



Social worker: Bebe O'Neal

Registration number: SW107030

Fitness to Practise

Final Order Review Hearing

Date of hearing: 13 April 2026

Hearing venue: Remote

Final order being reviewed:
Suspension order (expiring 25 May 2026)

Hearing outcome:
Current suspension order to lapse upon its expiry

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the first review of a final suspension order originally imposed for a period of three months by a panel of adjudicators on 28 January 2026.
2. Mr O’Neal attended and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by its case presenter Ms Anna Rubbi instructed by Capsticks LLP.
4. The panel of adjudicators conducting this review (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Rachel O’Connell	Chair
David Childs	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Lauryn Green	Hearings officer
Liam Dixon	Hearings support officer
Rochelle Martin	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

5. The panel was informed by Ms Rubbi that notice of this hearing was sent to Mr O’Neal by email day delivery service provided by Mr O’Neal and submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served.
6. 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 12 March 2026 and addressed to Mr O’Neal at his email address which they provided to Social Work England;
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 12 March 2026 the writer sent by email to Mr O’Neal’s email address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents;
7. The chair verified all parties had access and had been able to review the bundle.
8. Having regard to Rule 15 and all of the information before it in relation to service of the notice the Panel was satisfied that the notice of this hearing had been served on Mr O’Neal in accordance with Rules 14, 15, 44, and 45.

Review of the current order:

9. 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).
10. The purpose of this review is to review the current order, which is due to expire at the end of 25 May 2026. The order subject to review is a suspension order.

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

11. Allegation 1 – [PRIVATE]
 - Proved (by admission)
12. Allegation 2 – ‘You did not declare [PRIVATE] to the regulator in a timely manner.’
 - Proved (by admission)
13. Allegation 3 - ‘On or around 16 December 2018, you gave a false and misleading account to the police when interviewed about [PRIVATE].’
 - Proved (by admission)
14. Allegation 4 (Dishonesty) – ‘Your actions at paragraphs 2 and/or 3 were dishonest.’
 - The panel held that Mr O’Neal was dishonest in failing to declare [PRIVATE] to the regulator in a timely manner.
 - Mr O’Neal admitted that his actions with the police were dishonest.
15. The panel found that the statutory grounds of misconduct and [PRIVATE] were made out.

The final hearing panel on 28 January 2026 determined the following with regard to impairment:

16. The panel concluded that Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise is currently impaired on both the personal and public components in respect of the ground of misconduct and on the public component on the ground of [PRIVATE]. In relation to the personal component of misconduct, the panel found that, although there was some evidence of insight and remediation, this was “not fully developed” in respect of the dishonesty. The panel determined that “there remains a risk of repetition,” albeit low.
17. In relation to the public components, the panel determined that a finding of impairment was necessary “to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold professional standards,” given the seriousness of the misconduct, including two instances of dishonesty.
18. Accordingly, the panel determined that Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise is impaired.

The final hearing panel on 28 January 2026 determined the following with regard to sanction:

19. The panel concluded that a suspension order was the appropriate and proportionate sanction. It considered that the misconduct, particularly the findings of dishonesty, represented a “serious breach of the professional standards” and that honesty is a fundamental requirement of social work practice.
20. In deciding on suspension, the panel found that this sanction would both “protect the public” and “maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold professional standards.” The panel also took into account that Mr O’Neal had demonstrated remorse, some insight, had engaged with the proceedings, and that there had been no further concerns over a period of approximately five years.
21. The panel determined that a suspension order of three months was proportionate. It considered that this period would allow time for Mr O’Neal to “fully develop his insight and undertake further remediation”, while also marking the seriousness of the misconduct and the [PRIVATE]. The panel noted that a longer period would be “disproportionate and punitive.”
22. Accordingly, the panel imposed a suspension order for a period of three months.

Social Work England submissions:

23. The panel heard submissions from Ms Rubbi as to the background and the previous panel’s findings in relation to impairment and sanction. Ms Rubbi submitted that:
24. That Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise remains impaired and invited the panel to extend the current suspension order by at least three months.
25. This submission was based on Mr O’Neal’s failure to meaningfully engage with the recommendations made by the final hearing panel, including providing written reflection, evidence of CPD, and character references. Social Work England also relied on the seriousness of the original misconduct, which included two instances of dishonesty, the relatively recent nature of the final hearing, and the previous finding of a risk of repetition.
26. A removal order would not be appropriate or proportionate at this stage, given that this is the first review of a short suspension and the misconduct was previously considered remediable. It was submitted that the Mr O’Neal should be given a further opportunity to demonstrate insight, remediation, and updated skills.
27. Ms Rubbi further submitted that Mr O’Neal had advance notice of today’s hearing where he was invited to put forward evidence of developed insight, remediation, and up-to-date practice—such as written reflections, CPD, and supportive references for the panel to consider whether a finding of no current impairment and revocation of the suspension order would be appropriate.

Social worker submissions:

28. Mr O’Neal chose not to give evidence but made the following submissions:
29. Mr O’Neal submitted that, whilst his actions regarding not informing his regulator in a timely manner were found to be dishonest, they were not intentional. He stated that he made the declaration at the first opportunity available to him and expressed sincere apologies for his conduct.
30. He submitted that he is not “*a dishonest person*”, noting that he had no prior or subsequent [PRIVATE], and that the incident was not reflective of a pattern of behaviour. He explained that the offence arose during a period of personal stress and was an isolated incident.
31. Mr O’Neal informed the panel that he has reflected on his actions and chose to make his submissions orally in order to demonstrate “*how remorseful I am*”. He emphasised that he is genuinely sorry for what occurred and repeated this on numerous occasions to the panel. Mr O’Neal assured the panel that his CPD was up to date as per his obligations as a social worker.
32. He further submitted that Social Work England had permitted him to practise for 6 years following the incident, and questioned the fairness of a finding of current impairment at this stage. He maintained that he does not pose a risk to the public.
33. Mr O’Neal accepted that his conduct (in respect of his conduct at the police station) was dishonest but maintained that his non-timely declaration was not deliberate in the sense of being intentionally misleading. He submitted that the characterisation of dishonesty in his case should be viewed in that context.
34. He informed the panel that he has not practised as a social worker since 21 January 2026 and confirmed that he did not appeal the original decision.
35. In conclusion, Mr O’Neal invited the panel to revoke the suspension order.

Legal advice to panel:

36. The legal adviser reminded the panel that this was a review of a suspension order under paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018, and that its task was not to go behind the findings of the substantive panel but to determine whether Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise remains impaired as at the date of the review.
37. The panel was advised to conduct a forward-looking assessment, taking into account the previous findings, the seriousness of the misconduct, and any evidence of insight, remediation and steps taken since the final hearing, in accordance with Rule 16 of the Social Work England (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2019.
38. The panel was directed to the guidance in *Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v Nursing and Midwifery Council and Grant* when considering impairment, and reminded that a review is not a rehearing, in line with *Abrahaem v General Medical*

Council, and that it should have regard to the wider public interest, as set out in *General Medical Council v Adeogba*.

39. The panel was further advised to have regard to Social Work England's Impairment and Sanctions Guidance, in particular the sections relating to dishonesty (paragraphs 172–181) and suspension (paragraphs 136–138). It was reminded that dishonesty is a serious matter and that it should consider insight, remediation and the risk of repetition.
40. If impairment were found, the panel was advised to consider sanction in accordance with paragraphs 12(3) and 13 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations, applying the principle of proportionality and considering the least restrictive sanction first. It was further advised that, at a first review of a short suspension order, removal is unlikely to be appropriate absent a lack of engagement or no realistic prospect of remediation.
41. The panel was reminded to balance the interests of Mr O'Neal with the need to protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession, and uphold professional standards.
42. The chair asked Mr O'Neal about his current employment status. Mr O'Neal advised that he had ceased work on 21 January, as he found it too stressful to continue working whilst his final hearing was imminent.
43. The chair then asked about his intentions should the sanction be revoked. Mr O'Neal explained that he would not return to his previous role but would seek alternative employment. He confirmed that he would inform any future employer of proceedings against him.
44. Mr O'Neal submitted that he is a good practitioner and stated that he had completed his required CPD in November. When asked whether he had undertaken any recent or specific CPD this year, he responded that he regularly reflects on his practice, including the care of service users, and referred to an example from his work.
45. The chair put to Mr O'Neal that one of the criticisms of the previous panel was a lack of demonstrated insight, particularly in relation to dishonesty. Mr O'Neal accepted that he had been dishonest and stated that he had learned from the incident. He explained that, although a similar situation was unlikely to occur, if faced with a similar situation in the future, he would immediately report the matter to Social Work England.
46. Mr O'Neal explained that he understood about public confidence, acknowledged that his conduct had brought the profession into disrepute, and further stated that since the [PRIVATE] in 2018, he has not acted in a way that would bring the profession into disrepute.

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

47. In considering the question of current impairment, the panel undertook a comprehensive review of the final order in light of the current circumstances. It took

into account the decision of the previous panel. 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.

48. The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the original panel. The panel also took account of the submissions made by Ms Rubbi on behalf of Social Work England and those made by Mr O'Neal.
49. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. In reaching its decision, the panel was mindful of the need to protect the public and the wider public interest in declaring and upholding proper standards of behaviour and maintain public confidence in the profession.
50. The panel first considered whether Mr O'Neal's fitness to practise remains impaired. It considered whether his fitness to practise remains impaired in respect of the [PRIVATE] in relation to the public component.
51. The panel concluded that Mr O'Neal's fitness to practise is no longer impaired on the public component in respect of his [PRIVATE].
52. The panel considered whether a finding of impairment remained necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper professional standards. The panel considered that public confidence has been satisfied by the passage of time since the conduct in 2018 that led to the [PRIVATE], its isolated nature, and the fact that the conduct has been marked by a finding of impairment and a suspension order. The panel concluded that a further finding of impairment is not required.
53. Accordingly, the panel determined that Mr O'Neal's fitness to practise is no longer impaired on the ground of [PRIVATE].
54. The panel next considered whether Mr O'Neal's fitness to practise remains impaired in respect of the finding of misconduct. The panel undertook a forward-looking assessment of whether Mr O'Neal remains impaired in respect of that dishonest misconduct. It noted that the dishonest conduct towards the police occurred approximately seven and a half years ago, and that the failure to declare continued for a period of approximately 22 months between 2019 and 2020.
55. The panel next considered the personal component of impairment in respect of the findings of dishonest misconduct.
56. The panel considered whether Mr O'Neal remains liable to act dishonestly in the future, including whether he would fail to declare relevant matters or act dishonestly in his dealings with others, such as the police or the regulator.
57. The panel noted that Mr O'Neal had not provided independent supporting evidence, such as testimonials, character references, or documentary evidence of remediation. The panel considered that such evidence could have assisted in demonstrating his integrity and current professional standing. The panel noted Mr O'Neal's preference to

attend the hearing and make oral submissions and that he understood that there was no obligation to provide written documentation.

58. The panel had regard to Mr O'Neal's oral submissions. Mr O'Neal accepted that his actions were dishonest and stated repeatedly that he had learned from the experience. He told the panel that, if faced with a similar situation in the future, he would act differently and would immediately report the matter to the "*I have learnt from it*" "*...and would immediately report it ... but I would never be in this position again*".
59. The panel considered whether Mr O'Neal had demonstrated sufficient insight and remediation. Whilst recognising the absence of supporting documentation, the panel found Mr O'Neal's expressions of significant remorse, further insight, and learning to be genuine, credible, and indicative of the development of a sufficient level of insight into his conduct [PRIVATE].
60. The panel also took into account the passage of time since the misconduct, the absence of any further dishonesty, and Mr O'Neal's oral assurances. The panel concluded that, whilst the original misconduct was serious, there is no evidence to suggest an ongoing pattern of dishonest behaviour. The panel was satisfied that the risk of repetition is now extremely low.
61. Accordingly, the panel determined that Mr O'Neal is not currently impaired on the personal component in respect of the ground of misconduct.
62. The panel then considered the public component of impairment in respect of the ground of misconduct. The panel had regard to the rationale of the substantive panel and the need to maintain public confidence in the profession. The panel concluded that, in light of the passage of time and the absence of any further misconduct, a finding of current impairment would no longer be proportionate.
63. Accordingly, the panel determined that Mr O'Neal's fitness to practise is no longer impaired in respect of the dishonest misconduct.
64. In doing so, the panel had regard to the need to protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession, and uphold proper professional standards.
65. The panel considered whether Mr O'Neal had sufficiently addressed the concerns identified by the substantive panel. It noted that, during his oral submissions, Mr O'Neal acknowledged that his conduct had brought the profession into disrepute. He stated, unprompted, that he understood the importance of maintaining public confidence and repeated that he had learned from the incident. He further stated that, if faced with a similar situation in the future, he would immediately report the matter and would not place himself in such a position again.
66. The panel found Mr O'Neal to be genuine in his submissions and expressions of remorse. It considered whether this was sufficient to address the public component, particularly in the absence of supporting documentary evidence such as written reflections or testimonials.

67. The panel took into account that there has been no further evidence of misconduct since the events in question and no indication of an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It also noted that Mr O’Neal attended the hearing and engaged with the process, providing oral evidence despite not being required to submit further material.
68. The panel considered the issue of public protection and was satisfied that the risk of repetition is low. It accepted that Mr O’Neal understands the seriousness of his actions and the importance of honesty and transparency.
69. The panel also took into account Mr O’Neal’s confirmation that he would disclose these proceedings to any future employer, and was satisfied that he would act openly in the future.
70. In the panel’s view, Mr O’Neal’s oral submissions demonstrated genuine insight and sufficient remediation. The panel was satisfied that Mr O’Neal has learned from the whole process and is unlikely to repeat the conduct.
71. In all these circumstances, the panel determined that a finding of current impairment is no longer necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession or to uphold proper professional standards.
72. Accordingly, the panel determined that Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise is not impaired on the public component in relation to the ground of misconduct.
73. The panel determined that Mr O’Neal’s fitness to practise is no longer impaired in relation to either his [PRIVATE] or the misconduct. The panel has determined that the 3-month suspension order should continue until its expiry date given that part of the rationale of the final hearing panel for imposing a 3-month order was to mark the seriousness of the [PRIVATE] and the misconduct, in order to maintain public confidence in the profession and to uphold professional standards.

The Professional Standards Authority

74. 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>