



Social worker: Laura Hannah
Douglas
Registration number: SW135646
Fitness to Practise
Final Order Review Meeting

Date of Meeting: 29 April 2026

Meeting venue: Remote

Final order being reviewed:
Suspension order (expiring 10 June 2026)

Meeting outcome:
Revoke the suspension order with immediate effect

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is the second review of a final suspension order originally imposed for a period of six months by the case examiners, by way of accepted disposal on 12 June 2024.
2. The final suspension order was first reviewed by a panel of adjudicators on 20 November 2025. Following that review, the panel determined that Ms Douglas’s fitness to practise remained impaired and directed that the existing suspension order be extended for a further period of six months, to take effect upon the expiry of the current order on 11 December 2025.
3. The final order presently under review is a suspension order, which is due to expire on 10 June 2026. The case subject to final order review is FO-912.
4. Ms Douglas did not attend and was not represented. Ms Douglas had submitted her written submissions for the panel’s consideration.
5. Social Work England was represented by Capsticks LLP and their written submissions are set out within the notice of hearing letter.
6. The panel of adjudicators conducting this review (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Claire Cheetham	Lay chair
Delecia Dixon	Social worker adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Ruby Wade	Hearings officer
Lizzy Vanlint	Hearings support officer
Zill-E Huma	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

7. 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 30 March 2026 and addressed to Ms Douglas at her email address which she provided to Social Work England,
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 30 March 2026 detailing Ms Douglas’s registered address,
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 30 March 2026 the author sent by email to Ms Douglas at the address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents.

8. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice. This included reference to Rules 13, 16, 44 and 45 of Social Work England's Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the "Rules").
9. Having had regard to Rules 13, 16, 44 and 45 of the Rules 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 Douglas in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Rules.

Proceeding with the final order review as a meeting:

10. The notice of final order review informed Ms Douglas 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 14 April 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."

11. The panel took into account Ms Douglas's email dated 14 April 2026, in which she explained that she would reply by email because she did not have access to microsoft word and was unable to edit the forms. In that email, Ms Douglas confirmed that she would not be attending the review due to work commitments, as she had previously informed Capsticks, and she also provided written submissions for the panel's consideration. The panel noted that Ms Douglas therefore understood that, in her absence, the review could proceed in the form of a meeting.
12. The panel 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."

13. 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).

Preliminary matters:

14. The panel noted that the previous panel, on 20 November 2025, had considered an unopposed application made on behalf of Social Work England for the entirety of the hearing to be held in private [PRIVATE]. That panel determined that it was not necessary for the entirety of the hearing to be held in private, as substantial parts of the relevant material did not relate to Ms Douglas's [PRIVATE] and concluded that the hearing could

be managed appropriately by moving into private session only when [PRIVATE] matters arose for consideration.

15. The panel reconsidered that position at the outset of this review and, despite a meeting being held in private in any event, the same approach in relation to privacy remained appropriate for the publication of any decision. Accordingly, the panel determined that those parts of the determination [PRIVATE] should be in private, pursuant to rule 38(a)(ii) of the Social Work England Rules.

Review of the current order:

16. 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).
17. The purpose of this review is to review the current order, which is due to expire on the 10 June 2026. The order subject to review is a suspension order.

The allegations found likely to be proved which resulted in the imposition of the final order by way of accepted disposal were as follows:

18. [PRIVATE].
19. The panel understood that, under paragraphs 7 and 9 of Schedule 2 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018, for a case to be concluded through accepted disposal, the social worker must consent to the proposed disposal. The panel was informed that Ms Douglas had confirmed to Social Work England as follows on 3 June 2025, following receipt of the proposal for her case to be dealt with by way of accepted disposal:

"I have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide. I admit the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, and that my fitness to practise is impaired. I understand the terms of the proposed disposal of my fitness to practise case and accept them in full".

20. The panel understood that Ms Douglas had thus accepted the case examiners' observations in relation to the key facts, including the factual limbs of the concerns giving rise to the suspension order, and accepted that her fitness to practise was, at that time, impaired by reason of those facts.

The previous final order review panel on 20 November 2026 determined the following with regard to impairment:

21. *"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 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'.*

22. *The panel had regard to all of the documentation before it, including the decision and reasons of the case examiners and the submissions of Miss Douglas and Social Work England. It also considered all the new documentation provided by Miss Douglas including their responses to Social Work England on 21 August 2025 (which the panel considered, with respect, to be somewhat generic) and the written submissions referred to above. The panel did not have any references or training certificates.*
23. *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 maintaining public confidence in the profession.*
24. *The panel first considered whether Miss Douglas’ fitness to practise remains impaired, focusing on the private element of impairment in fitness to practise.*
25. *The panel noted that the case examiners found that Miss Douglas had limited insight and had demonstrated insufficient remediation in particular in relation to the seriousness of their actions which gave rise to the regulatory concerns.*
26. *This panel noted the extent to which Miss Douglas has acted upon the recommendations of the previous of panel as to what might assist a future reviewing panel. i.e.:*
- “how driving under the influence of cannabis places members of the public at risk of harm;*
- the value of ethics and a duty of candour in social work;*
- how their conduct inside and outside the workplace can impact on public trust and confidence and the maintenance of professional standards.”*
27. *The panel did not form the view that Miss Douglas has demonstrated fully or adequately developed insight into the regulatory concerns.*
28. *Although they had provided responses to Social Work England’s recommendations, with a view to satisfying them, the panel determined that these were lacking in detail, and they did not address what went wrong (in relation to each allegation), why that was wrong (in relation to each allegation), what had changed now to prevent these issues recurring (in relation to each allegation) and what Miss Douglas would do if they found themselves in a similar situation or situations (in relation to each allegation) in the future.*
29. *The panel shared the case examiners’ view that the regulatory concerns were capable of remediation, including by the ‘demonstration of clear insight into alleged actions from which the concerns arose occurred, evidence that the social worker understands the seriousness of the alleged breaches and impact on public confidence in the profession, and evidence that such actions are unlikely to be repeated’.*

30. *Miss Douglas has clearly demonstrated some insight, but this remains limited, particularly – but not solely – in relation to allegation 2.*
31. *Having found insight and remediation to still be limited, including in relation to the importance of openness and transparency in social work, the panel are of the view that a risk of repetition of the concerns remains.*
32. *Therefore, Miss Douglas’ fitness to practice remains impaired on the basis of the private element of assessing fitness to practise.*
33. *Regarding the public element of assessing fitness to practise, the panel were of the view that a fully informed and reasonable member of the public would be concerned by evidence that a social worker had drove under the influence of cannabis, particularly when already having been warned about such drug use following an incident of smelling of cannabis while visiting a child service user at school. [PRIVATE].*
34. *The panel considered that, even after a six-month suspension by consent, the public would be concerned by [PRIVATE] the fact that Miss Douglas had chosen not to inform relevant parties of the true position and the fact that they had shown limited insight.*
35. *Therefore, Miss Douglas’ fitness to practice remains impaired on the basis of the public element of assessing fitness to practise.”*

The previous final order review panel on 20 November 2025 determined the following with regard to sanction:

36. *“Having found Miss Douglas’ 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 submissions made along with all the information and accepted the advice of the legal adviser.*
37. *The panel considered the submissions made at the hearing and the evidence presented. Miss Douglas sought an order for no further sanction. Social Work England sought an order for a further six-month suspension.*
38. *The panel also took into account the ‘Impairment and sanctions guidance’ published by Social Work England.*
39. *The panel was mindful that the purpose of any sanction is not to punish Miss Douglas, but to protect the public and the wider public interest. The public interest includes maintaining public confidence in the profession and Social Work England as its regulator and by upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour. The panel applied the principle of proportionality by weighing Miss Douglas interests with the public interest.*
40. *The panel determined that taking no further action was not appropriate in a case where it has been alleged that the social worker [PRIVATE] failed to disclose this to their employer and regulator, and after a six-month suspension their insight was limited. Taking no further action is not sufficient to mark the seriousness with which the panel*

view the conduct in light of the present position regarding insight, and it fails to safeguard the wider public interest.

- 41. Advice and/or a warning were deemed inappropriate as there remains a risk of repetition. In particular, the lack of transparency and openness by the social worker with both their employer and regulator [PRIVATE] and the lack of insight into this issue – led to a risk of repetition which rendered advice and/or a warning insufficient and inappropriate in all the circumstances of this case.*
- 42. Next, the panel considered conditions of practice. The primary purpose of a conditions of practice order is to protect the public whilst the social worker takes any necessary steps to remediate their fitness to practise. Conditions are commonly applied in cases of lack of competence or ill health. The sanctions guidance states that conditions are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitudinal or behavioural failings. The panel carefully considered whether conditions of practice may be appropriate in this case. However, it noted that any conditions must be appropriate, proportionate and workable. In this case, the social worker's actions took place outside of social work practise, and in addition, the social worker is not currently practising as a social worker and they have not put forward any current plans to do so.*
- 43. In addition, the outstanding risk in relation to all three limbs of the protection of the public, particularly those relating to the reputation of the profession and the maintenance of proper standards, would not be capable of remediation by way of workable conditions.*
- 44. The panel therefore concluded that appropriate conditions are not possible.*
- 45. As such, the panel went on to consider suspension. The sanctions guidance states that suspension is appropriate where no workable conditions can be formulated that can protect the public or the wider public interest, but where the case falls short of requiring removal from the register.*
- 46. In this case, while the panel considered the concerns to be serious, they do not consider that they are so serious as to be incompatible with the social worker returning to the profession in the future. The panel considered therefore that suspension was the most appropriate sanction to reflect the seriousness with which they view this case, and is the minimum necessary to protect the public. The panel are of the view that the social worker could use a period of suspension to reflect, develop insight, and remediate the concerns that have been raised, and to mitigate the risk of repetition identified by the case examiners and the panel.*
- 47. To test the appropriateness of their sanction, the panel turned their minds to removal. While they consider that a removal order could be required, given the risk of repetition and the serious nature of the allegations, they considered that, in all the circumstances of this case, the relevant conduct fell short of that requiring removal from the register.*
- 48. The panel considered the appropriate length of the proposed suspension order. While they consider that the allegations are serious enough to warrant a suspension, the*

panel have sought to balance this against the amount of time likely to be required for the social worker to develop fuller insight and remediation. They concluded that a six-month suspension is the minimum necessary to meet the wider public interest, and to provide sufficient time for the social worker to reflect on their alleged conduct and to demonstrate that they are no longer impaired.

Extend the current suspension order for a further six months with effect from the expiry of the current order:

49. The panel determined that the suspension order should be extended for a period of six months. The panel was satisfied that this period was appropriate because this would adequately protect the public and the wider public interest.
50. The suspension period should enable Miss Douglas to reflect on the panel's findings and devise a plan of action targeted towards an unrestricted return to the register, if they desire such a return.
51. This panel cannot bind a future panel. However, a future reviewing panel would expect Miss Douglas to attend the review hearing and it would be of assistance to that panel if they were able to provide evidence that they had undertaken significant steps that would facilitate a safe and effective return to the register without restriction. This may include:
 - a. A detailed account of what went wrong (in relation to each allegation),
 - b. Why that was wrong (in relation to each allegation),
 - c. What has changed now to prevent these issues recurring (in relation to each allegation),
 - d. What Miss Douglas would do if they found themselves in a similar situation or situations (in relation to each allegation) in the future,
 - e. Evidence of CPD – particularly CPD relevant to the regulatory concerns,
 - f. Testimonials or references, particularly from persons who are aware of the specific details of the regulatory concerns;
 - g. Evidence that they have kept their social work skills and knowledge up to date.”

Social Work England submissions:

52. Social Work England on 22 April 2026 made the following written submissions for the panel's consideration:

“further to the notice of hearing served on 30 March 2026, the Social Worker has responded and provided a further reflection and an update on CPD undertaken. At the point of drafting the notice of hearing the Social Worker appeared to have disengaged and indicated no intention to further remediate.

It is submitted that the recent response from the Social Worker appears to show a development of further insight [PRIVATE]. Although the reflection is not set out in the way recommended by the previous panel, and does not appear to specifically address concern 2 (failure to disclose), there is reflection on the driving concern that brought the Social Worker to the attention of the regulator. It also considers how the Social Worker would prevent a reoccurrence of the conduct in the future by better understanding the issues around substance misuse.

The Social Worker has undertaken targeted CPD, "Understanding and Responding to the Impact of Substance Misuse in Social Work Practice". Social Work England invite the Panel to consider the further submissions received from the Social Worker and to determine if they consider the risk of repetition of the original conduct is reduced such that the Social Worker is no longer impaired. It is submitted that further extending the Order is unlikely to result in further remediation and the Social Worker, although still engaging, remains aggrieved by the Fitness to Practise process.

If the Panel consider that remediation is complete they are invited to allow the Order to lapse upon expiry. If the Panel consider that the Social Worker remains impaired then they are invited to consider imposing a Warning Order, to mark the conduct and act as a reminder regarding future conduct.

The Panel should only consider imposing a more restrictive Order if they consider the Social Worker remains likely to repeat the conduct and place the public at risk of harm. It is submitted that impairment on public interest grounds alone, at this stage, does not require a more restrictive sanction."

Social worker submissions:

53. On 14 April 2026, Ms Douglas provided the following written submissions for the panel's consideration.

"Reflecting on my actions,

I recognise that driving under the influence of cannabis was not only a serious error in judgment but also an action that could have had devastating consequences. Cannabis impairs concentration, coordination, and reaction time. By choosing to drive after using it, I placed myself, and other road users at risk. Even if no one was harmed, the potential for causing serious injury or loss of life was real, and that is something I now fully understand and deeply regret.

This experience has forced me to confront how my behaviour conflicted with the core values of social work, values that I strongly believe in, including responsibility, integrity, and respect for the safety and wellbeing of others. As social workers, we are expected to promote trust, model sound decision-making, and act in ways that safeguard vulnerable individuals and the wider public.

My actions fell short of these standards, and I take full accountability for that failure. I have also come to realise that professional integrity extends beyond working hours.

The way I conduct myself in my personal life influences how the profession is perceived.

Engaging in behaviour that breaks the law or compromises safety undermines public confidence in social workers and the vital role we play in society. I am committed to ensuring that this incident does not define me but instead marks a turning point in my professional and personal growth. Since this event, I have taken steps to better understand substance use and its effects, including reflection and exploring resources on ethical decision-making.

I have learned to be more mindful of the consequences of my actions and to consider how my choices can impact others, particularly those who rely on social workers to act with care and sound judgment. I fully understand and respect the concerns raised by Social Work England regarding this incident and the standards expected of the profession.

However, I also feel that I am being disproportionately punished for a time in my life that was that was difficult and occurred over three years ago, for which I have already taken full responsibility and shown genuine remorse.

During the time since, I have demonstrated sustained good conduct but have been unable to demonstrate this since the suspension.

In reflecting deeply, I recognise that living the values of the social work profession means embodying them consistently — in work, in private life, and in every decision. I am truly remorseful for my actions and am committed to demonstrating through my future conduct that I have learned from this experience and will uphold the highest standards of ethics, safety, and professionalism.

I want to be completely honest and hope that my response does not come across as impolite. However I have to be honest about my feelings in this process, this is not to mention the ridicule I've had to experience since you have been reporting on me, from those I chose not to tell. I may never go back into social work again especially after this significant time out and the difficulty in returning whilst this is on my record, not to mention the way that the social work system as treated me in general. I have previously answered the questions and have chosen not to repeat anything previously said that I am aware of. I cannot provide any references, however I am the best reference as nobody knows me better than myself. I am choosing to look after my wellbeing and this is what I can provide at this time, looking after my own wellbeing is something I should have done 3 years ago, and we would not be here. I personally feel that nobody is considering that I had a good record in social work and completed my work to a good standard. I do not believe this extension was required and further impacted mine and my daughters future. Despite social work being designed as an holistic, supportive framework for families, I personally believe it often fails the social workers.

Below is CPD I have been completing in relation to social work.

Understanding and Responding to the Impact of Substance Misuse in Social Work Practice
Type of CPD: Professional learning and reflective practice
Description of Learning Activity: I engaged in research and reflection on the impact of substance misuse within social work, focusing on how it affects individuals, families, and communities, and how social workers can develop effective, empathetic, and evidence-based responses. This included reviewing relevant legislation, professional guidance, and best practice frameworks such as the Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989/2004, and the Social Work England Professional Standards.

Key Learning Points:

1. *Understanding Substance Misuse: Substance misuse involves harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and drugs. It often coexists with mental health issues, poverty, or trauma, creating complex needs for individuals.*

2. *Impact on Individuals and Families: Individuals may experience physical deterioration, mental health challenges, homelessness, and unemployment. Family members, particularly children, can suffer from neglect, emotional harm, and instability. Parental substance misuse is a significant factor in child protection cases and can hinder safe caregiving. Less money in the familial home*

3. *Implications for Social Work Practice: Social workers must balance support and safeguarding, promoting recovery while ensuring protection of vulnerable adults and children. Partnership working with substance misuse services, mental health professionals, housing, and the criminal justice system is essential. Stigma and moral judgment must be challenged to foster trust and engagement. Evasive parents can be difficult to support if you do not know the true extent of the problem.*

4. *Ethical and Legal Context: Social workers have a duty under Standard 1.5 of the Social Work England Professional Standards to promote wellbeing and prevent harm. Practitioners must consider capacity, consent, and confidentiality, while working within safeguarding frameworks.*

5. *Professional Development: Enhancing knowledge of trauma-informed approaches and motivational interviewing techniques. Reflecting on personal attitudes toward substance misuse to ensure nondiscriminatory practice. Building confidence in multi-agency communication and risk assessment. Reflection on Learning: This learning reinforced the importance of viewing substance misuse not simply as a moral issue but as a health and social problem rooted in wider social determinants such as deprivation and trauma. I recognised the need for empathy alongside professional curiosity, maintaining boundaries while offering holistic support. Developing co-produced care plans and promoting recovery capital can empower individuals to make sustainable change. This is beneficial to me as an individual as well as a social worker.*

Impact on Practice: I will apply this learning by: Incorporating strengths-based conversations focused on recovery and resilience. Using motivational interviewing to enhance engagement. Working collaboratively with addiction [PRIVATE]. Embedding

reflective practices to limit burnout and manage stressors. Evidence of Learning: Watched a number of online YouTube videos on substance misuse and the impact on family Review policy and legislation that is impacted by this area e.g. Section 11 CA 2004

Next Steps: Explore community-based recovery models and peer support programmes. Continue updating knowledge on current drug trends and policy shifts.”

Legal advice:

54. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser.
55. The panel was advised that this review was conducted under paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 2 to the Social Workers Regulations 2018. The purpose of the review was to determine whether Ms Douglas’s fitness to practise remained impaired as at the date of the review and, if so, what order, if any, was necessary and proportionate. The review was forward-looking and protective in nature. It was not a rehearing of the original case, and the findings previously made stood.
56. The panel was advised that it was required first to consider the question of current impairment, exercising its own independent judgement on the basis of all the evidence before it, including the previous determinations, the written submissions made on behalf of Social Work England, and the material provided by Ms Douglas.
57. In considering impairment, the panel was advised to consider both the personal and public components. The personal component concerned whether Ms Douglas presented any current risk to the public, including the risk of repetition, having regard to insight, remediation, relevant training, engagement with the process, and evidence of changed behaviour. The public component concerned whether a finding of impairment remained necessary in order to maintain public confidence in the profession and the regulatory process, and to declare and uphold proper professional standards.
58. The panel was advised that if it concluded Ms Douglas’s fitness to practise was no longer impaired, it could allow the current suspension order to lapse upon expiry. It could also consider whether a Warning Order was necessary and proportionate as the least restrictive outcome, but to provide clear reasons as to why lapse alone would be insufficient.
59. If the panel found that impairment remained, it was advised to consider sanction separately and sequentially, starting with the least restrictive outcome and moving upwards only so far as necessary. Any sanction imposed had to be proportionate and directed to the protection of the public and the wider public interest.

Panel decision and reasons on current impairment:

60. In considering the question of current impairment, the panel undertook a comprehensive review of the current suspension order in light of the present circumstances. It took into account the earlier decision of the case examiners by way of

accepted disposal, together with the determinations of the previous reviewing panel. The panel recognised, however, that it was required to exercise its own independent judgement on the question of current impairment as at today's date. It also had regard to Social Work England's published guidance on impairment and sanctions.

61. The panel considered all of the documentary material before it. This included the previous regulatory decisions, the written submissions made on behalf of Social Work England including the most recent dated 22 April 2026, and the written submissions, reflective statement and continuing professional development material provided by Ms Douglas on 14 April 2026. The panel noted that whilst earlier submissions on behalf of Social Work England had advanced the position that a removal order was now appropriate, that position was subsequently revised following further representations and updated material from Ms Douglas. In its renewed submissions, Social Work England invited the panel to find that there was no current impairment and to allow the suspension order to lapse upon expiry, with a warning order advanced only in the alternative should impairment be found. The panel reminded itself that these were recommendations only and that the ultimate decision rested with the panel exercising its own independent judgement. It also accepted the advice of the legal adviser. In reaching its decision, the panel bore in mind the need to protect the public, to uphold proper professional standards, and to maintain public confidence in the profession and the regulatory process.
62. The panel first considered the personal component of impairment, namely whether Ms Douglas presents a current risk to the public by reason of her past conduct. [PRIVATE]. The panel recognised the seriousness of that conduct. Driving whilst impaired by drugs involved a clear risk to the safety of other road users and represented a serious lapse in judgement. The failure to disclose the matter promptly was also a breach of the standards of candour and professional responsibility expected of a registered social worker.
63. The panel then considered the extent to which those concerns had been addressed. It was satisfied that Ms Douglas has demonstrated materially improved insight. In her written reflections, she expressly acknowledged that driving under the influence of cannabis was a serious error of judgement which could have had devastating consequences. She recognised that she had placed herself and others at risk and accepted that her conduct fell short of the core values of social work, including responsibility, integrity and safeguarding others. She further recognised that professional integrity extends beyond the workplace and that behaviour in private life can affect public confidence in the profession. The panel considered these acknowledgements to be significant and indicative of genuine reflection.
64. The panel also considered remediation. It noted that misconduct of this nature is capable of remediation. It relates to judgement, behaviour and professional responsibility rather than a lack of professional competence. Ms Douglas had undertaken relevant continuing professional development concerning substance misuse and its impact within social work practice. The panel considered that this

learning was directly relevant to the circumstances of the case and demonstrated a constructive attempt to understand the wider consequences of substance misuse, both personally and professionally. It also noted her reflections as to how that learning would inform safer and more responsible future conduct.

65. The panel recognised that Ms Douglas had not addressed every historic concern in the precise manner previously suggested, and had not expressly revisited the delayed disclosure issue in detail. It also bore in mind that she was unrepresented and that registrants without legal representation may not always understand with precision what may be expected of them in regulatory proceedings or how best to present remediation. The panel considered it important not to adopt an unduly prescriptive approach in such circumstances. Nevertheless, when the evidence was considered in the round, the panel was satisfied that she now demonstrated a broader understanding of accountability, openness and the importance of compliance with professional standards.
66. The panel further took into account the passage of time since the original events, the absence of any evidence of repetition, further offending, or other regulatory concerns, and Ms Douglas's continued engagement with the present review through the provision of updated material. The panel also noted that Ms Douglas expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of the previous decision-making process and felt that, having complied with what had been asked of her, the expectations placed upon her were subsequently extended or altered. The panel understood why she may have formed that view. It did not regard the expression of such concerns as undermining her insight, remorse or remediation. Rather, the panel considered that she was entitled to hold and express those views and that, importantly, she had nonetheless continued to engage constructively with the regulatory process and to provide relevant material for consideration.
67. Having considered all of those matters, the panel concluded that the risk of repetition is now very low. There was no evidence before it of any continuing substance misuse issue, entrenched attitudinal problem, or ongoing disregard for professional standards. The panel was satisfied that the concerns which originally gave rise to impairment had been sufficiently remedied. Accordingly, the panel determined that Ms Douglas's fitness to practise is not currently impaired on personal grounds.
68. The panel then considered the public component of impairment. It recognised the seriousness of the original [PRIVATE] and the importance of maintaining confidence in the profession and declaring proper standards of conduct. However, the panel also recognised that the public interest is not advanced by maintaining a finding of current impairment where a registrant has demonstrated insight, undertaken remediation, presents a very low risk of repetition, and has been subject to regulatory restriction for a significant period.
69. The panel considered that an informed member of the public, having knowledge of all of the circumstances, would recognise that the misconduct has been appropriately

marked through the accepted disposal of a 6 month suspension order and the subsequent extension of a further six months to that order. The panel noted in particular that there had been two periods of suspension of six months each, the first by agreement and the second imposed upon review. Such an observer would also expect the regulator to acknowledge genuine remediation, to permit professionals to recover from past mistakes within a reasonable period, and to act proportionately. In those circumstances, the panel was satisfied that a finding of current impairment was no longer required in order to maintain confidence in the profession or the regulatory process, nor to declare and uphold proper professional standards.

70. Accordingly, the panel determined that Ms Douglas's fitness to practise is not currently impaired by reason of conviction or misconduct.
71. Although the panel determined that Ms Douglas's fitness to practise is not currently impaired, it went on to consider whether any further action was required in the wider public interest. In particular, the panel considered whether it would be appropriate to replace the existing suspension order with a warning order upon review.
72. The panel reminded itself that a finding of no current impairment does not automatically preclude consideration of the least restrictive available outcome, where such action is necessary and proportionate to maintain public confidence in the profession or to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct. The panel therefore considered the issue with care.
73. The panel had full regard to the seriousness of the original misconduct [PRIVATE]. The panel recognised that such conduct was capable of undermining confidence in the profession and fell below the standards expected of a registered social worker.
74. The panel then weighed those matters against the significant mitigation now present. It had already concluded that Ms Douglas has demonstrated meaningful insight, has undertaken relevant remediation, and presents a very low risk of repetition. It also took into account that she has been subject to regulatory restriction by way of suspension orders for a substantial period, during which the seriousness of the misconduct has been publicly marked and regulatory standards upheld.
75. The panel considered whether an informed member of the public, having knowledge of all of the circumstances, would regard a further formal warning as necessary in order to maintain confidence in the profession or the regulatory process. In the panel's judgement, such a person would recognise that the misconduct has already been addressed through the accepted disposal and a subsequent period of suspension, and would also expect the regulator to respond proportionately where genuine remediation has been achieved.
76. The panel concluded that the imposition of a warning order would serve no additional protective purpose and would amount to a further restrictive measure that was not required by the public interest. Any further sanction in the circumstances would be more punitive than protective.

77. Accordingly, having considered a warning order with care, the panel determined that it was neither necessary nor proportionate.
78. The panel next considered whether the current suspension order should be permitted to run until its stated expiry date or should instead be revoked with immediate effect. The panel recognised that the previous reviewing panel had imposed a further 6 month suspension order on the basis of the evidence and level of impairment found at that time, and it did not seek to undermine that earlier decision, which was properly made on the information then available. However, the present panel had reached the independent conclusion that Ms Douglas's fitness to practise is no longer currently impaired.
79. In those circumstances, the panel considered it would be inconsistent and unfair for a registrant who is now fit to practise to remain suspended for the remaining short period of the order unless there remained a compelling public interest justification. The panel was satisfied that the misconduct had already been sufficiently marked by a substantial period of suspension, amounting in total to a lengthy sanction, and that any continuation of the order would now be more punitive than protective. There being no ongoing public protection concerns and no wider public interest reason requiring the continuation of suspension, the panel determined that the appropriate and proportionate course was for the suspension order to be revoked with immediate effect.
80. **The panel directed that the current suspension order be revoked with immediate effect.**

The Professional Standards Authority:

81. 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>.