

Social worker: Joana D C
Miranda Cardoso
Registration number: SW127520
Fitness to Practise
Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 20 April 2026 to 23 April 2026

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome:
Fitness to practise impaired, removal order

Interim order:
Interim suspension order (18 months)

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”).
2. Ms Joanna Cardoso attended and was represented by Ms Laura Sheridan from the British Association of Social Workers (“BASW”).
3. Social Work England was represented by Ms Kathryn Pitters, case presenter instructed by Capsticks LLP.
4. The panel of adjudicators conducting this hearing (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Miriam Karp	Chair
Delecia Dixon	Social worker adjudicator
Douglas Thorpe	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Ruby Wade	Hearings officer
Lizzy Vanlint	Hearings support officer
Gemma Gillet	Legal adviser

Preliminary matters:

5. On behalf of Social Work England, Ms Pitters applied Rule 38 under the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the “Rules”), for the details and content of Schedule A to be heard and remain in private throughout the hearing and within the panel’s written determination.
6. Ms Pitters submitted that the highly sensitive content of the information within the document has the potential to cause harm to the service users referred to, even after their names have been anonymised. Ms Pitters submitted that the contents of this document should be referred to as the “sensitive information” during the public hearing and documentation.
7. On behalf of Ms Cardoso, Ms Sheridan did not object to the application. The panel heard and accepted the advice from the legal adviser which included reference to Rules 32, 37 and 38 and the panel’s discretion to manage proceedings in a way it considers fair and to decide the form of the hearing. The panel was reminded that the starting point remained that hearings should be heard in public in their entirety, unless it was the opinion of the panel that there were special circumstances in which publicity would prejudice the interests of justice. The panel was reminded that if it did exercise its discretion to hear part of the proceedings in private it should be strictly limited to the extent necessary.

8. The panel considered the submissions and granted the application made on behalf of Social Work England.

Allegations:

9. The allegations arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 13 March 2025 are:

Whilst a registered Social Worker

1. *[PRIVATE]*
2. *You failed to promptly inform your manager that you knew that Child B had seen and taken a screenshot of confidential information as set out within Schedule A [PRIVATE] regarding Child A on 11 May 2023.*
3. *You failed to record important information relating to your visit to Child B on 11 May 2023, namely that Child B took possession of your phone and screenshotted important information relating to Child A.*
4. *You placed Child A at risk of harm by disclosing the confidential information as set out in Schedule A [PRIVATE] to Child B on 11 May 2023*
5. *During a meeting held on 15 May 2023 you provided an account to the effect that Child B must have taken your phone, without your knowledge on 11 May 2023 and accessed information about Child A.*
6. *Your conduct at Allegation 2 above was dishonest in that you knowingly failed to inform your manager that Child B had access to confidential information relating to Child A from your phone on 11 May 2023.*
7. *Your conduct at Allegation 3 above was dishonest in that you knowingly recorded an inaccurate and incomplete record of your visit to Child B on 11 May 2023*
8. *Your conduct at Allegation 5 was dishonest in that you knew that the account provided was false.*

[PRIVATE].

In respect of Allegations 2-8 your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct.

Admissions:

10. Rule 32c(i)(aa) states:

Where facts have been admitted by the social worker, the adjudicators or regulator shall find those facts proved.

11. Following the reading of the allegations the panel chair asked Ms Cardoso whether she admits any of the allegations.

12. Ms Cardoso informed the panel that she admitted the factual allegations in full.

13. The panel therefore found the factual allegations 1-8 proved by way of Ms Cardoso's admissions.

14. The panel went on to consider the details and background of the admitted facts of the case and whether those facts amounted to misconduct (in relation to allegations 2-8) and whether Ms Cardoso's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

Summary of evidence:

15. The panel was provided with documents in advance of the hearing, which included:

- Service and Supplementary Bundle
- Statements Bundle;
- Exhibits Bundle [PRIVATE]
- Social Worker's Response Bundle;
- Statement of Case; and
- Signed Statement of Agreed Facts.

16. The panel was informed that on 20 May 2023, Social Work England received a referral from the respondent social worker, Ms Joana Cardoso.

17. Ms Cardoso was a frontline social worker with some experience in child protection having qualified in 2019. Ms Cardoso began her role in April 2023 at [PRIVATE] council (the "council"), working under the supervision of Ms Faniku. Ms Cardoso's key duties were working closely with families, children and external agencies, such as the police and educational services. Ms Cardoso had to ensure that records were accurate, liaise with different professionals, visit service users and ensure that her allocated children were kept safe. Ms Cardoso was line managed by Ms Faniku.

18. Ms Cardoso was assigned to both Child B and Child B's siblings on 3 April 2023. The key concerns for Ms Cardoso in relation to Child B pertained to child exploitation from

adults who were suspected of exposing Child B to drugs and weapons. There were also wider neglect concerns regarding Child B's family.

19. Child B and their siblings were subject to a Child Protection Plan. Ms Cardoso was required to visit the family at least every 10 working days, both announced and unannounced. The role of Ms Cardoso was to complete an ongoing assessment of the risks and needs of the children, addressing the actions against the plan.
20. [PRIVATE].
21. During a visit to Child B's home on 11 May 2023 Ms Cardoso took out her mobile phone and whilst reviewing the intelligence upon it, discussed the intelligence with Child B and his mother [PRIVATE]. Child B grabbed Ms Cardoso's mobile phone and, using his own phone, he took a screenshot of the confidential information. Ms Cardoso said that she asked him to delete the screenshot, which he appeared to do; and said that he later retrieved the screenshot from the "recycle bin" and shared the information on Snapchat.
22. Ms Cardoso initially omitted any detail of this incident in her case recordings of the visit and failed to inform her line manager of this data breach. She then went on to give a false account of the circumstances in which Child B accessed the intelligence information about/provided by Child A both in her account to the council during a meeting held on 15 May 2023 and also in a witness statement to the police on 18 May 2023. Ms Cardoso claimed that Child B must have accessed her phone and the intelligence whilst she left it unattended during her visit to his home on 11 May 2023. As a result of that false account, Child B and his mother were arrested in connection with the allegation that Child B had accessed Ms Cardoso's phone without her permission. Child B and his mother were interviewed by the police. As a result of the disclosure of the intelligence over Snapchat, Child A and his family had to be moved out of the area.
23. Ms Cardoso subsequently confessed to her wrongdoing, expressing remorse and acknowledging some of the consequences. Ms Cardoso stated in a meeting held on 23 May 2023 with Vanessa Johns and Ms Faniku that Child B had snatched her phone and taken a screenshot of the intelligence on his own phone, which she then believed he had deleted when asked by her and his mother. Ms Cardoso expressed fear and shame, admitting she had wanted to speak up but felt paralysed by the gravity of the situation. Ms Cardoso accepts that she should not have taken out her phone during the visit and referred to the intelligence within it.
24. [PRIVATE].
25. In addition to the written statements and exhibits, the panel heard evidence under oath from Ms Faniku, Ms Cardoso's Team Manager within the Children's Services Team at the council at the relevant time.
26. Ms Faniku accepted that the information about the arrest of Child B and his mother had not been shared by Child B's school, as Child B had not been in school at the time. She believed that the council had been informed by Child B's siblings' school. Ms Faniku

told the panel that after Ms Cardoso had told the truth about what had happened, she described it feeling like a weight had come off her shoulders and that she knew she should have said something as soon as the incident had happened.

27. Ms Faniku told the panel that she firmly believes that Ms Cardoso's lack of experience had underpinned the situation. Ms Faniku said that a more experienced social worker would know how to use information that comes through as intelligence to discuss issues with a child or family appropriately. She described Ms Cardoso as a good and passionate social worker who had areas to grow but was open to new challenges. She said that that her work with Child B and his family had been commendable up until this point as she had managed to build trust after previous relationships with professionals had broken down.
28. Ms Faniku told the panel that she believed that what started out as a genuine human error, which could have been dealt with if there had been transparency from the outset, had turned into a "white lie" that had later snowballed out of control. She believed that Ms Cardoso had an eagerness to do well and had not wanted to disappoint her managers with the truth.
29. Ms Cardoso gave evidence under oath. She told the panel that she had first become aware that Child B and his mother had been arrested at the meeting with her managers on 23 May 2023, which was when she realised that she needed to tell the truth even if it cost her profession.
30. Ms Cardoso told the panel that she recognised the seriousness of her actions and that she had been aware of the need to act with honesty and that she should treat confidential information sensitively. She told the panel that she had her telephone out to check the information so she could ask the right questions without disclosing where the information had come from. She said that at that moment Child B snatched her telephone and took the screenshot. She had asked Child B to delete the screenshot and was satisfied that he had done so. She had not appreciated that he would still have access to the information on the cloud and, at the time, did not think there was an ongoing risk of harm. She accepted that the safety of Child A did not cross her mind at that point as she had been focussed on Child B. She accepted there had been an obvious risk to Child A, but that it simply hadn't occurred to her at the time.
31. Ms Cardoso told the panel that she felt very ashamed about her behaviour but that at the time she couldn't think straight and carried on with the false version as the wrongdoing had already been done. She said she took full responsibility for what happened. She was confident nothing like this would ever be repeated. She was now able to recognise when she felt "in a box" and how she should respond. She had recently experienced a similar feeling in her current role and had sought out her manager the next day to discuss the issue.
32. Ms Cardoso said that she recognised the very great impact her actions had on Child A, Child B, their families, colleagues, the police and the public confidence in the profession as a whole. Following questions from the panel, Ms Cardoso did not accept

that she had prioritised her needs over those of Child A and Child B, as if she had been thinking about herself, she would have maintained the lie throughout. She told the panel that at the time she had not come forward with the information that Child B had snatched her phone and taken the screenshot, as she had believed she was protecting Child B. She recognised that her actions had been misguided and had not helped the child at all.

Submissions on grounds and impairment:

33. The panel heard submissions on behalf of Social Work England and was reminded that the factual allegations raised two grounds, [PRIVATE] and misconduct. [PRIVATE]. In respect of Allegations 2-8 it is said that Ms Cardoso's fitness to practise is impaired by reason of her misconduct.

34. Ms Pitters submitted that Ms Cardoso's [PRIVATE] conduct put her in breach of the Social Work England's Professional Standards 2019, in particular:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

2.2 Respect and maintain people's dignity and privacy.

2.6 Treat information about people with sensitivity and handle confidential information in line with the law.

3.11 Maintain clear, accurate, legible and up-to-date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions.

5.2 Falsify records or condone this by others.

5.3 Behave in a way that would bring into question my suitability to work as a social worker while at work, or outside of work.

6.6 Declare to the appropriate authority and Social Work England anything that might affect my ability to do my job competently or may affect my fitness to practise, or if I am subject to criminal proceedings or a regulatory finding is made against me, anywhere in the world.

6.7 Cooperate with any investigations by my employer, Social Work England, or another agency, into my fitness to practise or the fitness to practise of others.

35. Ms Pitters submitted that the conduct significantly falls short of what is expected of a social worker who is entrusted to act in the best interest of vulnerable child service users. [PRIVATE]. The failings are serious enough to amount to professional misconduct.

36. [PRIVATE].

37. Ms Cardoso has not worked in social work since 2023. Ms Pitters submitted that, although she has demonstrated remorse and some insight into her failings within the responses provided to Social Work England, in particular, by admitting the allegations

and within the reflective work that she has done with Ms De Silva, she has not however demonstrated that she can, in fact, practise safely and be trusted to deal appropriately with confidential information.

38. Ms Pitters submitted that, overall, despite Ms Cardoso's positive engagement and evidence of some insight and retraining, there remains a risk to the public of repetition and as such, a finding of current impairment is required on public protection grounds.
39. Ms Pitters submitted that the public would be extremely concerned to learn that a social worker had behaved inappropriately by reading confidential information from a mobile phone, which could easily be taken by a service user, and then failing to immediately disclose the fact that important information, which placed children at risk, had been disclosed. Public confidence in the profession would be undermined if the regulator did not make a finding of misconduct in respect of these actions and the subsequent dishonest explanations provided [PRIVATE]. A finding of current impairment is also required on public interest grounds.
40. On behalf of Ms Cardoso, Ms Sheridan reminded the panel that issues of misconduct and impairment were for the panel to decide and that Ms Cardoso would respect whatever conclusion it reached. Ms Sheridan highlighted that Ms Cardoso is fully aware of the seriousness of the admitted concerns and accepts that she put the children and families at risk of harm and the impact of her behaviour on the wider profession and public confidence.
41. She submitted that although there had been repeated incidents of dishonesty, it had taken place over a short period of time and was stopped when Ms Cardoso realised the impact of her actions after she had been informed of Child B and his mother's arrest.
42. Ms Sheridan, on behalf of Ms Cardoso, accepted the seriousness of the admitted allegations, that harm had been caused and that there had been a risk of further harm. She reminded the panel that Ms Cardoso had only qualified in 2019 and had no previous disciplinary issues or concerns raised against her. She reminded the panel to consider the testimonials provided which described the behaviour as extremely out of character.
43. Ms Sheridan submitted that Ms Cardoso had demonstrated insight in that she recognised and had fully reflected upon what went wrong and the impact of her behaviour. Ms Sheridan reminded the panel that Ms Cardoso had admitted the allegations in full at the outset of the regulatory process and had engaged throughout. Ms Sheridan accepted that Ms Cardoso had not been able to physically demonstrate her current fitness to practise as a social worker as she had not worked as one since the concerns arose, but that she has been working appropriately in a social care environment without any concerns.
44. The panel heard and accepted legal advice in relation to misconduct and impairment which included reference to the guidance as provided in the cases of *Roylance v GMC (no 2)* [2000] 1 AC 311, *Nandi v General Medical Council* [2004] EWHC 2317 (Admin),

Lawrence v General Medical Council [2015] EWHC 586 and Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v NMC and Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin).

45. The panel was reminded that as per the case of Professional Standards Authority v Health and Care Professions Council and Ghaffar [2014] EWHC 2723 (Admin) “*a finding of impairment does not, of course, necessarily follow upon a finding of dishonesty, although it is accepted by the Panel that it will be a frequent one.*”
46. And that as per the case of Lusinga v NMC (2017) EWHC 1458 (Admin), there is a scale of dishonesty;

“...dishonest conduct can take various forms; some criminal, some not; some destroying trust instantly, others merely undermining it to a lesser or greater extent.”

And that, “*in cases of significant professional dishonesty, mitigation has a necessarily limited role*” (Bolton v Law Society [1994] 1 WLR 512 at 598).

Finding and reasons on grounds:

47. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser and noted that the decision on misconduct was a matter of judgement for the panel and there was no burden or standard of proof.
48. The panel determined that Ms Cardoso had engaged in repeated and prolonged dishonesty in her professional capacity. Firstly, by omission in that she had not informed her manager of the incident involving Child B and not recorded it in her case notes. The dishonesty had then escalated to knowingly giving false accounts to her managers and then culminated in Ms Cardoso providing a false statement to the police. The panel agreed with the submissions made on behalf of Social Work England, that by behaving in this way Ms Cardoso had breached Social Work England’s Professional Standards 2019, 2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 3.11, 5.2, 5.3, 6.6 and 6.7 (as set out above). In addition, the panel determined that Ms Cardoso had breached the following standards:
- 3.1 Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately.
 - 3.12 Use my assessment skills to respond quickly to dangerous situations and take any necessary protective action.
49. The panel were mindful that not every falling short of the standards amounts to the statutory ground of misconduct, however the panel considered that lying repeatedly in a professional capacity, despite multiple opportunities to tell the truth, in a manner that actually harmed vulnerable children and their families and put them at risk of even greater harm amount to serious transgressions and departures from the expected standards. The panel concluded that Ms Cardoso’s conduct clearly meets the threshold for misconduct.

Finding and reasons on current impairment:

50. When considering the question of impairment, the panel took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'. The panel was mindful of the advice in *Cohen v GMC* [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin), quoted with approval in *Grant*, which states

“The panel must be highly relevant in determining if a doctor’s fitness to practise is impaired that first his or her conduct which led to the charge is easily remediable, second that it has been remedied and third that it is highly unlikely to be repeated.”

and the relevant tests it identified:

“Do our findings of fact in respect of the [doctor’s] misconduct ... conviction, caution ... show that his/her fitness to practise is impaired in the sense that he/she:

- a) Has the Registrant in the past acted and/or is liable in the future to act in a way so as to put service users at unwarranted risk of harm;*
- b) Has the Registrant in the past brought and/or is liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute;*
- c) Has the Registrant in the past breached and/or is liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the profession;*
- d) Has in the past acted dishonestly and/or is liable to act dishonestly in the future...”*

51. In considering whether Ms Cardoso's fitness to practise is currently impaired the panel considered the following two elements separately, namely:

- The personal element, established via an assessment of the risk of repetition.
- The public element, established through consideration of whether a finding of impairment might be required to maintain public confidence in the social work profession, or in the maintenance of proper standards for social workers.

52. The panel acknowledged that the issue of impairment was a matter of judgement for the panel and that there was no burden or standard of proof. The panel noted that Ms Cardoso accepted that she had acted in the past in a way that put service users at unwarranted risk of harm, brought the profession in disrepute, breached fundamental tenets of the profession and that she had acted dishonestly. The panel agreed with each of these admissions.

53. The panel went on to apply the tests set out in *Cohen* and considered Ms Cardoso's likelihood of acting in a similar way in the future. The panel considered that the persistent dishonesty which had culminated in providing a false statement to the police and was capable of destroying trust instantly, was at the more serious end of the scale of dishonesty. The panel accepted that although it is not impossible, concerns that

raise questions about a social worker's character are harder to remediate. The panel accepted the guidance in Social Work England's published Sanctions Guidance that the most serious instances of dishonesty in professional practice are those which directly harm service users or have the potential to put service users at risk.

54. The panel considered that honesty is fundamental to social work practise as social workers are routinely trusted with access to private, highly sensitive and confidential information. Ms Cardoso had been dishonest in relation to her actions around that information and this dishonest behaviour would undoubtedly undermine public confidence in the social work profession.
55. The panel noted Ms Cardoso's engagement throughout the regulatory process and accepted her evidence that she deeply regretted her actions and had developed some understanding of the consequences. The panel was concerned that Ms Cardoso appeared to remain of the opinion that had the information been completely deleted from Child B's device there would have been no risk or need to report. The panel was particularly concerned that Ms Cardoso had deliberately withheld information that had the potential to cause the most serious harm to Child A. The panel did not accept that Ms Cardoso had been motivated out of a desire to protect Child B as stated in her oral evidence and considered that she had acted to protect herself and to avoid any impact on her own career. The panel noted that when Ms Cardoso was made aware that there had been a data breach, she provided false versions of events which caused direct harm to Child B and his mother, in that they were arrested as a result of her account.
56. The panel accepted that Ms Cardoso had been limited in her ability to demonstrate that she had put right the deficiencies or shortfall in her practise as she had not been working as a social worker since the concerns arose. The panel found that it could apply limited weight to the training courses she had completed as they were mandatory courses for her current job and were not specifically targeting the areas of concern, in particular the dishonest conduct. The panel found that it could only apply limited weight to the reference from her current employer as it did not refer to the fitness to practise concerns or the actions behind them.
57. The panel carefully considered Ms Cardoso's written submissions and her oral evidence. The panel was not satisfied that even during this final fitness to practise hearing she had fully understood the gravity of the misconduct, the profound impact, and the extent of harm caused to both Child A and Child B and their families.
58. The panel therefore concluded that there remains a risk of repetition and that Ms Cardoso's fitness to practise remains impaired by reason of misconduct.
59. [PRIVATE].
60. For completeness, the panel went on to consider the public element of impairment in relation to the misconduct. The panel concluded that in this case (of deliberate and persistent dishonesty that caused harm to service users) a failure to make a finding of impairment would seriously undermine the public confidence in the profession and fail

to maintain the professional standards expected of a social worker. The panel therefore concluded that a finding of impairment is also necessary on the public interest grounds.

Decision and reasons on sanction:

61. The panel heard submissions from the parties on sanction. On behalf of Social Work England, Ms Pitters invited the panel to impose a removal order. She referred the panel to key aspects of its findings at the previous stage, which included:

- That the dishonesty had been repeated and prolonged;
- That the dishonest conduct had taken place in Ms Cardoso's professional capacity and despite repeated opportunities to tell the truth;
- That there had been harm to service users and their families;
- That there had been a risk of even greater harm to service users and their families;
- That there remained an ongoing lack of insight, in particular the risk to Child A even if the image had been deleted.

62. Ms Pitters referred the panel to the relevant sections of Social Work England's Sanctions Guidance and submitted that in the light of the panel's reasons and findings on personal and public impairment a removal order is necessary and is the only proportional order.

63. Ms Sheridan, on behalf of Ms Cardoso, requested that the panel consider all of the available sanctions. Ms Sheridan submitted that it was open to the panel to find that a conditions of practice order is the most appropriate sanction given Ms Cardoso's full engagement in the regulatory process. She submitted that it is in the interests of the public that a passionate social worker be retained by the profession. She suggested that appropriate conditions might include directions to undertake specific training, provide a reflective piece considering the standards the panel found breached and appointment of a workplace supervisor. Ms Sheridan submitted that the panel could be confident Ms Cardoso would comply with conditions given her engagement in the process throughout.

64. Ms Sheridan submitted that if the panel did not agree that a conditions of practice order would be the most appropriate sanction then a suspension order would send a clear message to the public that such behaviour is taken seriously and would allow Ms Cardoso to demonstrate full remediation.

65. The panel heard and accepted advice from the legal adviser. When considering the question of sanction, the panel took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'.

66. The panel identified the following mitigating factors:

- Full engagement with regulatory process
- Early admissions during the regulatory process
- No previous fitness to practise history
- Remorse
- Some attempts to remediate by attending counselling and mentoring
- Some insight, but not sufficiently developed.

67. The panel did not find that Ms Cardoso's relative lack of experience was a relevant mitigating factor, as honesty and the protection of sensitive information are core tenets of the profession which should be readily understood by a social worker at any level of experience. The panel also found that the employment testimonial had insufficient depth to assist them at this stage.

68. The panel identified the following aggravating factors:

- Repeated and persistent dishonesty in professional practise despite opportunities to correct the position
- Actual harm to vulnerable service users and their families
- Risk of further serious harm to vulnerable service users and their families
- Significant abuse of trust
- Lack of insight into;
 - i. the gravity of the dishonest conduct;
 - ii. the severity of the risks and potential risks to Child A, Child B and their families; and,
 - iii. Ms Cardoso's own motivation in providing the dishonest accounts.
- Lack of evidence of targeted remediation

69. Next, the panel considered each of the available sanctions.

70. The panel considered the options of taking no further action, giving advice or making a warning order. The panel was mindful that having found personal impairment, a sanction restricting Ms Cardoso's practice would usually be appropriate. The panel could find no exceptional circumstances to depart from this position. The panel considered that those sanctions would be wholly insufficient to protect the public or to reflect the nature and seriousness of Ms Cardoso's misconduct and to maintain public

confidence and proper professional standards in the light of the panel's findings on impairment.

71. The panel went on to consider whether a conditions of practice order would be appropriate. The panel carefully considered the submission made on Ms Cardoso's behalf and accepted that Ms Cardoso was motivated to comply with any conditions imposed. The panel considered the Guidance and in particular paragraphs 118 and 119 which state:

- *Conditions of practice are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitude or behavioural failings. They may also not be appropriate in cases raising wider public interest issues.*
- *For example, conditions are unlikely to be appropriate in cases of ... dishonesty.*

72. The panel considered that dishonesty is an attitudinal issue which is very hard to remediate. The panel found that the un-remediated dishonest behaviour meant Ms Cardoso could not be relied upon to be truthful in all circumstances. As honesty is an integral part of social work practice it would be necessary for Ms Cardoso to be supervised at all times, which is not a realistic or workable condition. The panel was therefore unable to formulate workable conditions that would not be tantamount to a suspension. The panel also concluded that a conditions of practice order would be insufficient to mark the seriousness of the repeated dishonest conduct, which had caused harm to service users and would therefore fail to uphold the public confidence in the profession and regulator.

73. Next the panel considered a suspension order which would prohibit Ms Cardoso from practising as a social worker for a period of time. The panel accepted that Ms Cardoso met most of the criteria suggested at paragraph 137 of the guidance in that;

- *the concerns represent a serious breach of the professional standards*
- *the social worker has demonstrated some insight*
- *there is evidence to suggest the social worker is willing to resolve or remediate their failings*

74. However, the panel noted that the guidance stated that there should be evidence to suggest that a social worker is not only willing but is also able to resolve or remediate their failings. The panel noted that attitudinal issues such as dishonesty are difficult to remediate. The panel found that this was especially true if the dishonest behaviour had been repeated. The panel considered that despite the extended period of time which has passed since the issues arose and the work Ms Cardoso has undertaken to understand and reflect upon her behaviour, there are key aspects of her insight that remain undeveloped, in particular her underlying motivation. The panel found that although not impossible, it was unlikely that Ms Cardoso would be able to remediate her failings given sufficient time.

75. In any event, the panel also considered that the public interest in this case would not be met by a suspension order, given the seriousness of the impact of her persistent dishonesty on service users and their families and the fact that her dishonest behaviour had culminated in her giving a false statement to the police. The panel considered that it is essential that the public, service users and partner agencies can trust that social workers will protect sensitive information and be honest and candid when something goes wrong and provide true statements to the authorities.

76. Accordingly, as the panel had decided that, in the present case, no other measure would be sufficient to maintain public confidence and proper professional standards, the panel concluded that a removal order was the appropriate and proportionate order.

77. In arriving at that conclusion, the panel had regard to paragraphs 148 and 149 of the Guidance, which state:

- *A removal order must be made where the decision makers conclude that no other outcome would be enough to (do one or more of the following):*
 - i. *protect the public*
 - ii. *maintain confidence in the profession*
 - iii. *maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England*
- *A removal order may be appropriate in cases involving...:*
 - i. *dishonesty, especially where persistent and/or concealed*

78. The panel recognised that a removal order would prevent Ms Cardoso from working as a social worker and might therefore adversely affect her financially, reputationally and otherwise. However, given its findings regarding her misconduct, the panel considered that any detriment to Ms Cardoso which might be caused by the removal order was outweighed by the need to protect the public, maintain public confidence and proper professional standards.

79. The panel considered that the serious nature of the [PRIVATE] misconduct found was fundamentally incompatible with continued registration as a social worker. In all the circumstances the panel therefore concluded that a removal order was the only sanction that would properly reflect the serious nature of the [PRIVATE] misconduct found and would protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession, and maintain proper standards of social workers.

Interim Order:

80. In light of its findings on sanction, the panel next considered an application by Ms Pitters for an 18-month interim suspension order to cover the appeal period before the final order becomes effective.

81. The panel was mindful of its earlier findings and decided that it would be wholly incompatible and inconsistent with those earlier findings not to make an interim suspension order.
82. Accordingly, the panel concluded that an 18-month interim suspension order is necessary for the protection of the public. When the appeal period expires, this interim order will come to an end unless an appeal has been filed with the High Court. If there is no appeal, the final order of removal shall take effect when the appeal period expires.
83. Ms Sheridan, on behalf of Ms Cardoso agreed to dispense with the formal notice requirement in relation to the review of the current interim order and therefore the panel revoked the current interim suspension order (made in accordance with Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 2 of the regulations) with the agreement of the parties.

Right of appeal:

84. 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:
- 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.
 - the decision of the regulator on review of an interim order, or a final order, other than a decision to revoke the order.
85. 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.
86. 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.
87. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practice Rules 2019 (as amended).

The Professional Standards Authority:

88. 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>.