

Case Examiner Decision

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FTPS-21182

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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	05 June 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - removal order
Final outcome	07 July 2026
	Accepted disposal – removal order

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4, and 5 being found proven by the adjudicators. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
2. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 5 amounting to the statutory ground of being included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list or the Scottish Ministers children's or adults' lists.
3. For regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4, and 5, 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 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 removal order.

The social worker accepted this proposal and the terms in full on 06 July 2026.

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.

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer.
Date the complaint was received	20 September 2022
Complaint summary	The social worker's former employer made a referral to the regulator after being made aware that the social worker was under police investigation for alleged [REDACTED] offences.

Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker:

[REDACTED]

2. From or around July 2022 to August 2022 you had in your possession [REDACTED] inappropriate and offensive content.
3. From or around July 2022 to August 2022 you engaged in sexual communications with a Twitter user who presented under 16 years old.
4. The conduct at regulatory concern [REDACTED] 3 was sexually motivated.
5. On or around the 22 May 2025 you were included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list.

Grounds of impairment:

The matters outlined at regulatory concerns [REDACTED] 2, 3, and 4 amount to the statutory ground of misconduct.

The matters outlined at regulatory concern 5 amounts to the statutory ground of being included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list or the Scottish Ministers children's or adults' lists.

By reason of your misconduct and/or being included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list or the Scottish Ministers children's or adults' lists your fitness to practice is impaired.

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	☐

Anonymity and redaction

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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

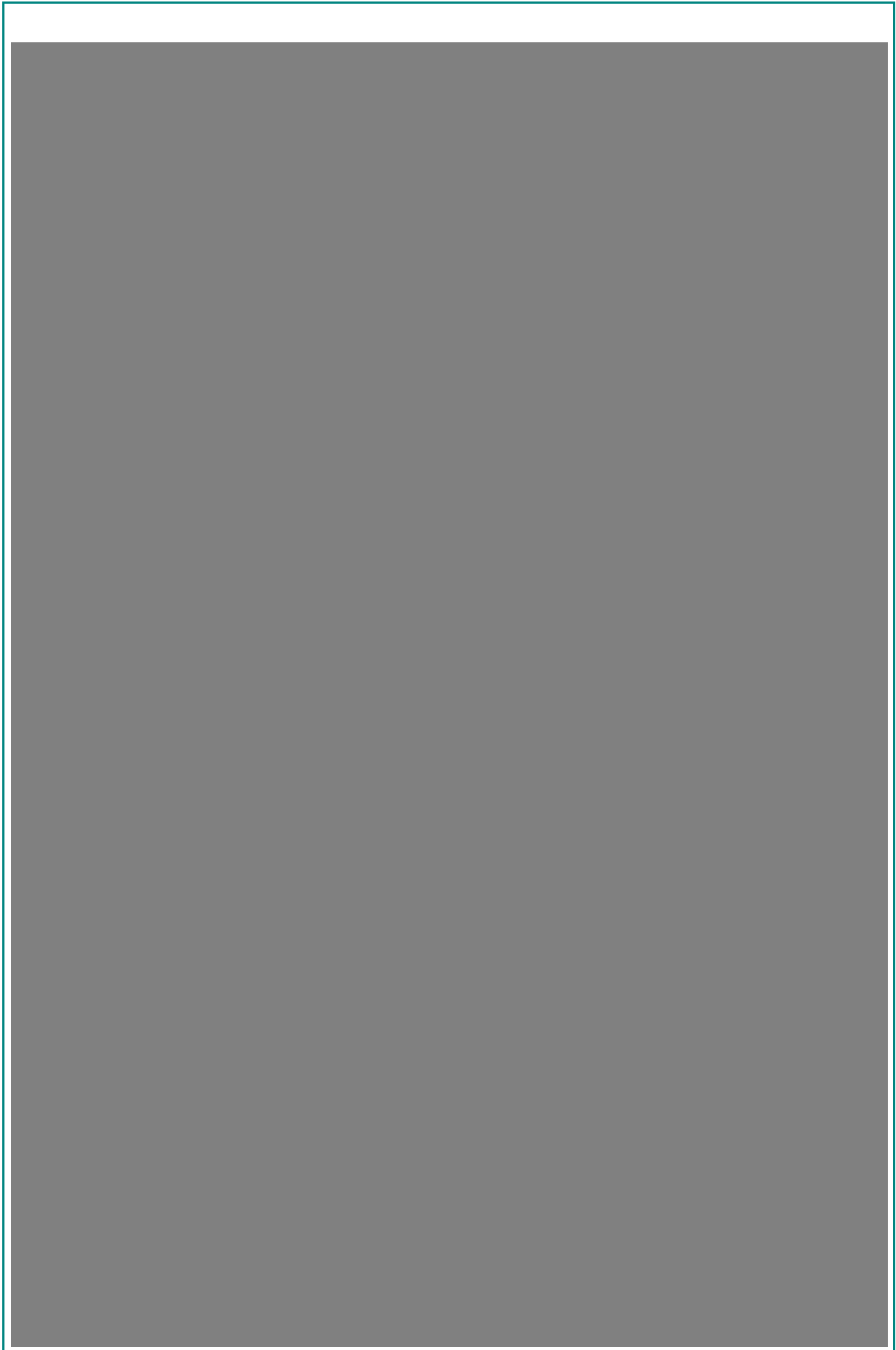
☐

The case examiners have determined that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 2, 3, 4, and 5 being found proven, that those concerns could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct (2-4) and being included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list or the Scottish Ministers children's or adults' lists (5), and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst registered as a social worker:



2. From or around July 2022 to August 2022 you had in your possession [REDACTED] inappropriate and offensive content.

Police completed a forensic examination of the social worker's electronic devices and identified '*a considerable amount of memes*' which the police described as '*very distasteful for a professional whose role is the protection of children.*' The police informed Social Work England that there were 253 attachments in total in the group, and '*most of them are offensive.*'

The memes depict a variety of images, including children with disabilities, and refer to themes including child sexual abuse, sexual assault, race, disability. Memes, by nature are designed to be content seen as humorous in nature, however the case examiners consider that the content of the memes identified on the social worker's phone would be more likely to offend than amuse an ordinary member of the public. The memes, provided by the police, found on the social worker's phone, attempt to make a joke of child sexual abuse, sexual violence against women, migrant children dying, and the vulnerabilities of children with additional needs or disabilities.

The police, having examined the content of the memes and confirmed that whilst the images were not illegal, they did raise concern that a registered social worker was in possession of such memes whilst undertaking a role protecting children.

The case examiners have considered the evidence available and note the social worker was said to be in a *what's app* group with people they knew, where the memes were shared alongside jokes. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The social worker states, in their initial submissions, that they did not find everything shared in the group funny and said, '*usually I would just open, look and forget about it.*' The social worker stated: '*I accept some of these were of dark humour. However, in absolutely no circumstances does anything like those sit in line with my everyday core values or alter how I view real life scenarios.*'

The social worker, in their final submissions, accepts that the content of the memes would have been offensive to some people and puts forward their perspective regarding the context to the group chat: '*Yes, dark humour is not for everyone and I would never ever use it around people that it would offend. It's about having the emotional maturity and understanding to separate any humour, not just dark humour, from reality. To this end, although I completely understand that some people would be offended. This was a private, end to end encrypted group chat containing different professionals from different occupations dealing with very different, yet equally*

traumatic and stressful work lives. Nothing in there was ever intended or repeated outside of the chat. Although I have left the group chat, I personally make no apologies for my part in the chat.'

Having considered the evidence available to them, the case examiners [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] are satisfied that there is evidence available that the social worker was in possession of inappropriate and offensive content, that being the memes identified by police.

In light of the above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 2, from or around July 2022 to August 2022 you **had in your possession** inappropriate and offensive content, being found proven.

3. From or around July 2022 to August 2022 you engaged in sexual communications with a Twitter user who presented under 16 years old.

The case examiners have had sight of the Twitter chat log provided by the police. The police have confirmed that the chat log is between the social worker and an unknown person.

The social worker states both within police information, and their submissions to the regulator, that they engaged in an online relationship with *'another consenting adult.'* However, there is no evidence that the social worker verified the age of the person they were communicating with. Within police information it is recorded: *'When asked how old the people he was talking to were he stated he thought 18, but he hadn't checked to ensure they weren't under 18.'*

The chat log from Twitter, at points during the chat, references the person the social worker was speaking to being under 16 years of age:





The police investigated the online communication but did not take any further action due to evidential difficulties.

The case examiners have considered all of the evidence available and are satisfied that the social worker accepts that they engaged in sexualised chat online. Whilst the social worker states the person, they were in communication with was over the age of 18, and the chat was 'fantasy', the age of the person has not been verified in the evidence, and the chat references the person as under 16 on a number of occasions, therefore presenting themselves as a child under 16.

In light of the above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 3 being found proven.

4. The conduct at regulatory concerns [REDACTED] 3 was sexually motivated.



Regulatory concern 3

The case examiners are mindful of the following case of relevance to regulatory concern 4:

- *Basson v GMC* [2018] EWHC 505 (admin); which sets out that for conduct to be sexually motivated it needs to either be in pursuit of immediate sexual gratification or a future sexual relationship.

The case examiners have been provided with a transcript from the police of the communication held on Twitter by the social worker and an unknown person.

The police confirmed that they took no further action with regards to the online communication due to evidential difficulties.

The transcript of the chat log from Twitter is dated July 2022 and is predominantly sexual in nature. Examples of communication sent by the social worker include:

[REDACTED]

'I know I shouldn't want that, and it's so wrong but believe me I really wanna fuck you and make you cum so hard.'

[REDACTED]

The case examiners note police information dated 25 August 2022 which states, when interviewed, the social worker, in response to the Twitter transcript, states it was 'just fantasy' and 'role play.'

[REDACTED]

Having reviewed the evidence, including the call log provided by police, the case examiners are satisfied that by the explicit nature of the conversations held by the social worker and their view that the conduct was 'role play' and 'fantasy' their conduct was in pursuit of sexual gratification and was therefore sexually motivated.

In light of the above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 4 being found proven.

- 5. On or around the 22 May 2025 you were included in the Disclosure and Barring Service barred list.**

The case examiners have been provided with a copy of the letter from the Disclosure and Barring Service, dated 16 July 2025, which confirms their decision to include the social worker on the barred lists for both adults and children on 22 May 2025.

In light of the above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 5 being found 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.

Social Work England: Professional standards (2019)

As a social worker I will:

3.1 Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately.

As a social worker I will not:

5.1 Abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone, or condone this by others.

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.

Regulatory concerns 2, 3, and 4

In regard to regulatory concern 2, the case examiners are satisfied that adjudicators may consider that having inappropriate and offensive content in your possession, that being memes detailed in regulatory concern 2, on your mobile device, to be a significant departure from the standards expected of social workers.

In regard to regulatory concerns 3 and 4, the case examiners are satisfied that adjudicators may consider that engaging in sexual communication with an unknown person where sexual contact with a child under 16 is referenced, to be a significant departure from the standards expected of social workers.

Whilst there has been no suggestion that service users were exposed to the social worker's conduct, by engaging in such conduct, as outlined in the regulatory concerns above, there is a risk that this may occur in the future given the nature of online communication.

If the matters were to be found proven, the case examiners conclude the alleged conduct is very serious and is likely to be considered a significant departure from the professional standards detailed above.

As such, the case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding this matter amounts to misconduct.

Being included in a barred list

Regulatory concern 5

The case examiners have identified the relevant evidence to suggest the social worker has been included on the DBS barred lists for both adults and children.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators establishing the statutory ground of being included by the Disclosure and Barring Service in a barred list, as provided by The Social Workers Regulations 2018.

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.

Whether the conduct can be easily remedied

The case examiners note that the social worker has been included on the DBS barred list which is in place for a person's lifetime unless successfully appealed or a review is requested. The case examiners note that the social worker has not applied for an appeal and the minimum review period is 10 years. The inclusion on the DBS barred list would significantly restrict the social worker's ability to remediate.

Insight and remediation

The social worker has provided little in the way of insight within their submissions to the regulator. Whilst the social worker has accepted the basis of the regulatory concerns, they have gone on to mitigate their actions, preventing them from considering the seriousness of the conduct before the regulator and potential far-reaching consequences of their conduct.

Regulatory concern 2:

'Yes, dark humour is not for everyone and I would never ever use it around people that it would offend. It's about having the emotional maturity and understanding to separate any humour, not just dark humour, from reality. To this end, although I completely understand that some people would be offended. This was a private, end to end encrypted group chat containing different professionals from different occupations dealing with very different, yet equally traumatic and stressful work lives. Nothing in there was ever intended or repeated outside of the chat. Although I have left the group chat, I personally make no apologies for my part in the chat.'

Regulatory concern 3 and 4:

'I obviously and understandably get why this has been raised as a concern by SWE.'

'I have gone through the chat logs provided and acknowledge there are some very graphic role play chat between myself and the consenting end user. I also note that at no time were any conversations of a nature of grooming or manipulation or exerts of much larger normal everyday conversations (not included)- however, much like the like the discussions about fruit tea. All conversations I had I (sic) believed at time, and still believe, were with consenting legal people and the terms used where nothing more than consensual legal role play held in what we believed to be private.'

Regulatory concern 5:

'I have no influence over a 3rd party agency and the decisions they make. This whole experience leaves me not ever wanting to work within the social care or protective services ever again. To that end I can't foresee any reason why I would need to obtain

a DBS so, after careful consideration and to protect my [REDACTED] health [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I decided not to appeal their decision. Although, with new evidence presented to me in your bundle clearly outlining why I was not charged for any offence and, why no further action was taken, I would have absolutely appealed the decision. Which, due to time limits, is now not possible.'

Risk of repetition

The case examiners have considered the submissions provided by the social worker, alongside the decision from the DBS to include the social worker on their barred list for children and vulnerable adults. By its nature, the DBS barring decision inherently presents a risk of repetition due to the indefinite inclusion of the social worker on these lists. As such, the case examiners consider there is a high risk of repetition.

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.

Given that the social worker has been included on the DBS barred list for both children and adults, the public would expect the regulator to take action to protect the public.

In conclusion, the case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the social worker impaired.

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 considered whether a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest in this case. However, the case examiners are satisfied that there has been no conflict in evidence presented which would require resolving at a hearing and the regulatory concerns are supported by a decision to include the social worker on the DBS barred list for children and vulnerable adults.

It is not clear if the social worker accepts impairment and as such, case examiner guidance suggests that a referral to a hearing may be necessary in the public interest. The case examiners have noted the following:

- The case examiners guidance reminds them that ‘wherever possible and appropriate, case examiners will seek to resolve cases through accepted disposal. This is quicker and more efficient than preparing and presenting a case to a fitness to practise panel’.
- 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 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.

Accepted disposal

Case outcome		
Proposed outcome	No further action	☐
	Advice	☐
	Warning order	☐
	Conditions of practice order	☐
	Suspension order	☐
	Removal order	☒
Proposed duration	Where a social worker is removed from the register, there is no defined end to the finding of impairment. A social worker that has been removed from the register may only apply to be restored to the register 5 years after the date the removal order took effect. The adjudicators will decide whether to restore a person to the register.	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England's Sanctions Guidance (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.

No further action, advice, or warning:

With reference to the regulator's sanctions guidance (December 2022), the case examiners note that in cases where a risk of repetition remains, the outcomes of no further action, advice or warning are not appropriate as they will not restrict the social worker's practice. The case examiners assessed that a risk of repetition remains, and due to the seriousness of the alleged conduct in this case, the case examiners are satisfied that such outcomes are inappropriate.

Conditions of practice order:

The case examiners next considered a condition of practice order. The case examiners considered paragraph 114 of the guidance which states:

Conditions of practice may be appropriate in cases where (all of the following):

- the social worker has demonstrated insight.
- the failure or deficiency in practice is capable of being remedied.
- appropriate, proportionate, and workable conditions can be put in place.
- decision makers are confident the social worker can and will comply with the conditions.
- the social worker does not pose a risk of harm to the public by being in restricted practice.

Conditions, in this case, would not be workable due to the social worker being unable to practice as a social worker whilst included by the Disclosure and Barring Service in a barred list. Furthermore, the case examiners consider that conditions would not satisfy the public interest in light of the nature and seriousness of the social worker's conduct.

Suspension order:

The case examiners went on to consider whether a suspension order might be an appropriate sanction.

The case examiners have considered the guidance, which states:

Suspension may be appropriate where (all of the following):

- the concerns represent a serious breach of the professional standards.
- 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.

In this instance, the case examiners consider the social worker's actions to be a serious breach of the professional standards. They note that due to being included in the DBS barred list and the restriction being potentially in place for life, the social worker is unable to effectively remediate.

Removal order:

The case examiners therefore went on to consider whether a removal order may be the only outcome sufficient to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession, and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

The Disclosure and Barring Service have taken steps to prevent the social worker from working with vulnerable adults and children indefinitely. As such, no other outcome available to the case examiners would provide the level of assurance needed in respect of the three criteria above. In the case examiners' view, a removal order is the only sanction available that will safeguard public confidence, protect the public and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.

The case examiners note that the social worker, within their submissions to the regulator, has requested removal from Social Work England's register: *'To this end I respectfully ask that it can be agreed for my deregistration to Social Work England with no further processes.'*

The case examiners have decided to propose a removal order to the social worker. They will 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.

Response from the social worker

The social worker responded on 06 July 2026 and returned the accepted disposal response confirming: *'I have read the case examiners' decision and the accepted disposal guidance. I admit the key facts set out in the case examiners 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 and published decision, rather than through a public hearing. They proposed a removal order, and the social worker accepted this proposal.

In light of the social worker's acceptance of the removal 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.

Having been advised of the social worker's response, the case examiners have again turned their minds as to whether a removal order remains the most appropriate means of disposal for this case. They have reviewed their decision, paying particular regard to the overarching objectives of Social Work England, i.e. protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence in the social work profession, and the maintenance of proper standards. Having done so, they remain of the view that an accepted disposal by way of a removal order is a fair and proportionate disposal and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.