



Name: Kamran Zafar Puri

Restoration application hearing:

Hearing Venue: Remote

Date of hearing: 1 June 2021 and 12 July 2021

Hearing Outcome: Restored

Introduction and attendees:

1. Mr Puri attended and was not represented.
2. Social Work England was represented by Mr Loran, presenting officer from Capsticks LLP.

Adjudicators	Role
Miriam Karp	Chair
Beverley Blythe	Social Work Adjudicator
Karen Phillips	Lay Adjudicator

Agnes De Biase	Hearings Officer
Paige Higgins	Hearing Support Officer
Andrew McLoughlin	Legal Adviser

Background to application:

3. This is Mr Puri's adjourned application from 1 June 2021 to be restored to Social Work England's register of social workers to enable him to return to social work practice in England.
4. This application is made pursuant to Regulation 15 of the Social Workers Regulations 2018 (the Regulations). The panel may in accordance with Regulation 15(6) of the Regulations:
 - a. restore the person's registration by recording the information set out in regulation 9(1) of the Regulations in relation to them in the register, and must notify them accordingly, and
 - b. make a conditions of practice order in relation to the registered social worker, and paragraphs 12(4), 13, 15 and 16 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations apply to such an order as they apply to a conditions of practice order made in fitness to practise proceedings.
5. Mr Puri was a qualified and registered social worker. In August 2008, he commenced employment at Manchester City Council (MCC) as a locum social worker working for an agency and working as a supervising social worker for the Supported Lodging Scheme (SLS) within the Family Placement Service. On 21 February 2011, MCC appointed him as a full time permanent member of staff. His role included the assessment, training, support, monitoring and supervision of supported lodging providers.

6. The SLS provided a service to vulnerable young people aged 16 plus who would have either been Looked After Children or care leavers. These young people would have either left fostering care and / or require additional assistance in terms of lodging and placements. Supported lodgings providers are individuals who provide supported lodgings within their own homes to vulnerable young people leaving care.
7. Following a tendering procedure run by MCC on behalf of local authorities in the region, First Steps Accommodation Ltd (FSA), an organisation offering support services and lodging for young people, was placed on a North West Regional Framework for the provision of supported accommodation services for young people leaving care.
8. Supported accommodation is different from supported lodgings because supported accommodation can be in a flat or house and does not involve the young person being placed in an individual's residence.
9. At the times in question Mr Puri's wife, [PRIVATE] was a director of FSA. Up until 31 January 2011, Mr Puri had also been the director of FSA. He did not disclose this to MCC.
10. Mr Puri appeared before a Conduct and Competence Committee hearing of the Health and Care Professions Council (the HCPC panel) from 22 to 24 September 2014 and faced the following allegations which were proved (including findings of dishonesty) against him: –

“Whilst registered as a social worker and working for Manchester City Council, you:

- 1. Did not disclose to the Council your directorship of a company, First Step Accommodation Limited, providing services to the Council or tendering to provide services which lasted up to 31 January 2011.*
- 2. Did not disclose to the Council the directorship of your wife of a company First Step Accommodation Limited, providing services to the Council or tendering to provide services.*
- 3. Minimised the nature of the work that you undertook for a company First Step Accommodation Limited, providing services to the Council.*
- 4. Worked for First Step Accommodation Limited under the name of Tony Holt.*
- 5. Your actions in paragraph 1 to 4 were dishonest.*
- 6. The matters set out in paragraph 1 to 5 constitute misconduct.*
- 7. By reason of that misconduct, your fitness to practise is impaired”.*

11. In reaching its decision, the HCPC panel had regard to all the circumstances, including the following aggravating and mitigating features of the case:

Aggravating –

- *The misconduct occurred over a long period of time;*

- *The misconduct was repeated and persistent;*
- *The misconduct represented a breach of trust which involved Mr Puri putting his interests above those of his service users for his own financial advantage;*
- *The dishonesty was deliberate and in the knowledge of the requirements of the relevant codes in respect of conflicts of interest;*
- *Despite his admissions, Mr Puri's evidence was evasive and inconsistent;*
- *Mr Puri had demonstrated only partially developed insight into the significance of his failings and their impact on the public and the public interest;*
- *The reputation of social workers and the social work profession was brought into disrepute.*

Mitigating-

- *Mr Puri had fully engaged in the HCPC process;*
- *The Panel received no evidence to suggest that any service users had suffered harm as a consequence of Mr Puri's misconduct;*
- *The Panel received no evidence to suggest that Mr Puri was not a competent and able social worker;*
- *Mr Puri displayed some insight by reason of his admissions in respect of each of the factual allegations and the misconduct allegation;*
- *Mr Puri had been motivated by the desire to support his family;*
- *Mr Puri had sought to address his dishonesty by undertaking counselling and therapy;*
- *Mr Puri had won the trust and support of his new employment agency and of his new employer.*

12. The HCPC panel was particularly concerned that Mr Puri's misconduct was characterised by deliberate and long standing dishonesty which breached the trust placed in him as a social worker. In view of this, it found that he was liable to repeat misconduct of the kind found proved.

Evidence for Restoration

13. The panel considered all of the written documentation that had been submitted to it including but not limited to: –

- Notice of Decision and Order of Health and Care Professions Council Conduct and Competence Committee 24.09.2014
- Transcripts of the hearing before the Health and Care Professions Council Conduct and Competence Committee 22.09.2014- 24.09.2014
- Mr Puri's application to the Health and Care Professions Council Conduct for restoration and accompanying documents 09.10.2019
- Mr Puri's submissions to Social Work England 06.02.2020
- Mr Puri's letter to Social Work England Undated
- References on behalf of Mr Puri 02.03.2020- 10.03.2020
- Mr Puri's application form to Social Work England 02.12.2020
- Education and training provided by Mr Puri- Various
- Supporting statement from Mr Puri- Undated
- Further references provided by Mr Puri
- Emails provided by Mr Puri's from referees.
- Mr Puri's Private Study document – 86 pages.

14. Mr Puri gave evidence to the panel on 1 June 2021 and on 12 July 2021 and stated in summary that upon reflecting on his misconduct including dishonesty he realised that he had betrayed the trust of the public, his then employer, his then professional colleagues, as well as the young people he was seeking to assist, his family and his own self. He had been guilty of a clear betrayal of trust as a consequence. **[PRIVATE]** He had been taken on as an agency worker in the Early Help team at Wakefield Council.

15. He provided three references from people who had worked with him, observed him in practice and supervised him and which he said spoke not only about his competency, his hard work, but also shows him to be acting with honesty and integrity in his current role.

The references from two separate sources made a number of comments about Mr Puri as follows: –

“Kamran’s work and engagement with families has been observed to be in an honest and open manner”.

“To be clear, I am fully in support of Kamran’s professional practice while working with children and young people and as a Lead practitioner I value his values, morals and integrity”

“I was reassured by his capacity to accept responsibility and his deep and heartfelt regret at the poor choices he had made, leading to his removal from the HCPC

register. My impression was that he had spent the preceding 6 years trying to make sense of what had led to an otherwise competent, intelligent and dedicated social worker to compromise his own moral compass. The impact of his social work deregistration on his family, his self-belief /esteem, and his hope for the future, was severe and had clearly taken its toll.”

“I have witnessed Mr Puri to have worked tirelessly in learning from past mistakes, and taking full accountability. I am reassured that he has a sincere and unwavering dedication to being an outstanding social worker, with the potential of becoming a real asset to the profession. I genuinely believe Mr Puri’s character is not defined by his past mistakes but moreover his past, current, and future good conduct, which I believe is deserving of recognition. Mr Puri has suffered the consequences of his historical misconduct and paid a high price for his failures. The order applied to Mr Puri at his original hearing was of the severest level, and he has carried this for a prolonged period of some years. Within this time period, he has evidently made healthier and responsible choices; has been robustly challenged to cultivate inner and professional growth; and has sought out pertinent developmental opportunities. Mr Puri has emerged through this testing time, with humility, remorse, and a desire to emulate the best definition of himself.”

16. He additionally at his own cost had invested in working with an independent social work mentor or Ms Parveen Yaqub in order to help build his resilience. She had also provided a reference for him and he confirmed that he had worked with her for 14 hours, with his last session being in November 2020. He had also sought support from colleagues to build the resilience to reflect upon judgements in supervision. He said he saw himself as a team player, who was on a reflective journey, and he was seeking to be open and transparent and honest with service users and colleagues alike. In December 2020 he had carried out a Return to Social Work course. He stated that the private study that he had carried out had been documented in detail.
17. When questioned by Mr Loran on behalf of Social Work England he stated that the team manager LG was aware from the first day of his employment as an agency worker that he had been struck off as a social worker. He explained that he had assumed the overall manager JS was also aware of his position but he could place no evidence before the panel to show a conversation between LG and JS. It was suggested to him that he had not been fully open and transparent when making an application in October 2019 to restore his name to the register as a social worker on the basis that he had not told JW, who was supporting his application, that he had been struck off as a social worker. He explained that during discussions with Social Work England he had drawn this to their attention and therefore had

been open and honest with the regulator and had decided to withdraw his application and make a further application in due course.

18. The panel, mindful of the very serious findings made against Mr Puri which led to his striking off, posed a series of challenging questions surrounding his honesty and integrity in terms of his present employment, his remorse, his remediation, his reflection and on the risk of repetition.
19. Mr Puri stated that he carried out ongoing reflective discussions with those he worked with and delivered interventions and prepared reports in detail, honestly recording the services that he had delivered. He stated that he could provide better support to service users following the insight and remorse that he felt he had demonstrated. He indicated that in the future he would always mention to any colleagues the fact that he had been struck off and would disclose a copy of the HCPC findings to them. He also cited evidence from his references that he had disclosed his strike off to colleagues. If he were restored to the register as a social worker he would continue to have open discussions with families and discussions with team members and his manager. His reflective journey now meant that he wished to be a role model as a result, and that the reference from Ms Yaqub demonstrated the depth of insight that he had into the original findings made against him.
20. He stated that having initially felt a sense of injustice as to the regulatory outcome from HCPC in September 2014, he now realised that he had let young people down who he was seeking to assist to allow them to live independently. He had chosen to engage privately with an experienced and regarded social worker to undertake direct work around his regulatory findings. Through this work he was able to fully understand how he had put the social work profession into disrepute by his dishonest conduct. He also worked on his own self-resilience and dealing with his shame.
21. When asked about public confidence in the profession, he stated that the work that he did was going above and beyond what was required of him in terms of deadlines for the preparation of reports and amount of time he spent in the office and as a result he was seeking to be a good example for others. He was able to give an example of how he had used his experience with a service user who was an ex-prisoner to effect better outcomes. He indicated how he had personally developed stating that *"previously I was guarded, shamed and would not talk about it. I can now."*
22. When asked about the HCPC panel findings regarding the risk of repetition and the evasive and/or inconsistent evidence that he had given, he explained that he was overwhelmed by that hearing, had become nervous and he struggled with the pace of the hearing. He stated that his life experiences had since helped him gain insight into his own behaviour. He now accepted that he had not been fully aware of the wider implications that his behaviour had on families and the public interest. He had not only let down his employer, but also colleagues and young people. He indicated that he would never be in a similar position again. He stated that his continued pursuit of the social work profession rather than a business role, proved that he had a passion for social work and a commitment to the role. He stated that he did not wish to let down his employers who had given him a second

chance and that he would continue to build upon the trust that he developed as an agency social worker over the previous two years. He stated that he had learnt from the mistakes that he had made and would do nothing to jeopardise that trust.

Submissions:

23. By agreement of both parties, Mr Loran on behalf of Social Work England made submissions first and invited the panel to consider all of the evidence very carefully and in particular to take into account the previous application that had been withdrawn by Mr Puri which involved JW's involvement, and which may reflect on the honesty and integrity of Mr Puri. He confirmed that Social Work England did not take any issue with the skills, training and knowledge aspect of Mr Puri's application for restoration.
24. Mr Puri submitted that the panel should restore his registration on the basis that he had undertaken a challenging, difficult and reflective journey in relation to his fully understanding and coming to terms with his misconduct and he will continue to reflect on these matters throughout his career and life. He relied on the references from fellow professionals who worked with him, observed and also supervised him, which spoke to his safe and effective practice. He suggested that his withdrawal of his earlier application for restoration was further evidence of his honesty because he had notified Social Work England that JW did not know that he had been struck off the register.

Panel decision:

25. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser and considered the submissions made by Social Work England and Mr Puri. The panel noted the previous facts found and the information provided at this hearing. The panel also took into account all of the documents submitted together with Social Work England's Restoration to the Register After Removal Order Guidance 2019. The panel noted that the burden was on Mr Puri to establish that he was capable of safe and effective practice as a social worker.
26. The panel noted the basis of the application by Mr Puri and decided that he had provided strong evidence from the three references that had been provided to show that he was capable of safe and effective practice. The panel further noted that he had worked successfully in public facing roles as an agency worker with Wakefield Council for over two years without cause for concern, albeit he was not acting in the role of a social worker. The panel were impressed that he had sourced the professional services of Ms Yaqub, to challenge and support his journey of reflection, understanding and development. This input enabled him to evidence that he had properly reflected as to his previous misconduct, which in turn allowed him to show greater insight, remorse and remediation. The panel felt that his evidence was compelling and that he saw the bigger picture now with regard to the impact that his dishonesty had had in that he had let down his employer, his colleagues, the social work profession as well as service users. The panel concluded that he had drawn examples from recent practice to show how his approach had changed and that his demeanour was that of an authentic and honest person who has been on a continuing journey of reflection and improvement.

27. The panel accepted Mr Puri's evidence that it was he who had made Social Work England aware that JW had not been appraised that he had been struck off as a social worker when she had been approached to support his earlier restoration application.
28. The panel decided that the risk of repetition of dishonest misconduct was very low and that he had not shied away from accepting that he was evasive and inconsistent in his evidence in September 2014 but had shown genuine shame, guilt and remorse for what he had done.
29. The panel decided that Mr Puri was aware of how important it was to act with honesty and integrity both now and in the future.
30. The panel further considered that it needed to balance the findings made against Mr Puri in September 2014 in the light of the overarching objective of Social Work England which was as follows: –
- protecting, promoting and maintaining the health and wellbeing of the public
 - promoting and maintaining public confidence in social workers in England
 - promoting and maintaining proper professional standards for social workers in England
31. The panel noted that whilst the public would be appalled by the nature and extent of the dishonest conduct of Mr Puri in September 2014, the public would also be mindful that Mr Puri had made every effort to demonstrate insight, remorse and remediation regarding his behaviour at that time. The panel felt that the public would be reassured that his efforts in those regards, evidenced by explicit professional references demonstrated that he was now capable of fulfilling the overarching objective of Social Work England.
32. The panel therefore allowed the application.

Right of appeal:

33. A person may appeal to Social Work England, in accordance with regulation 19(1)(h) of the Regulations, appeal a decision to refuse to restore registration under regulation 15(10) of the Regulations.
34. On an appeal under paragraph 19(1)(h) a panel of adjudicators may:
- (a) dismiss the appeal;
 - (b) quash the decision;
 - (c) substitute for the decision being appealed any other decision that the decision maker could have made; or,
 - (d) remit the decision to the regulator

That concludes this determination.