

Social worker: Stephen Williams

Registration number: SW42566

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 07 September 2026 to 10 September 2026

Hearing venue: Remote

Hearing outcome:

Discontinuance application granted, fitness to practise not impaired,
advice

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”).
2. Mr Williams attended the hearing and was represented by Ms Laura Sheridan of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).
3. Social Work England was represented by Mr Adrian Harris, case presenter, from 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
Mark Stobbs	Chair
Michael Isles	Social worker adjudicator
Cherrylene Henry-Leach	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Laurn Green	Hearings officer
Raegan Kirkland	Hearings support officer
Zill-e Huma	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

5. The panel considered all of the documents contained within the hearing bundle relating to service of notice. It also took into account that Mr Williams attended the hearing and was represented by Ms Sheridan, and that no issue was raised on his behalf in relation to service. Having considered the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), together with all of the information before it, the panel was satisfied that notice of the hearing had been served on Mr Williams in accordance with the Rules. Accordingly, the panel was satisfied that service had been properly effected.

Preliminary matters:

6. At the outset of the hearing, Mr Harris drew the panel’s attention to Rules 37 and 38 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended). He submitted that, whilst Rule 37 provides that hearings are ordinarily to be held in public, Rule 38 requires those parts of a hearing which concern the health of a registered social worker to be heard in private. He proposed that, whenever Mr Williams’ health was to be discussed in evidence or submissions, the relevant part of the hearing should be conducted in private.
7. The panel accepted Mr Harris’ submissions and determined that the hearing would otherwise remain in public, but that any part of the hearing concerning details of Mr

Williams' health would be conducted in private in accordance with Rule 38. The panel considered that this approach appropriately protected Mr Williams' private health information whilst maintaining the principle of open justice in respect of the remainder of the hearing. The panel also noted that there were references to Mr Brown's work history, which it considered should also be dealt with in private. Mr Brown was Mr Williams' line manager in the period covered by the allegations.

Allegations:

8. The allegations arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 27 October 2023 are:

"Whilst registered as a social worker, between the approximate dates of 7 December 2020 and 4 February 2022, you failed to adequately safeguard one or more service users, in that:

1. In relation to Child B:

- a. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timescale and/or as directed by management;*
- b. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;*
- c. You did not complete and/ or record a Child in Need Meeting on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;*

2. In relation to Child J:

- a. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale;*
- b. You did not complete and/ or record a Child in Need Meeting on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;*

3. In relation to Child L:

- a. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timeframe and/or in accordance with management direction;*

4. In relation to Child N:

- a. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timeframe and/or in accordance with management direction;*

5. In relation to R Children:

- a. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale;*
- b. You did not complete and/ or record a Child in Need Meeting on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;*

c. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timeframe and/or in accordance with management direction;

6. In relation to Child V:

a. You did not complete and/ or record one or more statutory visits within required timescale;

b. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

c. You did not complete and/ or record a Child in Need Meeting on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

d. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timescale;

7. In relation to W Children:

a. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

b. You did not complete and/ or record a Child in Need Meeting on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

c. You did not complete and/ or update a Single Assessment within the required timescale and/or as directed by management;

8. In relation to Child YY:

a. You did not complete and/ or record one or more statutory visits:

i. Within required timescale;

ii. Adequately;

b. You did not complete and/ or record Child in Need Meetings on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

c. You did not complete and/ or update a Child in Need Plan on one or more occasions, within the required timescale or at all;

d. In relation to Person 1's drug misuse, you did not:

i. Undertake sufficient direct work with Child YY;

ii. Undertake a Single Assessment;

iii. Maintain sufficient contact with Person 1's drugs worker;

e. In relation to the conditions of Child YY's home, you did not:

i. Accurately record the conditions in the case file;

ii. Discuss the situation with a Team Manager;

iii. Take any other appropriate action.

9. By your conduct described at paragraphs 1-8 above, you failed to adequately safeguard one or more service users.

The matters described at paragraphs 1-9 amount to misconduct

By reason of your misconduct your fitness to practise is impaired”

Background:

9. On 28 February 2022, Social Work England received a referral from Juanita Scallan of Torbay Council ('the Council') concerning Mr Williams' practice as a social worker.
10. Mr Williams had been engaged through an agency as a social worker within the Council's Safeguarding Team from 7 December 2020 until 28 January 2022, with his formal end date being 4 February 2022. His role involved working with vulnerable children and families who were receiving social care services, principally at Child in Need or Child Protection level.
11. The concerns referred to Social Work England related to Mr Williams' practice across a number of cases. They included alleged failures to complete Child in Need Plans and Single Assessments, to undertake statutory visits, and to undertake and/or appropriately record Child in Need meetings and reviews. These concerns subsequently formed the basis of the regulatory allegations against Mr Williams.

Discontinuance application:

Social Work England:

12. Mr Harris, on behalf of Social Work England, invited the panel to grant the application to discontinue the proceedings in full. He submitted that, in light of the information now available, there was no longer a realistic prospect of a determination that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was currently impaired.
13. Mr Harris explained that the case arose following a referral received by Social Work England in early 2022 from Torbay Council. Mr Williams had been employed through an agency as a social worker within the Council's Safeguarding Team between December 2020 and January 2022, working with vulnerable children and families subject to Child in Need and Child Protection arrangements.
14. The allegations concerned a number of cases and included alleged failures to produce Child in Need Plans and Single Assessments, undertake statutory visits, and conduct or record Child in Need meetings and reviews. Mr Harris submitted that the central feature of the case was that work allocated to Mr Williams, which he was required to undertake, did not appear as completed or recorded on the relevant case files.

15. Mr Harris took the panel through the history of Mr Williams' responses during the investigation. He emphasised that Mr Williams' present position had been broadly consistent since his first response. Those responses, admissions, reflection and insight had developed over a considerable period. In his earlier responses, Mr Williams disputed a significant proportion of the allegations and sought further investigation and information from the Council. He nevertheless accepted that there had been shortcomings in his practice, including failures to record information within the required timescales.
16. Mr Williams maintained that visits had been undertaken as required and that no child had been left at risk of harm. He nevertheless acknowledged shortcomings in his practice and, in subsequent responses, accepted that there had been occasions when he had been slow to record work, that he could have kept better records, and that records should have been completed on time and in sequence.
17. Mr Harris referred to Mr Williams' response dated 10 August 2026, in which he made a number of specific admissions. These included instances where Mr Williams maintained that assessments, Child in Need Plans, meetings or other work had been undertaken, but accepted that he had failed to update or record that work on the electronic system within the required timescale.
18. Mr Harris submitted that recording was an integral part of completing social work. Undertaking a visit, assessment or meeting was not, of itself, sufficient; the resulting information had to be properly recorded so that managers, colleagues and subsequent social workers could understand the progress of the case and service users could be appropriately safeguarded. Mr Williams had acknowledged that incomplete records could result in essential information being unavailable to subsequent workers and had accepted the potential safeguarding consequences of his failures.
19. [PRIVATE]
20. [PRIVATE]
21. Mr Harris submitted that Mr Williams had provided significant evidence of changes to his subsequent working practices. While working for Birmingham Children's Trust, he had requested an enhanced induction in relation to the electronic recording system. He stated that matters requiring recording were now completed on the same day, that his meetings and records were kept up to date, and that his court work was provided to managers in advance of the required timescale.
22. Mr Harris referred to the testimonial evidence from Mr Lance-Pencheon concerning Mr Williams' subsequent periods of employment with Birmingham Children's Trust. Mr Lance-Pencheon was aware of the Social Work England proceedings and the nature of the underlying concerns. Mr Williams had been assessed positively across relevant areas of practice, including maintaining accurate and up-to-date records and producing appropriate reports, assessments and plans. Mr Lance-Pencheon described

Mr Williams positively as a social worker and was willing to employ him again or recommend him to another manager within the service.

23. Mr Harris submitted that this evidence was particularly relevant because Mr Williams had successfully managed complex cases in his subsequent employment. Mr Williams had himself referred to the complexity of his Torbay caseload when reflecting upon his earlier difficulties. His subsequent practice therefore provided evidence of his ability to manage complex work safely and effectively.
24. Mr Harris also referred to copies of Mr Williams' handwritten notebooks. He acknowledged that these did not provide a comprehensive record of all of the work referred to in the allegations but submitted that they demonstrated Mr Williams' practice of making handwritten notes before information was subsequently entered onto the electronic system and provided some support for aspects of his account.
25. Mr Harris addressed the evidential limitations of Social Work England's case. The allegations principally concerned events during the latter part of 2021, with none arising later than January 2022. The Council had undertaken a local audit rather than a full investigation and had not contacted the relevant service users at the time. By the time of the regulatory investigation, a considerable period of over a year had elapsed. Mr Harris submitted that attempting now to trace and obtain reliable evidence from numerous vulnerable service users about whether particular visits or other events had occurred approximately five years earlier would be disproportionate and unlikely to materially improve the evidential position.
26. Mr Harris emphasised that there was no allegation of dishonesty or false recording. Social Work England did not have direct evidence demonstrating that Mr Williams had failed to undertake the underlying work itself. Rather, the principal evidence was that the required work was absent from the relevant case files, together with contemporaneous material concerning outstanding work.
27. Mr Harris submitted that the absence of a record could have a number of explanations. The work might not have been undertaken; it might have been commenced but not completed; or it might have been undertaken but not subsequently uploaded or recorded. The available evidence could not reliably distinguish between those possibilities. Where Mr Williams accepted that work had not been completed in the sense that it had not been properly recorded on the relevant case file, Social Work England did not have sufficient evidence to go materially beyond those admissions and establish that the underlying visits, meetings or other work had not in fact taken place.
28. Mr Harris recognised that Mr Williams' own professional responsibility remained relevant but submitted that the circumstances in which the concerns arose also required consideration.
29. [PRIVATE]

30. Mr Harris submitted that those matters did not remove Mr Williams' own professional responsibility but were capable of providing some mitigation when considering his culpability and the circumstances in which the original concerns arose.
31. Mr Harris referred the panel to Rule 52 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended). He submitted that the application was based upon new information available since the Case Examiners' determination, which meant that there was no longer a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment. He emphasised that the ultimate decision remained one for the panel. Social Work England's application was not determinative and the panel was required independently to scrutinise the application and determine whether there was now insufficient evidence to make a finding of impairment. If the panel was not satisfied, it could adjourn and give appropriate directions for the progression of the case.
32. Mr Harris referred to Social Work England's Discontinuance Guidance and the principles arising from PSA v NMC and X. He submitted that adjudicators have an inquisitorial role when considering an application for discontinuance and must ensure that they have sufficient information to reach a properly informed decision.
33. Mr Harris submitted that the pivotal new information was the body of evidence received from Mr Williams concerning his current practice, insight and remediation. In particular, his response to the Statement of Case, his further reflection and the evidence of subsequent safe professional practice had materially altered the position.
34. [PRIVATE]
35. Mr Harris submitted that, once this material had been received and considered, matters progressed quickly and Social Work England was able to give instructions shortly before the final hearing. He submitted that it would have been inappropriate to proceed into a lengthy contested final hearing merely because one had already been arranged when the newly available evidence had materially altered Social Work England's assessment of the realistic prospect of establishing current impairment.
36. Mr Harris acknowledged that the underlying conduct, insofar as it was capable of proof, was potentially sufficiently serious to amount to misconduct. The application was not advanced on the basis that the matters were necessarily too minor to engage the regulatory process. Rather, Social Work England's position concerned whether there remained a realistic prospect of establishing current impairment in light of all of the evidence now available.
37. Mr Harris submitted that the conduct was capable of remediation and did not demonstrate a deep-seated attitudinal concern. Mr Williams had no previous adverse fitness to practise history, had engaged with Social Work England's investigation and had provided evidence of insight, reflection and subsequent safe practice.
38. Mr Harris submitted that Mr Williams' employment from early 2025 onwards demonstrated remediation through actual professional practice rather than reflection alone. There had been no repetition of the concerns during those periods and his

subsequent practice had been assessed positively by a manager who was aware of the regulatory proceedings and their underlying nature.

39. Mr Harris further submitted that the fact that Mr Williams continued to deny some allegations did not prevent him from developing insight or demonstrating remediation. Full admissions were not a prerequisite to discontinuance. Mr Williams had demonstrated an understanding of the seriousness of the concerns, their potential impact upon service users and families, and the effect such matters could have upon public confidence in social workers.
40. In relation to the personal component of impairment, Mr Harris submitted that the concerns were remediable, that Mr Williams had demonstrated substantial remediation and that the risk of repetition was now very low. In relation to the public component, he submitted that the concerns were not of a nature fundamentally incapable of remediation. He invited the panel to consider whether a fully informed member of the public, knowing the circumstances, the passage of time, the evidence of remediation and Mr Williams' subsequent safe practice, would consider a finding of current impairment necessary to maintain public confidence or uphold proper professional standards.
41. Mr Harris submitted that, taking all of those matters together, there was no longer a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment. He therefore invited the panel to grant the application for discontinuance in full. He made no positive submission as to the outcome which should follow if the application were granted, submitting that this was a matter for the panel. He reminded the panel that it should consider the available outcomes in ascending order, beginning with no further action and thereafter considering advice or a warning.
42. In response to a question from the panel concerning the Council's decision not to undertake a full investigation and Mr Williams' denial that he had failed to carry out visits, Mr Harris clarified Social Work England's evidential position. He submitted that the evidence clearly demonstrated that required work was not present on the case files. However, that absence could encompass a spectrum of possibilities: the work might not have been undertaken at all; it might have been commenced but not completed; or it might have been completed but not uploaded to the case file.
43. Mr Harris accepted that Social Work England had no direct evidence that Mr Williams had failed to undertake the visits or other work. Its core evidence was that the work was not recorded on the files. Where Mr Williams accepted that work had not been completed in the sense that it had not been properly recorded, Social Work England did not have sufficient evidence to establish something beyond that. Mr Harris submitted that tracing and obtaining evidence from the relevant service users at this stage would be unlikely materially to improve the position, particularly given the passage of approximately five years and the difficulty of asking individuals reliably to recall whether a particular event had or had not occurred.

44. In response to a further question from the panel concerning why the application for discontinuance had been made relatively shortly before the final hearing, Mr Harris explained that the critical development had been Mr Williams' recent response and the substantial additional material concerning his current practice, reflection and remediation. The case had previously been prepared on the basis that it would proceed to a final hearing, but the question of current impairment necessarily required consideration of the most recent evidence.
45. Mr Harris explained that the receipt of the new material had been pivotal. Once Social Work England had considered it and obtained instructions, the matter progressed quickly to the present application. He submitted that it would have been wrong to proceed with a final hearing simply because one had already been arranged when the new information had materially changed Social Work England's assessment of current impairment.
46. In response to a further question from the panel as to whether Social Work England was effectively accepting Mr Williams' account that the underlying work had been undertaken but simply not uploaded to the files, Mr Harris clarified that Social Work England was not required to accept or reject Mr Williams' account as a matter of belief. The issue was what the available evidence was capable of proving.
47. Mr Harris explained that the evidence established that the required material was not on the files. Mr Williams had consistently accepted that, in a number of instances, he had failed to complete the work by virtue of not recording it appropriately. Where that account was consistent with the available evidence and there was little or no evidence capable of establishing that the underlying work itself had not been undertaken, Social Work England could not realistically go further.
48. When the panel asked whether it would therefore be difficult for a panel at a final hearing to find the more extensive factual allegations proved without additional evidence, Mr Harris agreed. He submitted that there was very little evidence capable of establishing more than the failure to complete and record the work on the relevant files. If Social Work England proceeded on the basis that the underlying work had not been undertaken, the question would arise as to what evidence existed to establish that proposition beyond the absence of a record.
49. Mr Harris submitted that this evidential limitation had to be considered alongside the evidence now available concerning current impairment. Even if Social Work England sought to investigate further, there was little realistic prospect that further evidence which materially strengthened Social Work England's position could be obtained. Further, even if additional factual matters could ultimately be established, there would remain the substantial evidence of Mr Williams' subsequent insight, remediation and safe practice. In those circumstances, Mr Harris submitted that there was no proper regulatory purpose in pursuing the proceedings further and maintained Social Work England's application for discontinuance in full.

Social worker:

50. Ms Sheridan, on behalf of Mr Williams, submitted that he fully supported and agreed with Social Work England's application to discontinue the proceedings in full. She submitted that the new evidence now available meant that there was no longer a realistic prospect of a finding that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was currently impaired.
51. Ms Sheridan referred the panel to the factual and procedural background set out in her Statement of Case. She largely adopted the factual background outlined by Mr Harris but highlighted the relevance of the interim conditions of practice order which had been in place between 2022 and September 2024. She submitted that the order had made it difficult for Mr Williams to secure employment as a social worker. Although he had undertaken reflection and continuing professional development before that time, his opportunity to demonstrate remediation through actual social work practice began in January 2025, after the restrictions were not renewed. Mr Williams had since undertaken two periods of employment with Birmingham Children's Trust and had provided testimonial evidence concerning his practice during those periods.
52. Ms Sheridan emphasised that the panel was required to play an active role in determining the application and to ensure that it had all of the evidence necessary to reach a fully informed decision. She submitted that the panel had been provided with a comprehensive body of evidence, including more recent material relevant to the application.
53. Ms Sheridan submitted that the panel should consider whether there remained a realistic prospect of all or some of the allegations being found proved, whether there was a realistic prospect of a finding of misconduct and, ultimately, whether there was a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment.
54. In relation to the allegations, Ms Sheridan referred the panel to Mr Williams' most recent response of 4 September 2026. She acknowledged that Mr Williams had clearly admitted that his case recordings had not been kept up to date and that he had failed to record key information and statutory meetings within the required timescales. She submitted that, insofar as Social Work England's position was that work could not be regarded as "completed" unless it had been recorded on the relevant case file, Mr Williams accepted that the work had not been completed in that sense because the relevant case notes had not been placed on the file.
55. Ms Sheridan nevertheless distinguished the failure to record or complete the work from an allegation that the underlying work, including visits and meetings, had not actually been undertaken. She submitted that there were a number of matters within Social Work England's own evidence which provided support for Mr Williams' account that the work itself had been carried out. She referred to material within the exhibits demonstrating that, where meetings or other matters were recorded, Mr Williams appeared to have a good knowledge of the cases. There were also supervision and management oversight records in which the relevant cases were discussed. Ms Sheridan invited the panel to consider whether a social worker who had not undertaken

the work would have been able to demonstrate such comprehensive knowledge of the cases.

56. Ms Sheridan referred to the evidence of Mr Brown and submitted that he did not appear, at any stage, to have expressed doubt that Mr Williams had undertaken the underlying work. Rather, the discussions appeared to concern the absence of notes and work from the relevant files. She drew the panel's attention to the documentary material concerning the plan which had been put in place to enable Mr Williams to bring his records up to date. In particular, she referred to evidence in which Mr Brown described Mr Williams, in substance, as a valued member of the team and indicated that the files needed to reflect the work he was undertaking.
57. Ms Sheridan acknowledged that Mr Williams continued to dispute some of the allegations. She referred the panel to his detailed earlier responses and submitted that particular regard should be had to those made in 2022, when the relevant events would have been considerably fresher in his memory than they were approximately five years later.
58. Ms Sheridan accepted, however, that there were admissions and that, if the matter proceeded to a full hearing, there remained a realistic prospect that some of the allegations, or elements of some allegations, would be found proved.
59. Turning to misconduct, Ms Sheridan submitted that the panel would be required to consider whether any conduct capable of being proved represented a sufficiently serious departure from the standards expected of a social worker to amount to misconduct. She acknowledged that Mr Williams himself accepted that his failure adequately to record cases and comply with the relevant statutory timescales fell below the standards expected of him. She submitted, however, that the panel should consider the surrounding circumstances when assessing whether there remained a realistic prospect that the conduct would be found sufficiently serious to amount to misconduct.
60. Ms Sheridan referred in particular to the circumstances surrounding the end of Mr Williams' employment. On or around 22 January 2022, a plan had been agreed between Mr Williams and his supervisor for the outstanding work to be completed by his intended final working day of 4 February 2022. Mr Williams was, however, dismissed on 28 January 2022. As a consequence, he was unable to complete all of the outstanding work in accordance with that plan. Ms Sheridan accepted that this did not alter the fact that the work should have been recorded before that point, but submitted that it was nevertheless a relevant circumstance when considering the overall seriousness of the conduct.
61. Ms Sheridan also referred to the evidence concerning the supervision provided to Mr Williams. She submitted that there was evidence that his supervision had not been adequate and referred the panel to the Council's supervision policy. She invited the panel to consider whether that policy had been complied with. Ms Sheridan emphasised that Mr Williams did not seek to rely upon any shortcomings in supervision

to avoid his own professional responsibility; rather, she submitted that they formed part of the relevant circumstances in which his practice at the time should be considered.

62. [PRIVATE]
63. [PRIVATE]
64. [PRIVATE]
65. Ms Sheridan reiterated that Mr Williams had a lengthy and otherwise unblemished professional career and submitted that this should be considered alongside the evidence of his subsequent good practice from January 2025 onwards.
66. Turning to current impairment, Ms Sheridan submitted that the panel was required to consider both the personal and public components. In relation to the personal component, she submitted that the relevant considerations included whether the conduct was remediable, whether Mr Williams had in fact remediated it, and whether there remained a risk of repetition.
67. Ms Sheridan agreed with Mr Harris that full admissions were not required before a social worker could demonstrate insight and remediation. She submitted, however, that Mr Williams had made relevant admissions concerning those aspects of his practice which had fallen below the required standard and that those admissions formed part of the evidence of his developing insight.
68. Ms Sheridan referred the panel to Mr Williams' earlier responses as evidence that his insight had developed over time. Mr Williams had described himself as acutely aware of his shortcomings and stated that he had begun working on the areas of concern which had been identified. In his July 2022 response, he acknowledged that he had failed to comply with the requirements relating to the recording of cases, expressed regret and described the reflection he had undertaken.
69. Ms Sheridan placed particular reliance upon Mr Williams' most recent statement and invited the panel to consider his detailed reflections. She submitted that these demonstrated genuine reflection. Mr Williams acknowledged the impact of his failure to make and maintain accurate and up-to-date records upon the individuals with whom he worked. He also recognised the potential impact upon his colleagues and upon the reputation of the social work profession.
70. Ms Sheridan submitted that Mr Williams had not merely reflected upon his previous shortcomings but had demonstrated practical changes to his working practices. His most recent evidence explained that he now worked in a substantially different way, and this was supported by evidence of his subsequent professional practice.
71. Ms Sheridan referred the panel to the employment references from Mr Williams' most recent manager, Mr Lance-Pencheon. She submitted that those references provided strong independent evidence concerning the quality of Mr Williams' subsequent practice. Mr Lance-Pencheon had expressed disappointment when Mr Williams left,

indicated that he would be happy to employ him again and stated that he would have no hesitation in recommending him to others.

72. Ms Sheridan further informed the panel that Mr Williams had told her the previous day that his former employer had asked him to return to work in Birmingham, subject to the outcome of these proceedings. She submitted that this was significant evidence concerning the quality of his current practice. If Mr Williams had not performed satisfactorily during his previous periods of employment, the employer would not be seeking his return.
73. Ms Sheridan also referred the panel to the evidence of Mr Williams' continuing professional development and reflection, particularly during the preceding 18 months. She submitted that the evidence taken as a whole demonstrated sufficient and genuine insight, substantial remediation and a low risk of repetition.
74. Accordingly, Ms Sheridan submitted that there was no realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment on the personal component.
75. In relation to the public component of impairment, Ms Sheridan acknowledged that the panel was required to consider the need to maintain public trust and confidence in the social work profession and to uphold proper professional standards. She submitted that a reasonable and properly informed member of the public, aware of all of the circumstances of the case, would be satisfied that Mr Williams had subsequently practised without concerns, had produced positive employment evidence confirming the standard of that practice, had undertaken extensive reflection and had demonstrated a low risk of repetition.
76. Ms Sheridan further submitted that the concerns arose during an isolated period within what had otherwise been a lengthy and unblemished professional career.
77. [PRIVATE]
78. Ms Sheridan therefore submitted that, if the matter were to proceed to a full hearing, there was no realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment on public interest grounds.
79. In conclusion, Ms Sheridan submitted that Social Work England's application for discontinuance was entirely appropriate in the circumstances. She submitted that the panel had been provided with sufficient evidence to enable it to reach a fully informed decision and that there was no longer a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment.
80. Ms Sheridan invited the panel to consider whether there could be any public interest in requiring the case to proceed to a full hearing in circumstances where the regulator itself submitted that there was no realistic prospect that Mr Williams would be found currently impaired.
81. Ms Sheridan accordingly invited the panel to grant the application for discontinuance in full. Having regard to the level of insight and remediation demonstrated by Mr Williams,

she submitted that the appropriate outcome following discontinuance would be to take no further action.

Legal advice:

82. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. The legal adviser advised that the application was made pursuant to Rule 52 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), which applies where new information available since the determination of the Case Examiners means that there is no longer a realistic prospect of a determination that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.
83. The panel was advised that its role was not to determine the allegations or make findings of fact or misconduct, but to consider independently whether, in light of the new information and all of the material before it, there remained a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment. The prospect must be realistic rather than fanciful or remote, and impairment must be assessed as at the date of the panel's decision.
84. The legal adviser referred the panel to Social Work England's Discontinuance Guidance and advised that the application required active scrutiny. The panel should satisfy itself that it had sufficient information to reach a properly informed decision and should consider whether any identified evidential difficulties could realistically be addressed by further investigation and whether continuing the proceedings would serve a meaningful regulatory purpose.
85. The panel was referred in particular to *Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care v Nursing and Midwifery Council and X* [2018] EWHC 70 (Admin). The legal adviser advised that the authority emphasises the importance of the adjudicatory body being sufficiently informed when considering whether proceedings should be discontinued and of considering whether further evidence or investigation should properly be required.
86. In considering current impairment, the panel was advised to undertake a forward-looking assessment. It was referred to *Cohen v General Medical Council* [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin) and *Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence v Nursing and Midwifery Council and Grant* [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin). The panel should consider, amongst other matters, whether the concerns were remediable, whether they had been remedied, the level of insight and reflection demonstrated, the risk of repetition and the evidence of subsequent safe and competent practice.
87. The panel was advised to consider both the personal and public components of impairment. In relation to the personal component, it should consider whether there remained a current risk to service users or a likelihood of repetition. In relation to the public component, it should consider whether, notwithstanding the absence of personal impairment, a finding of current impairment remained necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession or to uphold proper professional standards.

88. The legal adviser further advised that the existence of evidence capable of establishing some or all of the factual allegations or misconduct would not, of itself, require the proceedings to continue if, having regard to the new information, there was no longer a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment.
89. Finally, the panel was advised that, if satisfied that there was insufficient evidence to make a finding of impairment, it should determine that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was not impaired, give reasons for that decision and consider the appropriate outcome, namely whether to take no further action, give advice or issue a warning. If it was not so satisfied, it could adjourn the matter and give appropriate directions for the progression of the case.

Panel decision on discontinuance:

90. The panel carefully considered Social Work England's application for full discontinuance, the written and oral submissions made by Mr Harris on behalf of Social Work England and those made by Ms Sheridan on behalf of Mr Williams. It considered the extensive documentary material before it, including the full discontinuous application, the evidence obtained during the investigation, Mr Williams' responses to the regulatory concerns over the course of the proceedings, his handwritten notes, supervision and management records, his reflective material, evidence of continuing professional development, testimonial evidence and evidence relating to his subsequent professional practice. The panel also took account of the further clarification provided by Mr Harris in response to its questions.
91. In reaching its decision, the panel took into account Social Work England's Discontinuance Guidance. It reminded itself that it was required to scrutinise the application independently, to play an active role and to ensure that it had sufficient information to reach a properly informed decision. It considered whether the new information materially affected the realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment, whether any identified evidential difficulties could realistically be addressed by further investigation and whether continuing the proceedings would serve a meaningful regulatory purpose.
92. The panel reminded itself that its task under Rule 52 was not to determine the regulatory concerns, make findings of fact or reach a concluded determination as to misconduct. Rather, it was required to decide whether, in light of the new information available since the Case Examiners' determination and all of the material now before it, there remained a realistic prospect of a determination that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was currently impaired.
93. The panel was conscious that the regulatory concerns were numerous and that some were potentially serious. It therefore did not consider it appropriate simply to accept Social Work England's application without scrutinising the evidential position. In doing so, however, the panel was careful not to embark upon a substantive fact-finding

exercise. Its consideration of the underlying evidence was confined to what was necessary to determine whether it was sufficiently informed to decide the Rule 52 application, whether any material evidential difficulties required further investigation and whether, in light of the new information, there remained a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment.

94. The panel considered it important to distinguish between the admitted deficiencies relating to the recording and completion of work and the more serious proposition advanced in aspects of the regulatory concerns that the underlying professional work had not been undertaken at all.
95. There was a clear evidential basis for the recording concerns. Mr Williams had acknowledged that, in a significant number of cases, information had not been entered onto the electronic case management system or had not been entered within the required timescale. The panel accepted the submission that undertaking a visit, meeting or assessment without thereafter appropriately recording it on the case file did not amount to completing the professional task. Recording was an integral part of the work.
96. The panel regarded the admitted recording deficiencies as significant. The work involved vulnerable children and families, including Child in Need work, assessments and matters capable of engaging child protection procedures. Accurate and timely records were essential to enable managers and other professionals to understand what had occurred, what action remained outstanding and what risks required management. If responsibility for a case passed unexpectedly to another practitioner, incomplete records could materially affect that practitioner's ability safely to understand and progress the case.
97. The evidential position was materially less clear in relation to the more serious proposition that the underlying visits, meetings, assessments and other professional activity had not taken place. The principal evidential feature relied upon by Social Work England was the absence of the relevant work from the electronic case files. That provided evidence of the admitted recording deficiency. The panel did not, however, consider that the absence of an electronic record, without more, necessarily established that the underlying professional activity had not occurred.
98. The panel considered Mr Williams' handwritten notes as part of the overall evidential picture. It recognised that those notes were not a complete record of all of the work in issue and did not establish that every disputed activity had taken place. They nevertheless provided some support for his account that his working practice included making handwritten notes before information was subsequently entered onto the electronic system. They also demonstrated engagement with some of the cases that were the subject of the allegations.
99. The panel also considered the wider documentary material. Where substantive records were available, there was evidence that Mr Williams had detailed knowledge of the children and families allocated to him and of the complexities of their circumstances.

The material included evidence of case discussions, engagement with other professionals and management oversight. The panel considered that this material was relevant to Ms Sheridan's submission that the central deficiency was poor and untimely recording rather than a wholesale failure to engage with the allocated cases. The panel did not make findings as to whether any particular disputed item of work had or had not been undertaken.

100. The panel also considered the nature of the concerns being raised contemporaneously within the Council. The material before it principally concerned the need for Mr Williams to bring his records up to date. The panel did not identify clear contemporaneous evidence which would resolve the question of whether particular underlying visits, meetings or assessments had not taken place. Again, the panel approached this as an assessment of the evidential position for the purposes of Rule 52 and not as a finding as to what had occurred.
101. The panel considered the plan put in place towards the end of Mr Williams' employment for outstanding work to be entered onto the system. Mr Williams had agreed that the work would be brought up to date by his anticipated final working day in early February 2022, but his employment ended on 28 January 2022 before that exercise was completed. The panel was clear that this did not excuse the failure to make records within the required timescales. It considered the material relevant only to the evidential question of whether the absence of records necessarily demonstrated that the underlying professional activity had not occurred.
102. The panel also considered the evidence concerning difficulties with the electronic recording system. The available service-desk material disclosed relatively few requests for technical assistance and most concerned matters such as passwords, Teams, connectivity or Microsoft 365 rather than specific difficulties uploading information to the case management system. The panel therefore did not consider that this material provided significant support for a broad explanation that the recording deficiencies resulted from persistent technical difficulties.
103. Equally, the absence of such support requests did not resolve the separate question of whether the underlying professional work had been undertaken. At its highest, the IT evidence was relevant to the explanation advanced for the recording deficiencies. It did not establish whether particular visits, meetings or assessments had or had not occurred. The panel was careful not to conflate those issues.
104. The panel considered the regulatory concerns relating to Child YY separately and in greater detail because they represented some of the more serious aspects of the case. Those concerns extended beyond record keeping and included alleged failures relating to Child YY's home conditions, the father's drug use, direct work with Child YY and contact with the father's drugs worker.
105. In considering this material, the panel remained mindful that it was not conducting a substantive fact-finding exercise and was not required to determine whether the regulatory concerns concerning Child YY were proved or whether Mr Williams' account

should be preferred. Its consideration of the underlying evidence was limited to what was necessary to determine whether it had sufficient information to decide the Rule 52 application, whether there were material evidential gaps which could realistically be addressed by further investigation and, ultimately, whether there remained a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment.

106. The panel considered the photographic evidence depicting the condition of Child YY's home and recognised the seriousness of the safeguarding concerns which it raised. However, the photographs depicted the property at a later point and did not, without further evidence, establish its condition at the time of Mr Williams' earlier involvement. Social Work England's case included the proposition that the conditions were unlikely to have deteriorated to that extent within a short period. Mr Williams had provided an alternative account concerning the timing of the mother's return to the property and the subsequent deterioration in its condition.
107. The panel made no finding as to which account was correct. Rather, it considered whether the evidence presently available, together with any further evidence which might realistically be obtainable, provided a sufficient evidential basis for the proceedings to continue in respect of the more serious proposition that Mr Williams had failed to recognise or respond appropriately to the condition of the home. The panel considered that there remained a material evidential difficulty concerning the condition of the property at the relevant earlier time.
108. The panel also took account, without making findings upon the disputed underlying facts, of Mr Williams' account that he had previously identified concerns about the home conditions and had discussed the case with Mr Brown. There was documentary material relevant to the existence of discussions concerning the case. Mr Williams also described contacting Mr Brown when he became aware that Child YY's mother had returned to the property and expressing the view that Child YY needed to be removed. The panel considered this material as part of the overall evidential picture when deciding whether further investigation was required and whether there remained a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment; it did not determine whether Mr Williams' account was factually established.
109. The panel similarly considered the concern relating to the father's drug use without making findings upon the underlying allegation. It noted that the material before it included evidence that the local authority was aware of the father's longstanding heroin use and that there had been monitoring associated with his drug use. There was also material demonstrating Mr Williams' knowledge of the father's history and circumstances. The panel considered that this material contributed to the evidential uncertainty surrounding the more serious allegation that Mr Williams had failed altogether to maintain appropriate awareness of or engagement with that issue.
110. The panel also considered the concerns relating to direct work with Child YY and contact with the father's drugs worker. Mr Williams denied those allegations and had provided an account of his involvement with Child YY and his understanding of the

case. The documentary material included evidence of engagement with the child's circumstances and with other agencies, including the school. Again, the panel did not determine whether the disputed work had or had not been undertaken. It considered the material for the limited purpose of assessing the evidential position relevant to the Rule 52 application.

111. The panel also took account of the fact that the relevant period fell during the Covid-19 pandemic, when established professional working arrangements had been significantly disrupted and a substantial amount of inter-professional contact was being undertaken remotely. It did not regard the pandemic as excusing any failure in safeguarding practice. It considered that context only insofar as it was relevant to its assessment of the evidential position and whether further reliable evidence was realistically obtainable.
112. Having considered the Child YY material in that limited way, the panel made no findings upon the disputed allegations. It identified significant evidential limitations in relation to the more serious proposition that Mr Williams had failed to undertake the substantive safeguarding work, as distinct from the deficiencies in recording that work.
113. The panel then considered the remaining regulatory concerns insofar as they concerned visits, meetings, plans, single assessments and other work which did not appear on the electronic system. It considered that substantially the same evidential difficulty arose. There was evidence capable of establishing that records were absent or incomplete and Mr Williams had made significant admissions in that respect. However, the panel considered that the absence of an electronic record, without sufficient additional evidence, gave rise to an evidential difficulty in establishing the more serious proposition that the underlying professional activity itself had not occurred.
114. Consistent with the Discontinuance Guidance and the legal advice it had received, the panel considered whether those evidential difficulties should result in Social Work England being required to undertake further investigation rather than the Rule 52 application being determined on the material presently available.
115. The events were now approximately five years old. The Council had not obtained evidence from the relevant service users contemporaneously. The panel considered the inherent difficulty in seeking, after such a passage of time, to ask vulnerable children, family members or other service users reliably to recall whether a particular visit or contact had or had not occurred. An inability to recall an event several years later would itself be of limited evidential assistance.
116. The panel considered that further attempts to trace and obtain evidence from service users would therefore be time-consuming, burdensome and unlikely materially to resolve the identified evidential difficulties. It could identify no other obvious investigative step which was realistically likely to produce reliable evidence capable of resolving whether the disputed underlying professional activity had or had not occurred. The panel was therefore satisfied that it had sufficient information to

determine the Rule 52 application and that requiring further investigation would be unlikely to serve a useful regulatory purpose.

117. The panel nevertheless remained concerned about the recording deficiencies which Mr Williams had admitted. Without making a finding of misconduct, it considered that there remained a realistic prospect that the admitted deficiencies, if established at a substantive hearing and considered cumulatively, could be found sufficiently serious to amount to misconduct.
118. The panel reached that conclusion because the admitted deficiencies were not confined to a single administrative entry. They concerned a significant body of work involving vulnerable children and families. The potential consequences of incomplete safeguarding records were serious. A practitioner subsequently assuming responsibility for a case could be left without essential information concerning visits, assessments, risks and decisions. The panel considered that the surrounding circumstances relied upon by Ms Sheridan, including the evidence concerning supervision, were relevant context but did not remove Mr Williams' own professional responsibility to maintain accurate, complete and timely records.
119. [PRIVATE]
120. [PRIVATE]
121. The panel then turned to the central question under Rule 52: whether, having regard to the conduct which remained realistically capable of being established and, critically, the new information now available, there remained a realistic prospect of a determination that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was currently impaired.
122. The panel considered that it was at this stage that the new information assumed particular significance.
123. The panel considered the recording concerns to be remediable. It did not identify evidence of a deep-seated attitudinal problem or a rejection by Mr Williams of the importance of proper recording. His responses demonstrated that he had acknowledged deficiencies in his recording practice from an early stage in the regulatory process.
124. The panel noted that Mr Williams' reflections had developed and become more detailed over time, but considered that the central position he had adopted had remained materially consistent. He had not waited until immediately before the final hearing to acknowledge that his recording practice had fallen below the required standard. His earlier responses included acknowledgement that work had not been recorded in a timely manner and that there were matters he should have done differently. His later reflections developed that insight.
125. The panel gave particular weight to Mr Williams' more recent reflections. He recognised the importance of making and maintaining accurate and timely records and the potential consequences of failing to do so. He demonstrated an understanding that

inadequate records could affect the children and families with whom he worked, impede colleagues who later became responsible for those cases and adversely affect public confidence in social workers.

126. The panel considered, however, that the most compelling evidence of remediation was not the written reflection alone but the evidence of actual subsequent professional practice.
127. Mr Williams had explained that he now approached electronic recording differently. In his subsequent employment, he had ensured that he received extended and early induction into the relevant recording system. He stated that work requiring entry onto the system was now recorded on the same day, that his meetings and records were kept up to date and that court work was prepared and provided to managers within the required timescales. The panel considered these to be practical and directly relevant changes which addressed the deficiency at the heart of the concerns.
128. The panel regarded same-day recording as particularly important. The risk created by delayed recording was not merely administrative. A practitioner could unexpectedly become unavailable and another social worker might be required to assume responsibility for the case without warning. Timely recording therefore had a direct relationship with continuity of safeguarding and safe professional practice.
129. The panel placed substantial weight upon the independent evidence concerning Mr Williams' subsequent employment. Since returning to practice, he had worked for significant periods without recurrence of the concerns. In particular, the panel took account of the positive evidence from his most recent manager, Mr Lance-Pencheon, who was aware of the Social Work England proceedings and the nature of the underlying concerns.
130. Mr Williams had been assessed positively across relevant areas of practice, including the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date records. There was also evidence of a positive performance appraisal. Mr Lance-Pencheon had expressed disappointment when Mr Williams left, indicated that he would be willing to employ him again and stated that he would have no hesitation in recommending him to others. The panel also took account of the evidence that Mr Williams' former employer had indicated a willingness for him to return to work in Birmingham. The panel regarded this as particularly persuasive evidence because it demonstrated that the changes described by Mr Williams had been implemented in actual professional practice rather than existing only at the level of stated intention or reflection.
131. The panel took into account that Mr Williams' opportunity to demonstrate practical remediation had been affected by the interim conditions of practice order and the consequent difficulty in obtaining employment. Once he was able to secure relevant employment, however, the evidence demonstrated sustained professional practice without recurrence of the recording concerns.

132. The panel also considered Mr Williams' wider professional history. He had a lengthy career and there was no evidence of a comparable pattern of concerns outside the discrete period which gave rise to these proceedings. The panel did not consider that his previous professional history excused or diminished the seriousness of the admitted deficiencies. It did, however, consider the absence of similar concerns before or after the relevant period to be material when assessing whether the difficulties represented an enduring professional deficiency and the likelihood of repetition.
133. [PRIVATE]
134. Having considered the totality of the new information, the panel was satisfied that Mr Williams had demonstrated substantial remediation. That remediation was demonstrated both through reflection and, more importantly, through evidence of subsequent professional practice. The panel considered the risk of repetition of the admitted recording deficiencies to be low.
135. The panel therefore concluded that there was no longer a realistic prospect of a finding of current impairment on the personal component.
136. The panel separately considered the public component. It remained conscious of the seriousness of failures to maintain timely safeguarding records and that members of the public would properly expect social workers entrusted with vulnerable children and families to comply with their recording responsibilities.
137. The panel therefore considered whether, notwithstanding the evidence of remediation and low risk of repetition, there remained a realistic prospect that a finding of current impairment would nevertheless be required to maintain public confidence in the profession or to uphold proper professional standards.
138. The panel concluded that there was no realistic prospect of such a finding.
139. In reaching that conclusion, the panel considered the perspective of a reasonable and fully informed member of the public. Such a person would be aware of the seriousness of the admitted recording deficiencies and their potential consequences. However, they would also be aware of the material evidential limitations concerning the more serious proposition that Mr Williams had failed to undertake the underlying safeguarding work and that the panel had not made findings upon those disputed allegations.
140. A fully informed member of the public would also know that Mr Williams had acknowledged his recording deficiencies; that his insight had developed over the course of the proceedings; that the concerns arose during a discrete period in an otherwise lengthy professional career; and, importantly, that there was substantial independent evidence that he had changed his practice and had subsequently practised without recurrence of the concerns.
141. [PRIVATE]

142. The panel considered that public confidence in the profession would not be undermined by recognising genuine remediation where it had been demonstrated by cogent and independent evidence. Proper professional standards were capable of being upheld by recognising the seriousness of the admitted recording deficiencies while also recognising that the question under Rule 52 was whether there remained a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment.
143. The panel considered the distinction between past conduct and current impairment to be fundamental. The fact that there remained a realistic prospect that the admitted recording deficiencies could be found to amount to misconduct did not, without more, mean that there remained a realistic prospect that Mr Williams would be found currently impaired. The new information demonstrated a materially different standard of practice from that which had given rise to the original concerns.
144. Standing back and considering the case as a whole, the panel was satisfied that it had sufficient information to reach a properly informed decision. It had actively scrutinised the areas of greatest concern, including those relating to Child YY; considered the evidential limitations without making findings upon disputed facts; considered whether those limitations could realistically be addressed through further investigation; considered the seriousness of the recording deficiencies which remained realistically capable of being established; and assessed the new evidence concerning insight, remediation, risk of repetition and subsequent professional practice.
145. The panel concluded that further investigation was unlikely materially to improve the evidential position concerning the disputed substantive work. More importantly, in relation to the recording deficiencies which remained realistically capable of being established and which could potentially amount to misconduct, the new information demonstrated substantial remediation, persuasive evidence of subsequent safe professional practice and a low risk of repetition. The panel was therefore satisfied that there was no longer a realistic prospect of a determination of current impairment.
146. The panel concluded that continuing the proceedings to a substantive final hearing would not serve a meaningful regulatory purpose or the public interest. This conclusion did not minimise the importance of timely and accurate safeguarding records and did not amount to an exoneration of those aspects of Mr Williams' practice which he had acknowledged fell below the standards expected of him. Nor did it amount to findings upon those regulatory concerns which he continued to dispute. Rather, it reflected the panel's assessment, for the purposes of Rule 52, of the evidential position and, critically, the new information relevant to current impairment.
147. For those reasons, the panel decided, pursuant to Rule 52(3)(a) of the Social Work England Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), that there was insufficient evidence to make a finding of impairment and determined that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was not impaired.
148. Accordingly, the panel granted Social Work England's application for full discontinuance.

149. Having made that determination, the panel went on to consider the appropriate outcome in accordance with paragraph 12(1) of Schedule 2 to the Social Workers Regulations 2018. It considered whether to take no further action, give advice or issue a warning. In doing so, the panel remained mindful of its conclusion that Mr Williams' fitness to practise was not impaired and that any outcome must be appropriate and proportionate.
150. The panel first considered taking no further action. It gave significant weight to the substantial insight and practical remediation demonstrated by Mr Williams and to the positive independent evidence of his subsequent practice. He had acknowledged his previous recording deficiencies and demonstrated tangible changes in his working practices, including ensuring appropriate induction into electronic recording systems, recording information on the day, keeping meetings and records up to date and completing court work within the required timescales. The panel considered this cogent evidence that the recording concerns had been effectively remediated and assessed the risk of repetition as low.
151. The panel nevertheless identified one discrete area of further professional learning related to how the original concerns arose. Although Mr Williams had reflected extensively upon his shortcomings, their potential consequences and what he would do differently, his reflections did not expressly address the importance of seeking appropriate professional support at an early stage when experiencing significant difficulties or pressures which had the potential to affect his practice. The panel considered that there had been a theme within the material of Mr Williams contemplating leaving employment when faced with such difficulties rather than first seeking available support.
152. The panel recognised that there may be entirely appropriate circumstances in which a social worker ultimately decides to leave an employment and that seeking support will not necessarily resolve every workplace difficulty. However, it considered that, where possible, difficulties which have the potential to affect professional practice should first be raised and appropriate support sought so that they can be identified, discussed and managed before they have an opportunity to affect safe and effective practice.
153. The panel was careful to distinguish this discrete area of further professional learning from any outstanding deficiency in Mr Williams' current practice. It had identified none. The panel had concluded that there was substantial independent evidence of remediation, subsequent practice without recurrence of the concerns and a low risk of repetition. It considered that supportive advice in this limited area would complement, rather than qualify, the remediation already demonstrated.
154. The panel therefore concluded that taking no further action would not enable it to provide the focused and constructive guidance which could properly be drawn from the circumstances in which the original concerns arose. Focused advice would provide appropriate and proportionate guidance to assist Mr Williams in maintaining the progress he had already demonstrated.

155. The panel next considered a warning. It concluded that a warning would be unnecessary and disproportionate. Although the admitted recording deficiencies were significant and arose in the context of work involving vulnerable children and families, Mr Williams had demonstrated substantial insight and remediation, there was persuasive independent evidence of subsequent practice without recurrence of the concerns, and the risk of repetition was low. The panel considered that a warning would therefore go further than was necessary to achieve the limited supportive and educative purpose it had identified.
156. The panel was satisfied that this purpose could be adequately achieved by advice and therefore determined that advice was the appropriate and proportionate outcome.
157. The panel advises Mr Williams that, should he encounter significant difficulties or pressures in his future professional practice which have the potential to affect his ability to practise safely and effectively, he should, where possible, seek appropriate support at an early stage from a suitable professional source. The purpose of doing so is to enable those difficulties to be identified, discussed and appropriately managed before they have an opportunity to affect his professional practice. The panel recognises that seeking support may not resolve every difficulty and that there may ultimately be circumstances in which leaving an employment is appropriate.
158. The panel also encourages Mr Williams to maintain the positive changes he has already demonstrated in relation to timely and accurate record keeping.
159. The panel emphasised that the advice did not reflect any outstanding deficiency in Mr Williams' current practice, any continuing risk to the public, or any qualification of its determination that his fitness to practise was not impaired. The advice was supportive and educative, related to how the original concerns arose, and was intended to assist Mr Williams in maintaining the progress already demonstrated.

The Professional Standards Authority

160. 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>.