



Social worker: Cleopatra Sillah

Registration number: SW112960

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 9 June to 10 June 2026

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome: Fitness to practise not impaired, no further action

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”).
2. Ms Sillah attended and was represented by Ms Beaty.
3. Social Work England was represented by Mr Kerruish-Jones, 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
Gill Murgatroyd	Chair
Anna Racher	Social worker adjudicator
Baljeet Basra	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Paul Harris/Ruby Wade	Hearings officer
Asma Ansar	Hearings support officer
Scott McDonnell	Legal adviser

Preliminary matters:

5. The chair of the panel confirmed that all parties were in receipt of the hearing timetable (3 pages), the statement of case (11 pages), the witness statement bundle (12 pages), the exhibits bundle (150 pages), Ms Sillah’s response (144 pages), the service and supplementary bundle (29 pages) and the statement of agreed facts (4 pages).

Allegations:

6. The allegations arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 17 January 2023 are:

1. On 24 May 2022, at Portsmouth Magistrates’ Court, you were convicted of an offence on 4 August 2021 of acting in contravention of a provision of an order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, namely The Portsmouth City Council (Consolidated) (On-Street Parking and Restrictions on Waiting and Loading) (No.6) Order 2015, relating to the parking of motor vehicles and at that time there was displayed on the motor vehicle a badge of a form prescribed under section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and you were using the vehicle in circumstances where a disabled person’s concession would have been available to a disabled person’s vehicle contrary to section 117(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

2. You failed to notify the regulator of your conviction at paragraph 1 above.

3. *Your conduct at Paragraph 2 was dishonest.*

The matter outlined in Paragraph 1 amounts to the statutory ground of conviction or caution in the UK.

The matters outlined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your conviction or caution in the UK and/or misconduct.

Admissions:

7. Rule 32c(i)(aa) Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended) (the 'Rules') states:

'Where facts have been admitted by the social worker, the adjudicators or regulator shall find those facts proved.'
8. Following the reading of the allegations the panel chair asked Ms Sillah whether she admitted any of the allegations.
9. Although Ms Sillah had admitted allegations 1 and 2 before the hearing, she had denied allegation 3.
10. However, when all three allegations were put to her at the hearing Ms Sillah changed her position and informed the panel that she admitted allegations 1,2 and 3.
11. The panel therefore found allegations 1, 2 and 3 proved by way of Ms Sillah's admissions.

Background and summary of evidence:

12. Mr Kerruish-Jones provided the background to the case and directed the panel to the statements and evidence that Social Work England relied upon, which were contained in the bundles provided to the panel.
13. Mr Kerruish-Jones informed the panel that on 4 August 2021, Ms Sillah misused a blue disabled badge.
14. Ms Sillah parked her car in Portsmouth and displayed a blue disabled badge, which had been issued to a family member. Ms Sillah was approached by a Portsmouth City council senior enforcement officer who asked questions of Ms Sillah and assessed that she had displayed the blue disabled badge contrary to its conditions of use. This was because the person who had been issued the blue disabled badge was not with Ms Sillah.
15. On 8 October 2021, Portsmouth City council wrote to Ms Sillah concerning the said incident and invited her to a formal interview in accordance with the police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

16. An interview was arranged, initially, for 3 November 2021 and thereafter for 8 December 2021.
17. On 13 November 2021, Ms Sillah submitted a renewal application to Social Work England in which there was no mention of the incident or the investigation.
18. A written summons to court dated 28 January 2022 was sent to Ms Sillah.
19. On 24 May 2022, Ms Sillah appeared before Magistrates at Portsmouth Magistrates' Court where she pleaded guilty to one offence of misusing a blue disabled badge contrary to section 117(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
20. Ms Sillah was sentenced as follows:
 - Fine of £200;
 - Victim surcharge of £34;
 - Prosecution costs of £300.
21. Mr Kerruish-Jones informed the panel that on 20 June 2022, Social Work England received an anonymous referral in respect of Ms Sillah's conviction, approximately one month after the conviction.
22. Mr Kerruish-Jones informed the panel that this was the first time that Social Work England became aware of the conviction. Ms Sillah had not notified her regulator about it or the events leading up to it including being subject to a criminal investigation.

Submissions on grounds and impairment:

23. Mr Kerruish-Jones reminded the panel that Ms Sillah had admitted the facts. In addition, with regard to allegation 1, the statutory grounds had been made out in light of the conviction on 24 May 2022 confirmed by the memorandum of conviction.
24. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that whether the facts proven amounted to misconduct in respect of allegation 2 and 3 was a matter of judgment for the panel, rather than a matter of proof.
25. Mr Kerruish-Jones informed the panel that misconduct was defined by Lord Clyde in the case of *Roylance v General Medical Council (No 2)* as *'a word of general effect, involving some act or omission which falls short of what would be proper in the circumstances.'* Lord Clyde went on to say that *'[t]he standard of propriety may often be found by reference to the rules and standards ordinarily required to be followed by a [...] practitioner in the particular circumstances.'*
26. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that Ms Sillah was obliged to report the criminal investigation and conviction in accordance with Social Work England's Professional Standards 2019, (updated in August 2021) and referred to standard 6.6, which provides:

'As a Social Worker, I will 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.'

27. Mr Kerriush-Jones also referred the panel to Social Work England's 'Safe and effective practice declarations and fitness to practise self-referrals' guidance which states:

'What you need to declare:

- *Convictions, cautions ... for a criminal offence'*

28. Further, under the heading 'Convictions cautions and investigations' it states:

'You must declare any charges, convictions or cautions that've been issued to you in the UK ... You must also tell us if you're being investigated for a criminal offence in the UK ... Our regulatory powers mean that all registered social workers in England must disclose these matters. You must tell us if you have been charged with an offence but have not yet been found guilty or not guilty.

We may consider your actions were dishonest if you do not disclose them:

- *At the point of applying to renew your registration*

You must declare:

- *Any charges, convictions and cautions issued in the UK*
- *Any charges of or investigations for a criminal offence.'*

29. Mr Kerruish-Jones also referred the panel to the principles in *R (Remedy UK Ltd) v General Medical Council [2010] EWHC 1245 (Admin)* including:

'Misconduct is of two principal kinds. First, it may involve sufficiently serious misconduct in the exercise of professional practice such that it can properly be described as misconduct going to fitness to practise. Second, it can involve conduct of a morally culpable or otherwise disgraceful kind which may, and often will, occur out with the course of professional practice itself, but which brings disgrace upon the doctor and thereby prejudices the reputation of the profession.'

'Conduct falls into the second limb if it is dishonourable or disgraceful or attracts some kind of opprobrium; that fact may be sufficient to bring the profession of medicine into disrepute. It matters not whether such conduct is directly related to the exercise of professional skills.'

30. Mr Kerruish-Jones invited the panel to make a finding of misconduct regarding allegations 2 and 3.

31. He then made submissions regarding impairment and referred the panel to *Cohen v General Medical Council [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin)* and *Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v Nursing and Midwifery Council, Paula Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)*.

32. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that a conviction is a serious matter. Criminal offences are evidence of serious shortcomings in conduct that could put people at risk or undermine public confidence in social work services.
33. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that even where an offence takes place outside of the workplace, as in the current case, this can still be relevant to the issue of current fitness to practise. The conviction can also undermine public confidence in the profession and/or evidence a breach in the standards expected of social workers.
34. Mr Kerruish-Jones submitted that as Ms Sillah's actions were dishonest, this would support a finding of current impairment.
35. Mr Kerruish-Jones acknowledged, on behalf of Social Work England, that Ms Sillah had provided a reflective statement and supporting testimonials to support her case, but suggested that despite this Ms Sillah's practice was currently impaired.
36. Ms Beaty then made submissions on behalf Ms Sillah regarding grounds and impairment.
37. Ms Beaty informed the panel that there had been no fitness to practice concerns relating to Ms Sillah for the past 5 years.
38. Ms Beaty submitted that Ms Sillah had been professional, honest and behaved in a supportive manner as demonstrated in testimonials provided by her.
39. Ms Beaty informed the panel that Ms Sillah deeply regretted her behaviour. She had reflected on her conduct and conceded that she had fallen below the standards expected of her.
40. Ms Beaty informed the panel that Ms Sillah loved her job, and she made a difference every day.
41. Ms Beaty submitted that Ms Sillah did not pose a risk or threat to anyone.
42. Ms Beaty informed the panel that Ms Sillah's current employer was aware of these proceedings and supported her. Ms Sillah "had learnt a strong lesson".
43. Ms Beaty invited the panel to consider Ms Sillah's reflective statement, her testimonials and told the panel that she deeply regretted what had happened.

Legal Advice:

44. With regard to misconduct the panel then heard advice from the legal adviser referring the panel to Rule 35A of the Rules;

'(1) Where a registered social worker has been convicted of a criminal offence:

(i) a copy of the certificate or memorandum of conviction, certified by a competent officer of a Court in the United Kingdom or, in Scotland, an extract conviction, shall be conclusive proof of the conviction.

(ii) the findings of fact upon which the conviction is based shall be admissible as proof of those facts.

2. The only evidence which may be adduced by the registered social worker in rebuttal of a certificate or memorandum of conviction is evidence for the purpose of proving that said conviction has been quashed, or they are not the person referred to in the certificate or memorandum.

3. Any other evidence pertaining to the conviction may be considered as sufficient proof of the conviction.'

45. Regulation 25(2)(c) of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 states that a conviction in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence constitutes grounds for bringing fitness to practise proceedings.
46. The panel heard and accepted legal advice from the legal adviser on allegation 1 and the issue of the statutory ground of conviction. The panel was reminded that the statutory ground was made out by reason of the conviction.
47. With regard to allegations 2 and 3 and the issue of misconduct the panel was reminded of the overriding objective of Social Work England, which includes its duty to protect the public, promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in England and to promote and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.
48. The panel was referred to *R(on the application of Remedy UK Limited) v GMC [2010] EWHC 1245 (Admin)* and that misconduct is of two principal kinds. First, it may involve sufficiently serious misconduct in the exercise of professional practice such that it can properly be described as misconduct going to fitness to practise. Secondly, it can involve conduct of a morally culpable or otherwise disgraceful kind, which may, and often will occur, out-with the course of professional practice itself, but which brings disgrace upon the registrant and thereby prejudices the reputation of the profession.
49. The panel then heard advice from the legal adviser regarding impairment and was referred to the personal and public elements of impairment and the cases of *Cohen v GMC [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin)* and *Yeong v GMC [2009] EWHC 1923(Admin)* and *CHRE v NMC & Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)*.
50. With regard to the “*personal element*” and the principles referred to in *Cohen v GMC [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin)* the panel should consider if the conduct is remediable, has the conduct been remediated and is there a likelihood of repetition?
51. With regard to the “*public interest element*” the panel must take into account that even where the misconduct is easily remediable, has been remedied and there is no risk of repetition a registrant’s fitness to practise may still be impaired, *Yeong v GMC [2009] EWHC 1923 (Admin)* & *CHRE v NMC & Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)*.
52. The panel was reminded that a social worker’s fitness to practise is impaired if they pose a risk to public safety, or if their conduct or performance undermines the confidence the public is entitled to place in all social workers in England. A social

worker's fitness to practise may also be impaired if their actions make it necessary to send a public message about the standards expected of social workers.

53. The panel should consider the limbs of public interest, which includes the protection of service users, colleagues and the wider public from the risk of harm, maintaining public confidence in the social work profession, protecting the reputation of the social work profession and declaring and upholding appropriate standards of conduct and competence among social workers.

54. The panel was referred to the four tests identified by Dame Janet Smith in her *5th Shipman Report* and cited in *CHRE v (1) NMC and (2) Grant*. The panel was advised to consider whether:

- Ms Sillah has in the past and/or is liable in the future to place service users at unwarranted risk of harm.
- Ms Sillah has in the past brought and/or is liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute.
- Ms Sillah has in the past breached and/or is liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the profession.
- Ms Sillah has the social worker in the past acted dishonestly and/or is liable to act dishonestly in the future.

55. The panel was also advised that when considering the question of impairment, it should take account of Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'.

Findings and reasons on grounds:

56. The panel considered each allegation in turn as well as the principles described *R (Remedy UK Ltd) v General Medical Council [2010] EWHC 1245 (Admin)* and took account of the relevant standards and guidance issued by Social Work England.

57. The panel determined that concerning allegation 1, the conviction proved the statutory ground. The panel further determined that allegations 2 and 3, found proved, did amount to misconduct.

58. Ms Sillah had committed a criminal offence, she had failed to declare it to her regulator and had been dishonest in not doing so.

Findings and reasons on current impairment:

59. When considering the question of impairment, the panel took into account Social Work England's 'Impairment and sanctions guidance'.

60. The panel took account of the submissions by Mr Kerruish-Jones and Ms Beaty as well as the legal advice provided. The panel also referred to the testimonials provided by Ms Sillah, her reflective statement, the evidence of her conduct and character and how she

had performed as a social worker since the incident including support provided to service users.

61. The panel decided that Ms Sillah had demonstrated significant insight and remediation.
62. Her reflective work was thoroughly comprehensive and insightful. Ms Sillah had undertaken CPD to address the concerns and shown that she was a reflective professional.
63. The panel decided that there was no risk of repetition and that Ms Sillah did not pose a risk to others.
64. The panel noted that Ms Sillah worked in a demanding and complex field of social work and decided that it was in the public interest that she should be permitted to practice in her field.
65. When considering the personal and public elements the panel decided that with regard to the personal element Ms Sillah had demonstrated that she had remediated, she had provided positive testimonials (both from senior managers and service users) and shown extensive self-reflection. The panel was satisfied that Ms Sillah had shown insight and remorse and remediated her conduct even though dishonesty is attitudinal in nature. In relation to the risk of repetition, the panel were satisfied that Ms Sillah has taken considerable learning from these proceedings and implemented them in her practice. This has included keeping herself updated on the professional standards and requirements expected of her by Social Work England and being vigilant and transparent in providing information about her conviction and these proceedings to her employers.
66. Taken as a whole, the panel concluded that the risk of repetition was therefore highly unlikely.
67. When considering the public element, the panel decided that public confidence would not be undermined by a finding of no current impairment being made. This was due to Ms Sillah's significant insight and remediation showing that she did not pose a risk to others. The panel decided that a member of the public, fully informed of the facts and circumstances of the case would not lose confidence in the profession by the finding of no current impairment.
68. Having found no current impairment the panel then considered if there should be no further action, or if the panel should issue advice or a warning.
69. The panel concluded that no further action should be taken against Ms Sillah. The panel accepted that she "had learnt a strong lesson" and that there would be no repetition of the conduct.

Interim order:

70. Having made a finding of no impairment, the panel asked Mr Kerruish-Jones if there was a current order in place. Mr Kerruish-Jones confirmed that there was not.

The Professional Standards Authority:

71. 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>.