



Case Examiner Decision
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SW18979
FTPS-22571

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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	4 June 2026
	Accepted disposal proposed - warning order (3 Years)
Final outcome	17 June 2026
	Accepted Disposal - Warning Order (3 Years)

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1, 2 and 3 being found proven by the adjudicators.

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1, 2 and 3 being found to amount to the statutory ground of misconduct
2. For regulatory concerns 1, 2 and 3, 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 warning order of three years duration. The social worker subsequently responded, confirming that they understood and accepted the terms of the proposed disposal 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.

Anonymity and redaction

Elements of this decision have been marked for redaction in line with our Fitness to Practise Publications Policy. Text in [REDACTED] will be redacted only from the published copy of the decision, and will therefore be shared with the complainant in their copy. Text in [REDACTED] 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.

Person A

[REDACTED] other of Person B

Person B

Person C

[REDACTED] Person B's current partner

Family A

Consisting of Person B, Person C and two children

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer and subsequently by two members of the public.
Date the complaint was received	17 August 2023
Complaint summary	<p>██████████ Council allege that the social worker forwarded confidential information about a family known to them (Family A) to a member of the public (Person A), discussed confidential information about Family A with Person A and then denied that they had done so to their employer.</p> <p>In November 2023 and December 2023 respectively, members of Family A, Person B and Person C also made complaints that the social worker had shared their confidential information with Person A.</p>

Regulatory concerns

Regulatory Concern 1:

While registered as a social worker and employed by ██████████ council, on or around 13 August 2023, you breached confidentiality in that:

- a) You forwarded a screenshot you had been sent of a Child and Family Assessment to Person A without any professional reason to do so,
- b) You shared confidential information about Family A with Person A.

Regulatory Concern 2:

You stated you had not shared Family A's record when asked by your employer on 16 August 2023, when this was not the case.

Regulatory Concern 3:

Your conduct at Regulatory Concern 2 was dishonest.

The matters outlined in regulatory concerns 1, 2 and 3 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	<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 concerns 1, 2 and 3 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

Regulatory Concern 1:

While registered as a social worker and employed by ██████████ Council, on or around 13 August 2023, you breached confidentiality in that:

- a) You forwarded a screenshot you had been sent of a Child and Family Assessment to Person A without any professional reason to do so,
- b) You shared confidential information about Family A with Person A.

The case examiners will consider both aspects of Regulatory Concern 1 together as they rely on the same evidence.

The case examiners have reviewed the evidence provided and have seen a screenshot of a confidential child and family assessment for Family A that was sent to the social worker by a social work colleague. The case examiners have also seen screenshots of WhatsApp messages between the social worker and Person A, within which there is a forwarded message of the confidential child and family assessment from the social worker's phone to Person A's phone.

In addition, the case examiners have seen further screenshots of WhatsApp conversations between the social worker and Person A within which the social worker discusses and provides details of sensitive and confidential information about family A's circumstances and the status of their involvement with children's services.

In their submissions the social worker accepts both aspects of regulatory concern 1 and these are not in dispute. The social worker said they sent the screen shot to Person A [REDACTED]

The case examiners are satisfied that the evidence supports that the social worker sent a screen shot of a child and family assessment and sent confidential information to Person A. The case examiners next considered if the social worker had a professional reason to forward and share confidential information about Family A with Person A. They note that Person A is a member of the public and not linked to the social worker in any professional capacity. The case examiners acknowledge the social worker's explanation of the reason for sending the screen shot and messages to Person A, but are not satisfied that this could represent a professional reason to share information. The case examiners have not seen any evidence to suggest the social worker had a professional reason to share confidential information about Family A with Person A.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

Regulatory Concern 2:

You stated you had not shared Family A's record when asked by your employer on 16 August 2023, when this was not the case.

The case examiners note from the evidence that on 16 Aug 2023 the employer received a complaint from Person B stating that the social worker had shared confidential information about them and their partner Person C, with Person A. An

email from the employer to the investigator documents their discussion with the social worker on that day and notes that when asked by their employer if they had shared the child and family assessment that was forwarded to them with Person A, the social worker allegedly denied doing so.

It is acknowledged that the employer states in their concern form that later that day they received a telephone call from the social worker within which they admitted sharing a screen shot with Person A.

In their submissions the social worker accepts regulatory concern 2 and has provided some mitigating circumstances which the case examiners will consider later in this report.

The case examiners are satisfied that the evidence suggests that the social worker stated they had not shared Family A's record, when this was not the case.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

Regulatory Concern 3:

Your conduct at Regulatory Concern 2 was dishonest.

When considering dishonesty, there are two tests, the subjective test and the objective 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 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. There is no requirement for the social worker to appreciate that their conduct is, by the objective standards of ordinary decent people, dishonest.

The subjective test:

The case examiners reviewed the evidence available to discern if the social worker knew that they had shared Family A's records with Person A when telling their employer that they had not done so on 16 August 2023.

The evidence indicates that the social worker initially denied to their employer that they had shared Family A's records when asked directly. The employer stated that the social worker contacted them later the same day and admitted to them that they had shared Family A's information with Person A. The social worker states in their submission:

“I accept this as a concern. When I was invited into the senior managers office on the 16 August 2023 and asked about the concerns, I was upset and did not feel able at that time to explain my reasoning to the two managers who were present. I did not feel able or in a safe place to divulge my personal circumstances [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when in my social worker role, I am seen by others as being a strong, independent who advocates for children and families. If I had chosen to speak up, I would have become very tearful and did not want my management team to see me in this way.”

The evidence suggests that the social worker made a conscious decision to falsely inform their employer that they had not shared Family A’s records when they knew that they had, and they appear to have done so to maintain emotional composure and preserve their professional reputation.

As such, the case examiners are satisfied that the social worker provided their employer with information that they knew to be false.

The Objective Test

The case examiners believe it is reasonable to conclude that, if a social worker was proven to have deliberately informed their employer that they had not shared confidential information when they knew they had, an ordinary decent person is likely to view that as dishonest.

The case examiners consider that both subjective and objective tests are met. They are therefore satisfied that there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find this regulatory concern proven in respect of the social worker’s alleged conduct captured in regulatory concern 2.

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of this regulatory concern being found proven, should the matter go forward to adjudicators.

Grounds

The case examiners consider that the appropriate statutory ground to consider in this case is 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 professional standards, which were applicable at the time of the concerns.

As a social worker, I will:

2.1: Be open, honest, reliable and fair.

2.2: Respect and maintain people's dignity and privacy.

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

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.

5.6: Use technology, social media or other forms of electronic communication unlawfully, unethically, or in a way that brings the profession into disrepute.

The case examiners are aware that falling short of the standards may not always amount to misconduct. However, the case examiners consider that in this instance adjudicators may consider the alleged conduct to be a significant departure from the expected standards.

Social workers in their roles have access to a large amount of confidential information about people, therefore members of the public need to be confident that social workers will not share this information with others unless there is a legitimate and lawful reason to do so.

Whilst the evidence in this case suggests that the social worker did not access the case records of Family A themselves, there is evidence to suggest, as we have seen in our previous consideration of regulatory concern 1, that speaks to the social worker forwarding the information that they were sent to another person and sharing further confidential information that they had gleaned. People who utilise children's services should be able to feel confident that their sensitive and private information will not be misused and shared with members of the public. In this case, the evidence suggests that the social worker shared Family A's information via WhatsApp. The information shared was sensitive included details about Person C

The evidence suggests that the social worker's alleged conduct caused harm to both Person B and Person C. Person C allegedly became distressed at learning that their personal information had been shared and both Person B and Person C made complaints to the regulator.

The social worker has cited the following mitigation for their conduct in regulatory concern 1:

- *“My decision was driven by [REDACTED] rather than professional reasoning. I acknowledge this was a breach of confidentiality and regret my actions, recognising it was highly inappropriate and out of character”*

In summary, the case examiners note that the social worker's mitigation rests on the following key alleged points:

The case examiners recognise and understand that the social worker may have been concerned about the activities of Person B [REDACTED] but they are minded that social workers are entrusted with access to highly sensitive information about people and any non-legitimate sharing of this information could be considered a breach of public trust.

The case examiners consider that sharing confidential and sensitive information about a family known to children's services with a member of the public, if proven, would not align with professional standards 2.2, 3.1, 5.2 and 5.6.

As we have seen in our earlier consideration of regulatory concerns 2 and 3 at the facts stage, the evidence indicates that the social worker was not honest with their employer when asked if they had forwarded confidential information to Person A. Dishonesty is incompatible with the standards expected of a social worker and has the potential to undermine public confidence in the profession. When a social worker does not act honestly, this brings into question their suitability to work as a social worker. The case examiners consider that such conduct, if proven, would not align with professional standards 2.1 and 5.2

The case examiners are satisfied there is a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding the statutory ground of misconduct engaged, in relation to regulatory concerns 1, 2 and 3.

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

For regulatory concern 1, the case examiners are of the view that the conduct could be easily remedied through training, continued professional development, ongoing reflections and adherence to practice guidance and law. The case examiners acknowledge however that conduct involving potential dishonesty as is alleged in regulatory concerns 2 and 3, may present challenges for remediation. This is because it is more difficult to produce objective evidence of reformed character.

The case examiners have reviewed their guidance in relation to dishonesty along with case law and note the following relevant points:

- The guidance states that case examiners should consider that dishonesty is nuanced and can take different forms. It guides case examiners to consider dishonesty on a scale of seriousness. In doing so case examiners can consider factors such as whether the dishonesty was an isolated incident, the duration of the dishonesty, and whether the social worker admitted the dishonesty at the earliest opportunity.
- Case law implies that dishonesty does not have to be an all pervading trait in that a person can be dishonest on just one occasion (GMC v Chaudhary 2017)

In this case, the evidence suggests that the social worker's dishonesty was an isolated incident, the social worker admitted to their employer that they had been dishonest on the same day, a short time after their alleged dishonest conduct and expressed their remorse. The case examiners are therefore not of the view in this case, that the social worker's dishonesty reflects an ongoing attitudinal problem or dishonest character and therefore consider it capable of remediation through reflection, good insight and evidence of non-repetition of dishonest conduct.

Insight and remediation

The case examiners have reviewed the social workers submissions to the regulator and note that the social worker has shown considerable insight into their conduct and the impact on others. The social worker fully accepts responsibility for their conduct and accepts that at the time of the regulatory concerns, their practise was impaired. Since then, they claim to have taken considerable steps to demonstrate insight and remediation. They say:

“Since the incident, I have taken proactive steps to reflect and improve my practice. I completed a detailed reflective statement examining what happened, how my response may have been perceived, and the impact on professional trust. This helped me recognise the importance of maintaining honesty under pressure and developing strategies to manage stress when questioned unexpectedly”.

“I undertook GDPR training in August 2023, which strengthened my understanding of legal and ethical frameworks, appropriate responses to sensitive questions, and the need for clear documentation and communication.”

“I have been transparent with subsequent employers and practice supervisors, continued working as a social worker with openness about the incident, and committed to strengthening professional boundaries and accountability”.

“I fully acknowledge that my actions in sharing confidential information were wrong and fell below the professional standards expected of a social worker. At the time, I acted impulsively and allowed my emotions and personal circumstances to influence my judgment. My intention was not to cause harm or distress [REDACTED]

However, I recognise that this does not excuse my actions, and I deeply regret the impact this has had on others.....”

“i [sic] am truly sorry for the breach of trust and the potential impact on those involved. Moving forward, I am committed to ensuring this never happens again. I will continue to use reflective tools, seek supervision when faced with dilemmas, and uphold the highest standards of confidentiality and integrity in my work”.

The case examiners have seen evidence of the training attended by the social worker and have had sight of their reflective statement submitted to the regulator as part of the social worker’s continued professional development. They have also seen references from past and current employers, all of which testify to the social worker’s good character and high professional standards. An example is a reference from the social worker’s practice supervisor [REDACTED]

They say:

“Gina self-funded her own online training around information governance and then also completed [REDACTED] online course (mandatory for all staff). During the time that Gina worked for [REDACTED] there were no concerns with the way in which she handled sensitive information, there were no concerns about data breaches [REDACTED] were sad to see Gina leaving the authority as she is a very experienced and competent social worker. Gina has always presented as incredibly professional and thoughtful”.

The case examiners also note the positive reference dated 24 June 2025 received from the social worker’s current employer [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] which states that the social worker is undertaking social work practice without restrictions and their practice is of a good standard.

The case examiners are of the view that the social worker has shown good insight into their conduct, has expressed remorse and shown evidence of remediation.

Risk of repetition

In their consideration of the risk of repetition, the case examiners are assisted by the passage of time, 34 months, with no repetition of the conduct that caused the regulatory concerns plus a positive reference from the social worker's current employer. Having considered the evidence available in this case, the case examiners are satisfied that there is evidence of insight and remediation, and the risk of repetition is therefore low.

Public element

The case examiners next considered whether the social worker's actions have the potential to undermine public confidence in social workers and whether this is a case where adjudicators may determine that the public interest requires a finding of impairment. Public interest includes the maintenance of professional standards for social workers and the need to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the profession.

The case examiners have reminded themselves that the public interest includes responding proportionately to regulatory concerns. They consider that the adjudicators may determine that a member of the public would be seriously concerned where a social worker is alleged to have shared confidential records of people without any professional or legitimate reason to do so and was dishonest with their employer about their actions. This has the potential to seriously undermine the public trust in social workers. The case examiners consider that a failure to find impairment could undermine public confidence in the social work profession.

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

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 have concluded that the public interest is engaged. However, they are satisfied that this interest may be appropriately fulfilled by virtue of the accepted disposal process.

Whilst the matter before the regulator is serious, the case examiners are not of the view that it is so serious that a hearing might be necessary to maintain public confidence in the social work profession, or in Social Work England's maintenance of the standards expected of social workers. In addition, there is no conflict in evidence in this case and the social worker accepts 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. The case examiners considered however that they could reasonably and legitimately offer the social worker the opportunity to consider the question of impairment, and an offer of accepted disposal. In reaching this conclusion, their reasoning is as follows:

- There is no conflict in evidence in this case and the social worker accepts the facts.
- The social worker is clear that they accept that their conduct fell short of the standards expected of them.
- The case examiners are of the view that there is a low risk of repetition and therefore any impairment would be primarily made in the public interest to safeguard public confidence.
- The case examiners recognise that not all professionals will have an innate understanding of how and when the public interest 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 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.

Interim order

An interim order may be necessary for protection of members of the public	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An interim order may be necessary in the best interests of the social worker	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Accepted disposal

Case outcome

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

Reasoning

Having found that there is a realistic prospect that the social worker's fitness to practise is impaired, the case examiners then considered what, if any sanction they should propose in this case. The case examiners have taken into account their Sanctions Guidance published by Social Work England. They are reminded that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish the social worker but to protect the public and wider interest. The case examiners have borne in mind the principle of proportionality and fairness in determining the appropriate sanction.

In considering a sanction the case examiners have also considered mitigating and aggravating factors in this case:

Mitigating Factors:

- The social worker has demonstrated insight, accepted responsibility, completed remediation, expressed remorse and presents a low risk of repetition.

- The social worker has shown over the passage of time, 34 months, that they have not repeated the conduct that led to the regulatory concerns whilst employed as a social worker.
- The social worker has an otherwise exemplary practice record supported by positive employer references.

Aggravating Factors

- The social worker shared confidential information about the family via WhatsApp conversations with a member of the public.
- The social worker did not initially tell their employer the truth about their actions, although they did so a couple of hours later.

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

The case examiners commenced by considering whether it may be appropriate to reach a finding of impairment, with no requirement for any further action. The case examiners were satisfied that in this case, and considering the seriousness of the concern raised, that a finding of no further action would be insufficient to protect public confidence.

Advice

The regulator's sanctions guidance explains that advice would set out steps a social worker should take to avoid repeating conduct that contributed to a concern. The case examiners consider that advice would not be sufficient to mark the seriousness with which they view the social worker's alleged conduct.

Warning Order

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 noted from the guidance that a warning order is likely to be appropriate where all of the following apply:

- The fitness to practise issue is isolated or limited

- There is a low risk of repetition
- The social worker has demonstrated insight

The case examiners are of the view that all three points above apply in this case. The social worker's alleged conduct which led to the regulatory concerns could be considered both isolated and limited, there is a low risk of repetition in this case, and the social worker has demonstrated insight as detailed in previous sections of this report. The case examiners have therefore concluded that a warning order is the most appropriate and proportionate outcome in this case and represents the minimum sanction necessary to adequately address the public's confidence in the profession.

Conditions of Practice or Suspension.

In order to test whether a warning order might therefore be appropriate, the case examiners considered the higher sanctions of conditions of practice and, suspension. Having reviewed their guidance, the case examiners do not consider that either of these more severe sanctions would be a proportionate response to the social worker's actions. The case examiners have been provided with evidence indicating that the social worker has been practicing safely and effectively for a significant period of time, making a conditions of practice order unsuitable. The case examiners have concluded that the risk of repetition is low, therefore any restrictive sanction would be solely to meet the public interest. As such, this would steer the case examiners away from conditions of practice and towards suspension.

The case examiners note that the sanctions guidance sets out that cases of dishonesty are likely to warrant suspension or removal from the register. The case examiners note that the use of the word 'likely' in the guidance is important because it indicates there is no presumption that every finding of dishonesty must result in a suspension or removal order. Rather, the guidance recognises that cases of dishonesty are nuanced and should be treated on an individual-by-individual basis.

The case examiners have already set out their determination in the impairment section of this report based on the evidence which suggests the social worker's dishonesty was an isolated incident, the social worker has demonstrated insight and remediation, and the risk of repetition is low. The case examiners are therefore of the view that a suspension order would be both disproportionate and punitive in this case.

With the above in mind, the case examiners consider it likely, that a well-informed member of the public would consider a warning order sufficient in the circumstances

and, therefore, it is the minimum necessary outcome to safeguard public confidence in the social work profession, and to maintain proper professional standards for social workers.

The length of the proposed warning order

Warning orders can be imposed for one, three or five years. With reference to the regulator's sanctions guidance, the case examiners are aware that when deciding on the proportionate duration of a warning, decision makers should consider all of the following:

- 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. This helps to maintain public confidence and highlight the professional standards. A social worker should ensure there is no risk of repetition throughout this extended period. If successful, there will be no further fitness to practise findings (in relation to similar concerns).

The guidance states that one year may be appropriate for an isolated incident of relatively low seriousness. The case examiners do not consider this a case of low seriousness. As such a one year warning would be insufficient to protect the public and safeguard public confidence.

The case examiners considered the guidance in relation to a three year order, which may be more appropriate for more serious concerns or a five year order where a case has fallen marginally short of requiring restriction of practice. The case examiners consider that a three year order is proportionate to maintain public confidence and to send a message to the public, the profession and the social worker about the standard expected of social workers.

The case examiners do not think that the matter fell marginally short of the need to restrict practice due to the low risk of repetition as highlighted in earlier sections of this report, and also the social worker's exemplary practice record; therefore a five

year order would be disproportionate and not represent the minimum sanction required to protect the public.

The case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a warning order of 3 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

Your conduct in this case represented a departure from the expectations of all social workers in relation to respecting privacy, maintaining confidentiality and being honest.

You are reminded of the importance of social workers treating sensitive information with significant care, the importance of honest conduct and the following relevant Social Work England professional standards (2019).

As a social worker, I will:

- 2.1. Be open, honest, reliable and fair
- 2.2. Respect and maintain people's dignity and privacy.
- 3.1. Work within legal and ethical frameworks, using my professional authority and judgement appropriately.

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.
- 5.6. Use technology, social media or other forms of electronic communication unlawfully, unethically, or in a way that brings the profession into disrepute.

The matters at the heart of this case should not be repeated. Any further similar issues brought to the attention of the regulator are likely to result in a more serious outcome.

Response from the social worker

On 15 June 2026, the social worker provided a response and confirmed the following:

“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 have reviewed their decision paying particular regard to the overarching objectives of Social Work England:

- The Protection of the public
- Maintaining confidence in the social work profession
- The maintenance of professional standards

The case examiners remain satisfied that an accepted disposal warning order of 3 years duration is a fair and proportionate way to conclude this matter, and the minimum sanction required to protect the public and the wider public interest.