Case Examiner Decision
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FTPS-24286

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The role of the case examiners

The case examiners perform a filtering function in the fitness to practise process, and their primary role is to determine whether the case ought to be considered by adjudicators at a formal hearing. The wider purpose of the fitness to practise process is not to discipline the social worker for past conduct, but rather to consider whether the social worker's current fitness to practise might be impaired because of the issues highlighted. In reaching their decisions, case examiners are mindful that Social Work England's primary objective is to protect the public.

Case examiners apply the 'realistic prospect' test. As part of their role, the case examiners will consider whether there is a realistic prospect:

- the facts alleged could be found proven by adjudicators
- adjudicators could find that one of the statutory grounds for impairment is engaged.
- adjudicators could find the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

If the case examiners find a realistic prospect of impairment, they consider whether there is a public interest in referring the case to a hearing. If there is no public interest in a hearing, the case examiners can propose an outcome to the social worker. We call this accepted disposal, and a case can only be resolved in this way if the social worker agrees with the case examiners' proposal.

Case examiners review cases on the papers only. The case examiners are limited, in that, they are unable to hear and test live evidence, and therefore they are unable to make findings of fact.

Decision summary

Decision summary	
Preliminary outcome	13 August 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - warning order (5 years)
Final outcome	3 September 2026
	Accepted disposal - warning order (5 years)

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 and 2 being found proven by the adjudicators.

2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 and 2 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

3. For regulatory concerns 1 and 2, there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators determining that the social worker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

The case examiners did not consider it to be in the public interest for the matter to be referred to a final hearing and determined that the case could be concluded by way of accepted disposal. As such, the case examiners requested that the social worker was notified of their intention to resolve the case with a warning order of 5 years. The social worker responded accepting the proposal in full.

The case examiners have considered all of the documents made available within the evidence bundle. Key evidence is referred to throughout their decision and the case examiners' full reasoning is set out below.

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint	
The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer, West Sussex County Council, and the social worker subsequently self-referred.
Date the complaint was received	18 March 2025 -employer referral 22 July 2025 -self referral
Complaint summary	The employer raised that the social worker was employed with them from January 2024, and they discovered that the social worker was employed in another full-time role elsewhere. The employer noted when asked, the social worker denied this.

Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker:

RC1. On/between 14 and 19 February 2025, you denied to your manager at Employer 1 (West Sussex County Council) that you had secondary employment with Employer 2 (NHS England), when this was not true.

RC2. Your conduct at RC1 above was dishonest.

The matters outlined in regulatory concerns 1 and 2 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct.

Preliminary issues

Investigation		
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has been notified of the grounds for investigation?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has had reasonable opportunity to make written representations to the investigators?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that they have all relevant evidence available to them, or that adequate attempts have been made to obtain evidence that is not available?	Yes	☒
	No	☐
Are the case examiners satisfied that it was not proportionate or necessary to offer the complainant the opportunity to provide final written representations; or that they were provided a reasonable opportunity to do so where required.	Yes	☒
	No	☐

The realistic prospect test

Fitness to practise history

The case examiners have been informed that there is no previous fitness to practise history.

Decision summary

Is there a realistic prospect of the adjudicators finding the social worker's fitness to practise is impaired?	Yes	☒
	No	☐

The case examiners have determined that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 and 2 being found proven, that those concerns could amount to the statutory ground of misconduct, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst registered as a social worker:

1. On/between 14 and 19 February 2025, you denied to your manager at Employer 1 (West Sussex County Council) that you had secondary employment with Employer 2 (NHS England), when this was not true.

The case examiners have first looked at whether the social worker was employed in two roles at the same time and what their responsibility was in respect of any secondary employment.

The case examiners have seen a letter dated 5 December 2023 confirming the social worker's start date to the Team Manager post in the Emergency Duty Team at West Sussex County Council (WSCC) on 15 January 2024 and the written statement of employment particulars. Within this statement, it is recorded that, *'WSCC does not*

preclude you from undertaking additional employment, but any such employment must be approved by your line manager…'

The case examiners have also seen a letter from NHS England (NHSE) dated 20 February 2024, which confirms their employment with them as a Senior Case Manager starting from 19 February 2024. Additionally, the case examiners have had sight of the NHSE Standards of Business Conduct Policy, in which it states, *'all officers much declare on CoreStream any outside employment (including self-employment/freelance, directorships or consultancy work) or private practice on appointment, and when any new employment arises'*. The NHS employer's investigation report dated 29 April 2025, suggests that the employer was unaware of this secondary employment, until this was discovered by the NHSE's Counter Fraud team.

The evidence suggests that the social worker was employed in two roles and that there was an obligation with both employers to inform them of any additional employment.

The case examiners have gone on to look at whether the social worker had denied working for both employers. They note the supervision notes from WSCC from 14 February 2025, where was recorded that the social worker was *'asked if she is working for, or receiving money from any other employer and [social worker] was clear that she is not. [Social worker] states that she is no longer working for the NHS and can evidence her P45 to prove this…[manager] reminded [social worker] about a meeting they had in April 2024 relating to her cross-over contract with Brent where it was made clear it was a Breach of Contract to not disclose additional employment. [social worker] will send [manager] her P45 and a contract as evidence that this is a misunderstanding.'*

The case examiners have seen a subsequent chasing email to the social worker for their P45 on 17 February 2025 and the social worker's response initially on 19 February 2025 that they would *'get back to [sic] latest by this afternoon'* and an email later that day in which the social worker stated, *'upon further reflection, I wish to clarify my previous response regarding my second full-time role with the NHS. I can confirm that I have been employed in a rolling full-time contract with the NHS…. I acknowledge that I should have disclosed this information but failed to do so'*.

The evidence suggests that the social worker was made aware of the need to disclose any secondary employment in April 2024 by WSCC, due to an earlier incident, where they were still on the employment payroll of another local authority. Furthermore, the social worker's email of 19 February 2025 suggests that they were fully aware of the need to provide this information to their employer, and they did not do so.

The social worker in their submissions accepts this concern.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding this concern proven.

2. Your conduct at RC1 above was dishonest.

The evidence suggests that the social worker did not declare their secondary employment to their employer West Sussex County Council when asked on or around 14 and 19 February 2025. The case examiners have considered whether the alleged conduct may be found as dishonest. In considering this, the case examiners have applied the test for dishonesty, which consists of two parts – the subjective test and the objective test.

The subjective test

The subjective test requires the case examiners to assess the evidence to ascertain the social worker's actual knowledge or belief as to the facts. The question is not whether the social worker's beliefs are reasonable, but whether they were genuinely held at that time.

The case examiners have therefore considered whether the evidence suggests that the social worker knew they had secondary employment and whether when asked, they denied that this was the case.

The case examiners note that the social worker in their submissions accepts that they acted dishonestly and that they knew at the time they were asked that they were employed in two roles, and they denied that this was the case when asked by their manager.

The case examiners have also looked at the additional information as set out in regulatory concern 1. They note the supervision notes from 14 February 2025, and the email dated 19 February 2025 from the social worker suggest that the social worker was aware of the need to disclose this information to their employer. The social worker's email also suggests that they were aware that their actions in denying this employment, meant that they were providing inaccurate information.

The objective test

The objective test requires the case examiners to consider whether the social worker's alleged conduct may be considered dishonest by the objective standards of ordinary decent people.

The case examiners are satisfied that ordinary, decent people would consider it dishonest if a social worker knowingly declared that they did not have secondary employment to their employer when asked directly, when they knew this not to be an accurate response.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding this concern proven.

Grounds

Misconduct

The case examiners are aware that there is no legal definition of misconduct, but it generally would consist of serious acts or omissions, which suggest a significant departure from what would be expected of the social worker in the circumstances. This can include conduct that takes place in the exercise of professional practice, and also conduct which occurs outside the exercise of professional practice but calls into question the suitability of the person to work as a social worker.

To help them decide if the evidence suggests a significant departure from what would be expected in the circumstances, the case examiners have considered the following standards, which were applicable at the time of the concerns, namely Social Work England Professional Standards (2019).

As a social worker, I will:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

As a social worker, I will not:

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

The case examiners are aware that falling short of the standards may not always amount to misconduct. However, adjudicators in this instance may consider the alleged conduct to be a significant departure from the expected standards. The allegations of failing to inform their employer of their secondary employment when directly asked, and thereby acting dishonestly, is a very serious matter.

Declaring all employment obligations are important to employers in order that they can ensure that they can effectively manage any potential impacts on performance and ensure that staff have the appropriate breaks to mitigate the risk of burnout and excessive working patterns. Concealing or denying any such employment when

directly asked would be considered dishonest, and as such this may impact on the employer's and the public's trust of the social worker.

Dishonest conduct is seen as particularly serious. Social workers are expected to act honestly at all times, whether this is within their professional practice, or in their personal lives.

Where a social worker is alleged to have acted dishonestly, this would not align with Social Work England standards 2.1 and 5.2.

Where a social worker is alleged to have denied their secondary employment when directly asked, this would not align with Social Work England standards 2.1 and 5.2.

If the matters were to be found proven, the case examiners conclude the conduct described is likely to suggest a significant departure from the professional standards detailed above.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the conduct outlined in regulatory concerns 1 and 2 would engage the statutory ground of misconduct.

Impairment

Assessment of impairment consists of two elements:

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

Personal element

In considering the personal element of impairment, the case examiners have considered the test for the personal element of impairment as set out in the case examiner guidance (2022), namely whether the conduct is remediable; whether the social worker has undergone remediation and demonstrated insight; and whether there is a likelihood the matters alleged will be repeated.

The case examiners note that ordinarily dishonest conduct is hard to remediate, however social workers may reflect upon their actions and consider how their alleged conduct may impact on public confidence in them, and the wider social work profession.

The social worker admits the allegations. In their submissions the social worker accepts their role and responsibilities in relation to the events that gave rise to the concerns. They admitted the concerns at an early stage to their employer and has expressed deep remorse. In respect of insight, the case examiners are aware that they must take care to assess the quality of any insight. A social worker may accept they have acted wrongly, however, simply asserting this is unlikely to be enough to demonstrate genuine insight.

The social worker has considered their personal circumstances and how this may have led to them being dishonest. They state:

- *'At the time, there were several factors that influenced my thinking and led to the decision and actions I took. In my reflective report, I have critically analysed the reasons behind my behaviour, my thought processes at the time, the impact on myself and others and the remedial actions I have taken to address the concerns raised.'*

- *'Although my initial dishonesty stemmed from panic rather than intent to deceive, I now recognise this does not excuse my behaviour. It reflected poor ethical resilience and an inability to manage pressure appropriately. Through reflection and professional development, I have come to understand how fear and flawed reasoning influenced my decisions.'*

The social worker has also addressed how they might act differently to avoid reoccurrence of similar concerns. For example, they state:

- *'Through structured learning, coaching, and mentoring, I have examined not only what happened, but why it happened—addressing personal, cognitive, and systemic factors. I now understand that genuine accountability requires accepting full responsibility without defensiveness and focusing on learning rather than justification.'*

- *'Through case discussions and reflective exercises, I explored both personal and professional factors that contributed to my poor decision-making. I came to understand how ethical breaches can develop gradually when professional values are not actively maintained. Honesty is the cornerstone of social work and healthcare practice, and compromising it, even briefly, undermines personal integrity and professional standards.'*

- *Ultimately, my actions created a dissonance between my values and behaviour—a moral strain that caused deep emotional distress. I viewed myself as an honest person yet acted dishonestly. The training helped me recognise that moral strain does not only arise from major ethical violations*

but also from smaller lapses under pressure. I now understand that fear of consequences can distort moral reasoning, leading to self-justifications that seem rational at the time. By developing reflective awareness and ethical resilience, I am now better equipped to manage pressure with honesty, integrity, and professional accountability.'

When assessing insight, it is also important to establish if the social worker demonstrates remorse, alongside a genuine understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and the profession. The case examiners highlight the following parts of the social worker's submissions as examples that demonstrate the social worker is very remorseful with a good understanding of the impact of their actions:

- *'I take full responsibility for my actions and do not seek to excuse or minimise my conduct. I recognise that any form of dishonesty -whether intentional or through omission- undermines confidence in social work practice and compromise the ethical standards we are bound to uphold.'*
- *'I understand that social workers are held to the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability. My actions did not reflect these core values, and I acknowledge the potential impact this may have had on public trust, the reputation of the profession, and the expectations placed upon me as a registered social worker. I am sincerely sorry for any distress or concern this may have caused to colleagues, service users, and the wider profession.'*
- *'I have come to understand that equating long working hours with dedication is misguided, as this can lead to exhaustion, reduced ethical clarity, and increased risks to both self and others. The training highlighted the importance of avoiding behaviours that contribute to sleep deprivation, such as excessive workloads and extended working hours — both of which strongly resonate with my own professional experience.'*
- *'I have come to recognise the wider consequences of my actions, including loss of trust among colleagues, potential reputational harm to my employers, and risks to public confidence in social work.'*
- *'I am aware that failing to disclose secondary employment, which led to my dismissal from both roles, has significantly affected my professional identity and reputation after 24 years of unblemished practice. I recognise that potential employers and colleagues may approach me with caution, and that rebuilding trust will require time, consistency, and sustained demonstration of ethical and transparent practice.'*

Case examiners must carefully look for and assess any objective evidence that might confirm the social worker's insight. The case examiners note that they have not been provided with any information from the social worker's current employer. However, they note within the information from WSCC, the social worker's manager stated that *'this situation is clearly out of character for [social worker], she is honest in her work, reliable and fair in her decisions'*. The manager acknowledged that there were some personal circumstances which may have impacted upon the social worker's judgement and that they had been honest when they admitted that they had not disclosed the information when they should have.

Turning their minds to remediation, the case examiners are aware that this is best shown by objective evidence. For example, by the successful completion of training courses. The case examiners have had sight of a number of training courses undertaken by the social worker and note that within the social worker's reflective pieces, they have demonstrated extensive learning from these and have considered deeply how their conduct has the potential to impact on the public's trust in them and on the profession as a whole.

The case examiners are mindful that ordinarily dishonest conduct is inherently difficult to remediate. However, in this instance, the case examiners note that the social worker admitted dishonesty from an early stage and has worked extensively to understand their motivation and the factors that led them to act in this manner. Due to the exceptionally high levels of insight demonstrated, the case examiners consider that the risk of repetition is low.

Public element

The case examiners next considered whether the social worker's actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in the social work profession, or the maintenance of proper standards for social workers. Public interest includes the need to uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour and the need to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the profession.

The case examiners consider that members of the public may lack confidence in a social worker who denied they were engaged in secondary employment when directly asked by their employer and thereby allegedly acting dishonestly.

Dishonest conduct has the potential to impact upon the public confidence in the social worker, and the wider social work profession. As such, it is likely the public would expect that a finding of current impairment is made by adjudicators to maintain public confidence in the regulation of the profession.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of the adjudicators making a finding of current impairment.

The public interest

Decision summary		
Is there a public interest in referring the case to a hearing?	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Referral criteria		
Is there a conflict in the evidence that must be resolved at a hearing?	Yes	☐
	No	☒
Does the social worker dispute any or all of the key facts of the case?	Yes	☐
	No	☒
Is a hearing necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession, and/or to uphold the professional standards of social workers?	Yes	☐
	No	☒

Additional reasoning

The case examiners have carefully considered whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. They note the social worker has accepted the key facts.

The social worker has not indicated to Social Work England whether they consider that their fitness to practise is currently impaired. Where a social worker does not accept impairment, the case examiner guidance suggests that a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. However, the case examiners have noted the following:

• There is no conflict in evidence in this case, and the social worker accepts the facts of the concern.

• The social worker is clear that they accept that their practice fell short of the standards expected of them. In their submissions to the regulator, the social worker stated, *'I accept that I should have clearly disclosed all relevant employment arrangements and that my failure to do so contributed to the concerns raised'* and *'I*

now fully understand that honesty is absolute and non-negotiable in professional practice and that my actions represent a serious breach of trust with my employer, colleagues and the wider profession.'

• The case examiners recognise that not all professionals will have an innate understanding of how and when the public interest limb of impairment may be engaged, or how exactly this might impact upon findings concerning current fitness to practise.

• The accepted disposal process will provide the social worker an opportunity to review the case examiners reasoning on impairment and reflect on whether they are able to accept a finding of impairment. It is open to the social worker to reject any accepted disposal proposal and request a hearing if they wish to explore the question of impairment in more detail.

• The case examiners in this instance have concluded that there is a low risk of repetition, and they have a number of sanctions available to them in order to satisfy the public interest.

• The case examiners are also of the view that the public would be satisfied to see the regulator take prompt, firm action in this case, with the publication of an accepted disposal decision providing a steer to the public and the profession on the importance of adhering to the professional standards expected of social workers in England.

The case examiners are aware that a case cannot be concluded through an accepted disposal process where a social worker does not agree that they are currently impaired. At this stage, the case examiners' proposal for an accepted disposal process does not mark the conclusion of the case, as that would require a response from the social worker for the case examiners' consideration and is also subject to a final review of the case by the case examiners, who may determine to send the matter to a hearing following any response received.

Accepted disposal

Case outcome		
Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☒
	Conditions of practice order	☐
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☐
Proposed duration	5 years	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England's sanctions guidance (December 2022) and reminded themselves that the purpose of sanction is not to punish the social worker but to protect the public and the wider public interest.

In determining the most appropriate and proportionate outcome in this case, the case examiners considered the available options in ascending order of seriousness.

In line with the sanctions guidance, they have considered the aggravating and mitigating factors in this case:

Aggravating factors:

• Dishonesty within professional practice is seen as very serious.

Mitigating factors:

• The social worker's manager stated this was out of character for the social worker.

• There were no concerns raised about the standard of work completed by the social worker

• The social worker has demonstrated remorse and extensive insight into their behaviour.

The case examiners considered taking no further action. They note paragraph 95 of the sanction's guidance which states, when decision makers find impairment, an outcome of 'no further action' is rare. Further, the case examiners are of the view that an allegation of dishonest conduct is extremely serious, and that taking no further action does not reflect their consideration of the public interest in this case.

The case examiners next considered whether offering advice would be sufficient in this case. An advice order will normally set out the steps a social worker should take to address the behaviour that led to the regulatory proceedings. However, the case examiners consider that advice would not be sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they view the social worker's alleged conduct.

The case examiners next considered whether a warning order might be suitable, given that it would show clear disapproval of the social worker's conduct. The case examiners have concluded that there is a low risk of repetition in this case, therefore the purpose of any warning would be to send a message to the social worker and the wider profession of the standards expected of social workers. The sanctions guidance suggests that a warning may be appropriate where the fitness to practise issues are isolated, there is a low risk of repetition, and the social worker has demonstrated insight. Furthermore, the guidance states that decision makers should consider issuing a warning order where they cannot formulate any appropriate or proportionate conditions of practice, and a suspension order would be disproportionate.

In this instance, the case examiners consider that the alleged conduct appears isolated in nature, as the social worker denied their employment, however they did then admit their dishonesty 5 days later, and the social worker has demonstrated extensive insight. Furthermore, the employer at the time stated that this was out of character for the social worker and the social worker was experiencing some personal issues at the time which may have impacted upon their judgement.

The case examiners did go on to consider whether the next sanctions, conditions of practice and suspension, were more appropriate in this case. As stated above, given the conduct involved matters which may be considered attitudinal in nature, a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate in this case and is more commonly suited to cases relating to health, competence, or capability. The case examiners considered that suspension from the register would also be a disproportionate and punitive outcome, where the social worker has undertaken extensive reflection, engaged with their employer and the regulator, has a good employment history until this point and no concerns were raised about the standard of their practice at either employer. Given the social worker's extensive career, a suspension would risk deskilling the social worker and mean depriving the profession

of an experienced worker. Therefore, the case examiners determined that a warning was the most appropriate and proportionate response in this case and was the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest. A warning will serve as a signal that any repetition of the behaviour that led to the concerns is highly likely to result in a more severe sanction.

In considering the duration of the warning, the case examiners have had regard to the sanctions' guidance which states, '1 year may be appropriate for an isolated incident of relatively low seriousness. In these cases, the primary objective of the warning is to highlight the professional standards expected of social workers. 3 years may be appropriate for more serious concerns. This helps to maintain public confidence and highlight the professional standards. The period also allows more time for the social worker to show that they have addressed any risk of repetition. 5 years may be appropriate for serious cases that have fallen only marginally short of requiring restriction of practice'.

The case examiners consider 5 years to be proportionate in this case to maintain public confidence and to send a message to the public, the profession and the social worker about the standards expected from social workers. While the case examiners recognise that the matter is reported to be isolated, they do not consider the matter to be one of 'relatively low seriousness', as they note that this involved alleged dishonesty. In light of the alleged dishonest conduct, along with the fact that the social worker did not declare their secondary employment for around a year, when the need to do so had been drawn to their attention earlier, the case examiners consider that this falls only marginally short of requiring restriction. Therefore, 5 years will send a clear message to the profession and wider public of how seriously the regulator considers this conduct. The case examiners consider that the social worker has already shown extensive reflection and insight therefore additional time is not needed for further reflection, however 5 years will allow the social worker time to demonstrate that they are able to act with honesty and integrity during this period.

The case examiners consider that 1 and 3 years are not sufficient to mark the seriousness given the specific circumstances as outlined above. To confirm, the case examiners are satisfied that a warning of 5 years duration is the proportionate sanction.

To conclude, the case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a warning order of 5 years duration. They will now notify the social worker of their intention and seek the social worker's agreement to dispose of the matter accordingly. The social worker will be offered 14 days to respond. If the social worker does not agree, or if the case examiners revise their decision regarding the public interest in this case, the matter will proceed to a final hearing.

Content of the warning

The case examiners formally warn the social worker as follows:

Dishonest conduct has the potential to impact on public confidence in you as a social worker, but also on the wider social work profession.

The case examiners remind the social worker of the following Social Work England Professional Standards (2019):

As a social worker, I will:

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

As a social worker, I will not:

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

This conduct should not be repeated. Any further matters brought to the attention of the regulator are likely to result in a more serious outcome.

Response from the social worker

The social worker provided a response on 27 August 2026 and confirmed *'I have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guide. I admit the key facts set out in the case examiner decision, and that my fitness to practise is impaired. I understand the terms of the proposed disposal of my fitness to practise case and accept them in full.'*

Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners concluded that the social worker's fitness to practise was likely to be found impaired but that the public interest could be met through a prompt conclusion, published decision and warning, rather than through a public hearing.

They proposed a warning order with a duration of 5 years and the social worker accepted this proposal.

In light of the social worker's acceptance of the warning order, the case examiners have considered again whether there would be a public interest in referring this matter to a public hearing. They remain of the view that this is unnecessary for the reasons set out earlier in the decision.