted disposal which resulted in the final order were as follows;

#### Regulatory Concern 1

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

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

#### Regulatory Concern 2

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

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

15. The case examiners recorded their reasoning in relation to a suspension order as follows:

“The case examiners have next considered a suspension order. They note that the social worker has expressed an intent to practise social work in the future, and reports to have taken steps to ensure ongoing developmental training. As such, the case examiners consider that a suspension order for a duration of 9-months is a proportionate and

appropriate sanction that will enable the social worker to provide evidence of a reflective statement and remediation and further insight into the difficulties that brought them before the regulator in this instance. The case examiners take the view that a 6-month suspension period will not give the social worker sufficient time to demonstrate the required insight and remediation and that 12-months is a disproportionate duration.

The case examiners have considered the more restrictive sanction of a removal order and they take the view that this would be disproportionate, given that the social worker has previously demonstrated some improvement in their practice when subject to local processes, and due to the social worker's willingness and intention to undertake the requisite learning and development.

The case examiners have, therefore, decided to propose to the social worker a suspension order of 9-months duration. They will now notify the social worker of their intention and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing."

16. Ms Bruce accepted the accepted disposal proposed by the case examiners of a 9 months suspension order.
17. Ms Bruce did not attend the final order review hearings on 14 May 2024 and 10 February 2025, and did not engage with the recommendations made by either panel. Ms Bruce did attend the final order review hearing on 25 November 2025. Ms Bruce described her current job role, but the panel considered that she had not provided any coherent reflection on the impact of her failings in professional practice or why those failings had taken place. The panel on 25 November 2025 considered that there remained concerns about the lack of insight demonstrated by Ms Bruce and found no reliable evidence that the risk of repetition had reduced.
18. The final order review panel on 25 November 2025 imposed a four month suspension order and advised Ms Bruce that a future reviewing panel would be assisted by:

*“(i) Evidence that she has kept her social work skills and knowledge up to date, such as training course completion certificates (online or otherwise) and evidence of CPD completed;*

*(ii). Evidence of her current role, including a copy of the job description and a reference from her current employer setting out her performance in the role and their awareness of the concerns;*

(iii). A reflective piece of writing, focusing on the findings made against her, the steps that she has taken to show remediation and insight, and her reflections on the learning/CPD/training courses she has undertaken, including their relevance to the original concerns, how her learning has been relevant to the original findings and its impact on her current practice.

### Social Work England submissions:

19. Social Work England made the following written submissions, contained in the notice of hearing dated 11 February 2026:

*“Subject to any evidence of remediation received prior to the review, Social Work England invite the Panel to find that the Social Worker’s fitness to practise remains impaired for the same reasons given by the Case Examiners, and by the Adjudicators at the previous three Final Order Reviews. On 17 November 2025, Social Work England’s case review officer emailed the Social Worker about the proposed four-month extension of the final order, due to take effect on 23 December 2025 when the current order was due to expire, and offered a telephone discussion; on the same date, the case review officer sent a further supportive email about the recommendations and provided the template reference form.*

*To date no evidence has been received to demonstrate compliance with the Case Examiners’ recommendations or to demonstrate that the concerns raised by the Case Examiners and the previous panels of Adjudicators have been addressed, despite those Adjudicators extending the Suspension Order to allow the Social Worker more time to address the deficiencies identified.*

*On 23 December 2025, the case review officer issued the extended suspension letter, again offered the Social Worker a telephone discussion, and re-sent the reference form template.*

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

*On 6 January 2026, the case review officer emailed the Social Worker to ask how she was progressing with the recommendations and whether she intended to provide any of the evidence referred to at the last Final Order Review meeting as part of her submissions, and the reference form template was re-sent.*

*On 9 January 2026, the case review officer sent an evidence request letter to the Social Worker and again re-sent the reference form template; the Social Worker has not engaged with the case review team since the last Final Order Review.*

*In light of the continued lack of engagement by the Social Worker, and the absence of any evidence of remediation despite repeated efforts by the case review officer to*

*support and facilitate such evidence being provided, the Adjudicators are invited to replace the existing Suspension Order with a Removal Order.”*

### Social worker submissions

20. Ms Bruce did not attend the meeting and provided no written submissions or documents.

### Legal advice

21. The legal adviser advised that the panel’s powers were to:

- Extend the current order from the date of its expiry for up to three years;
- To make a new order. All orders were available to the panel, including the option of a removal order, because Ms Bruce has been continually suspended for more than two years;
- To convert the current order of suspension to one of conditional registration from the date of its expiry for up to three years;
- To revoke the order from the date of the review.

22. The legal adviser advised that the panel would first have to consider whether Ms Bruce’s fitness to practise remained impaired. She referred the panel to the case of *Cohen v GMC* and advised it should consider whether the failures recorded by the case examiners leading to the final order of suspension were capable of being remedied, whether they had been remedied and whether there was a risk of them being repeated. The legal adviser advised that there was a persuasive burden upon Ms Bruce to show that her fitness to practise was not currently impaired.

23. The legal adviser advised that if the panel found that Ms Bruce’s fitness to practise remained impaired it should then consider what was the appropriate sanction, if any, to impose upon Ms Bruce’s registration. She advised that the purpose of a sanction is not punitive and was to protect the public and the public interest, which included the maintaining of standards in the profession and the protection of its reputation. The legal adviser advised that the panel should apply the principle of proportionality and should impose the minimum sanction necessary to protect the public and the public interest, and no more.

### Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

24. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser and took fully into account the original decision of the case examiner and the written submissions made on behalf of Social Work England. It carried out a comprehensive review of the case and first considered whether Ms Bruce’s fitness to practise remained impaired. It considered that

the regulatory concerns leading to the suspension order were serious and involved failures in statutory requirements to children ‘looked after’ and in the public care of the local authority. Ms Bruce’s lack of competence placed vulnerable service users at risk of harm. It involved failures in core tasks and fundamental areas of social work practice and persisted over a significant period of time.

25. The panel was satisfied that the panel at the final order review on 25 November 2025 took all reasonable steps to ensure that Ms Bruce understood the need for her to engage with Social Work England’s review teams and to provide written information for this panel to review. Clear recommendations were made on the evidence which would assist a future panel and the panel also summarised the position within the written determination of the panel at paragraph 46 as follows:

*“The panel took the view that a removal order would not be appropriate because, whilst Ms Bruce’s fitness to practise remains impaired, she has, in attending this final order review hearing taken the first steps in engaging with the Regulator. The panel noted that Ms Bruce had said that she can provide evidence of current competency and remediation, and considered that she should be offered a further opportunity to do so. The panel wanted to take this opportunity to highlight to Ms Bruce that she has been given a number of opportunities to provide evidence of the steps she has taken to remediate her practice, which she has not taken advantage of. There can be no guarantee that a future panel will afford Ms Bruce further opportunities if she does not heed the advice of this and previous reviewing panels.”*

26. Although it appeared from this summary that Ms Bruce understood that the panel expected her to heed the advice she had been given, there was no evidence before this panel that she has done so. Since the review hearing on 25 November 2025 Ms Bruce has not responded to correspondence from Social Work England’s case review team, has not provided any evidence for this panel, and has not provided any explanation for her non-engagement. It is of course a voluntary matter for Ms Bruce to decide whether to act upon the recommendations made by reviewing panels, but the consequences of Ms Bruce’s choice is that this panel has no new information from Ms Bruce for its review.

27. The panel found that Ms Bruce had not discharged the persuasive burden of proof. She has not provided evidence before the panel to show that her practice deficiencies had been remedied. The panel was satisfied that the deficiencies found by the case examiners were capable of remedy but that despite guidance from Social Work England Ms Bruce had failed to provide the panel with any evidence of remediation or development of insight. Therefore, the panel considered that there remained a risk of repetition and an ongoing risk of harm to service users.

28. The panel was also of the view that the agreed disposal of the Case Examiners together with the subsequent history of Ms Bruce’s very limited engagement with the process, engaged the wider public interest. The absence of evidence of remediation of the basic failures in social work practice engaged the need to uphold Social Work England’s Professional Standards. The ongoing risk of repetition and of harm to service users has

the potential to seriously undermine public confidence in the profession, if no action were to be taken by the panel.

29. The panel concluded that Ms Bruce's fitness to practise remained impaired by reason of lack of competence.

### Decision and reasons:

30. Having found Ms Bruce's fitness to practise is currently impaired, the panel then considered what, if any, sanction it should impose in this case. The panel had regard to the written submissions on behalf of Social Work England and accepted the advice of the legal adviser.
31. The panel considered what, if any, was the appropriate sanction in Ms Bruce's case. It did so by first considering whether it was appropriate to take no action and to allow the present order to expire in due course, or to revoke the order. It concluded that these courses were not sufficient to protect the public and the public interest. The panel then considered whether issuing Ms Bruce with a warning or advice was appropriate. It concluded that this course was insufficient to protect the public and the public interest as it imposed no restriction on Ms Bruce's practice.
32. The panel then considered the option of a conditions of practice order. The panel considered that it would be possible to formulate conditions of practice which would address the deficiencies in Ms Bruce's practice. However, the panel took into account the history of Ms Bruce's engagement with Social Work England. Her engagement has been very limited and there has been no engagement at all with Social Work England's case review team since the hearing on 25 November 2025. The panel decided that Ms Bruce has not demonstrated a sufficient level of insight or efforts to remedy the deficiencies in her practice for conditions of practice to be realistic or workable. The panel also had insufficient confidence that Ms Bruce would comply with a conditions of practice order. The panel therefore decided that a conditions of practice order was insufficient to protect the public and the public interest.
33. The panel considered the option of imposing a further suspension order. A suspension order would prevent Ms Bruce from practising as a social worker and would therefore provide a sufficient measure of protection for service users. However, the panel was of the view that a suspension order would be insufficient to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold standards for social workers. It is not in the public interest that the review cycle should continue indefinitely, when there is no real prospect that the social worker is willing and able to engage fully with the process. In Ms Bruce's case it appeared on 25 November 2025 that she was willing to engage with the process, but, for reasons that are unknown, she has not done so. Ms Bruce has now been subject to a suspension order continuously for a period of over two years, and within that period there has been very little engagement and no evidence provided. The panel was of the view that it was unlikely that a further extension of a suspension order would provide a

route for Ms Bruce to return to safe and effective practice, and that it would therefore be insufficient to uphold public confidence in the profession and the regulatory process.

34. The panel was also of the view that a suspension order would not be sufficient to uphold standards for members of the profession. Despite being given several opportunities to do so over a period of more than two years, Ms Bruce has not provided any evidence to demonstrate remedial steps to address the standards that she had breached. The breach of professional standards therefore remains unaddressed, and it is not in the public interest for this to continue indefinitely.
35. The panel also took into account Social Work England's 'impairment and sanctions guidance' at paragraph 138 which indicates that a suspension order is unlikely to be suitable where:

*The social worker has not demonstrated any insight and remediation*

*There is limited evidence to suggest they are willing (or able) to resolve or remediate their failings*

36. In considering a removal order the panel noted that at the final order review hearing Ms Bruce had asked the panel not to impose such an order because of its consequences for her career. In considering this option the panel was aware that the imposition of a removal order was likely to cause hardship to Ms Bruce. Nevertheless, the panel was of the view that a removal order was the only order that was sufficient to uphold public confidence in the profession and to maintain professional standards.
37. The decision to impose a removal order is consistent with Social Work England's 'impairment and sanctions guidance'. Paragraph 149 states that a removal order may be appropriate in cases involving:
- Social workers who are unwilling and/or unable to remediate (for example, where there is clear evidence that they do not wish to practise as a social worker in the future)*
38. Given Ms Bruce has not engaged with Social Work England's case review team since 25 November 2025, has not engaged with this panel, and her history of non-engagement, the panel was satisfied that she is either unable or not willing to remediate.
39. The panel decided that a removal order is the appropriate and proportionate sanction. This sanction will apply from the expiry of the current order.

### Right of appeal:

40. Under Paragraph 16(1)(b) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended), the social worker may appeal to the High Court against:
- a. the decision of adjudicators:

- i. to make an interim order, other than an interim order made at the same time as a final order under paragraph 11(1)(b),
- ii. not to revoke or vary such an order,
- iii. to make a final order,

b. the decision of the regulator on review of an interim order, or a final order, other than a decision to revoke the order.

41. Under Paragraph 16(2) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) an appeal must be filed before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with the day after the day on which the social worker is notified of the decision complained of.
42. Under Paragraph 15(1A) of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended), where a social worker appeals against a decision made under sub-paragraph (1), the decision being appealed takes effect from the date specified in that sub-paragraph notwithstanding any appeal against that decision.
43. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended).