



Case Examiner Decision
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SW128777
FTPS-24094

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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	22 April 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - suspension order 3 years
Final outcome	18 May 2026
	Accepted disposal - suspension order 3 years.

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 1 being found proven by the adjudicators.
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 1 being found to amount to the statutory grounds of adverse physical or mental health.
3. [REDACTED]
4. For regulatory concern 1, 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 be notified of their intention to resolve the case with a suspension order of 3 years duration.

On 17 May 2026 the social worker confirmed that they had read the case examiner decision, and that they understood and accepted the facts and the terms of the accepted disposal proposed to them.

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.

Anonymity and redaction

Elements of this decision have been marked for redaction in line with our Fitness to Practise Publications Policy. Text in **blue** will be redacted only from the published copy of the decision and will therefore be shared with the complainant in their copy. Text in **red** will be redacted from both the complainant's and the published copy of the decision.

In accordance with Social Work England's fitness to practise proceedings and registration appeals publications policy, the case examiners have anonymised the names of individuals to maintain privacy. A schedule of anonymity is provided below for the social worker and complainant and will be redacted if this decision is published.

Professional 1	
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The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer, [REDACTED]
Date the complaint was received	11 December 2024
Complaint summary	The concerns relate to the social worker's [REDACTED] health [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker:

1. You suffer from an adverse health condition, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which impacts on your ability to practise as a social worker.

[REDACTED]

Grounds of impairment:

The concern outlined at regulatory concern 1 amounts to the statutory ground of adverse physical or mental health.

[REDACTED]

Your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of adverse physical or mental health

[REDACTED]

Preliminary issues

Investigation		
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has been notified of the grounds for investigation?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the case examiners satisfied that the social worker has had reasonable opportunity to make written representations to the investigators?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 concern 1 being found proven by adjudicators.


Regulatory concern 1 could amount to the statutory ground of adverse physical or mental health, and the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

1. You suffer from an adverse health condition, which impacts on your ability to practise as a social worker.

A report dated 4 September 2025, completed by Professional 1 confirms the above-described diagnosis.




In submissions, the social worker accepts that at the relevant time it was unsuitable for them to be in a social work position [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The social worker also appears to accept that they lacked insight into their health and wellbeing at the relevant time.

The case examiners consider there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 1 being found proven by adjudicators.

[REDACTED]





Grounds

Regulatory concern 1:

The case examiners are asked to consider whether regulatory concern 1 could amount to the statutory ground of adverse physical or mental health. The case examiners have consulted their guidance in respect of health concerns.


In making their decision, case examiners will take into consideration (both of the following):

- whether the social worker has a health condition that may pose a risk to the public if not adequately managed
- whether there is evidence calling into question the ability of the social worker to manage their condition or limit their practice adequately

The case examiners have been furnished with substantial evidence in respect of the social worker's health. The social worker has also provided detailed submissions in respect of regulatory concern1 and their health and treatment plans.

The evidence from professional 1 is based on several meetings with the social worker. The latest report from professional 1 is dated 4 September 2025.

Professional 1 says, that the social worker was first [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in April 2024, however the symptoms seemed to be present for a number of months, potentially years prior to that. [REDACTED]



[REDACTED] Professional 1 suggests that the social worker has partial insight [REDACTED] however they say that insight into some of the symptoms of their condition [REDACTED] is not developed; for this reason, their professional opinion is that the social worker would not be able to self-

limit their practice appropriately. The medical opinion suggests that the social worker is at the beginning of the process of engaging with their treatment programme.

The social worker's submissions appear to support the views expressed by professional 1 and to support a view that the social worker is in the early stages of cooperating with their treatment plan.

Professional 1 identifies the potential impact of the social worker's health condition

As some of the areas potentially affected by the health condition are core to the professional social work role, it is essential the social worker has engaged with their treatment programme with consistency and satisfied health professionals that their practice can be both safe and effective prior to them returning to the profession.

The case examiners are satisfied that the social worker has a health condition that might pose a risk to the public if it is unmanaged, and that whilst positive steps are being taken by the social worker, they are at an early point of their journey to recovery.

There is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding regulatory concern 1 amounts to the statutory ground of impairment by reason of adverse physical or mental health.



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

With regards to the concerns before the regulator, the case examiners have given thought to their guidance, and they note that they should give consideration to whether the matters before the regulator are easily remediable, and whether the social worker has demonstrated insight and/or conducted remediation to the effect that the risk of repetition is highly unlikely.

In submissions the social worker outlines their increased understanding of their health condition and how support from services and interaction with others is assisting with their understanding of the condition and how it can be managed.

The social worker has limited their practice since these concerns were raised. On 10 April 2024, the social worker indicated to Social Work England investigators they had no plan to return to the profession ‘in the near future.’

The case examiners have set out in their consideration of the grounds the professional opinion expressed with regards to the social worker’s insight and cooperation with their treatment plan. It would appear that the social worker may be at an early stage of developing insight into their health condition and cooperating with their treatment plan. Professional 1 has indicated that their opinion is that insight into some aspects of their condition is not sufficiently developed for them to be confident the social worker could restrict their practice, as necessary. Professional 1 also indicates the social worker is at an early point of their treatment and recovery programme. Given this, the case examiners conclude that the risk of repetition is currently high, and the social worker should be given more time to cooperate with treatment plans and demonstrate the necessary insight into their health condition.

Public element

The case examiners have 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.

The case examiners have found a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the social worker to be impaired [REDACTED] Professional opinion suggests that the social worker is in the early stages of cooperation with their treatment plan and developing insight into their condition.

As the social worker is, as yet, in the early stages of developing insight into their condition and embarking on their journey to recovery, the risk of repetition remains. As the current medical opinion is that the social worker does not have sufficient insight to limit their practice in line with their health issues, the case examiners conclude that there is a risk to the public presented by a social worker who does not have sufficient insight into their health issues to limit practice as and when any health condition might require this.

The case examiners consider there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the social worker to be impaired by reason of adverse health.

The public interest

Decision summary

Is there a public interest in referring the case to a hearing?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Referral criteria

Is there a conflict in the evidence that must be resolved at a hearing?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the social worker dispute any or all of the key facts of the case?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is a hearing necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession, and/or to uphold the professional standards of social workers?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Additional reasoning

The case examiners conclude that offering accepted disposal is proportionate for the following reasons:

- There is no conflict in evidence in this case, and the social worker accepts the facts.
- The social worker accepts that they have a health condition that could affect their ability to practice.
- The social worker is at an early stage of cooperating with their treatment programme.

Interim order

An interim order may be necessary for protection of members of the public

Yes

No

An interim order may be necessary in the best interests of the social worker

Yes

No

The case examiners have not been presented with any new evidence that would suggest that any previous assessment of risk should be reviewed at this time.

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

Proposed outcome	No further action	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Advice	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Warning order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of practice order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Suspension order	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Removal order	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed duration	3 years	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England’s sanctions guidance and reminded themselves that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish the social worker but to protect the public and the wider public interest. Furthermore, the guidance requires that decision makers select the least severe sanction necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.

The case examiners have initially considered any mitigating or aggravating factors. They have consulted their sanctions guidance at paragraph 81 and note the following mitigating factors as relevant:

- There is some evidence of developing insight into their health condition, and cooperation with treatment plans.
- Removing themselves from practice.

The case examiners have not identified any aggravating factors.

In this instance, the case examiners have moved beyond considering the lowest available sanctions of no further action, advice, or warnings as these do not restrict practice. These outcomes are not appropriate when there are concerns that the social worker may present a risk to the public if their health is not managed, and a risk of repetition has been found.

The case examiners have considered conditions of practice as this would enable the social worker to continue to practice with restrictions. In this instance, the social worker has expressed a view that they do not intend to practice in a social work role in the immediate future, as the social worker has been focussing on their recovery. Furthermore, the case examiners have set out professional 1's opinion that the social worker is at the early stages of cooperation with their treatment plan and developing insight into their health conditions; for this reason, the case examiners consider that at this stage conditions of practice would not be workable.

The case examiners moved on to consider a suspension order. Suspension orders can be imposed over a period of up to 3 years.

The sanctions guidance says that a suspension order may be appropriate when:

- the social worker has demonstrated some insight.
- there is evidence to suggest the social worker is willing and able to resolve or remediate their failings.

The case examiners consider it to be in the public interest to support a trained and skilled social worker to return to practice, if this can be achieved safely. The case examiners are mindful that there appear to have been no previous fitness to practice concerns in respect of this social worker and the issues appear to be singular, and to relate to health. It is hoped that the social worker will continue to cooperate with their treatment plan and develop insight that is sufficient to enable them to return to the profession.

Paragraph 141 of the sanction's guidance reminds the case examiners that:

“There may be instances where the social worker does not intend to remediate or practise in the short term but wishes to do so later. This could include cases of chronic ill health. If so, it may be in the interests of the social worker to impose a longer period of suspension. This avoids the stress for the social worker of a review hearing before they have recovered to full health. If the social worker makes an earlier recovery, Social Work England can schedule an early review hearing to consider (either of the following):

- revoking the suspension
- allowing a phased return to practice through conditions”.

The case examiners have therefore decided to propose to the social worker a suspension order of 3 years duration. The case examiners consider that a 3 year suspension order reduces time-pressure on the social worker and allows sufficient

time for them to focus on their recovery and develop further insight into their health issues.

The case examiners consider that a shorter period is inappropriate in light of evidence that the social worker's insight and remediation may still be developing, and would not sufficiently protect the public at this time. The case examiners note that the social worker can request an earlier review of their suspension, if their health recovers in a shorter period.

The case examiners 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 28 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.

Recommendations for the social worker

The case examiners recommend that the social worker:

- Continues to engage with their treatment plan and other support services.
- Completes regular reflections on their insight into their health condition.
- Produce an action plan as to how they might manage/ seek support for their health condition this should they return to a social work role.
- Engages in continuing professional development, to avoid becoming deskilled.

Response from the social worker

On 17 May 2026 the social worker responded to the proposal put forward to them. The social worker has signed to confirm that they have read the case examiner decision and the accepted disposal guide. The social worker accepts the facts and understands

the terms and conditions of the proposal to conclude this matter with an accepted disposal suspension order of 3 years duration.

Case examiners' response and final decision

The case examiners have reviewed their decision, and considered the overarching objective of Social Work England: protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the social work profession, and upholding professional standards. The case examiners are satisfied that an accepted disposal suspension order (3 years duration) is a fair and proportionate way to address the concerns and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and satisfy the wider public interest.