



Case Examiner Decision

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SW37724

FTPS-23212

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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	09 April 2026
	Accepted disposal – suspension order (2-years' duration)
Final outcome	26 May 2026
	Accepted disposal – suspension order (2-years' duration)

Executive summary

The case examiners have reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concerns 1 and 2 (a) and (b) 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 misconduct.
3. There is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 2 (a) and (b) being found to amount to the statutory grounds of adverse physical or mental health.
4. For regulatory concerns 1 and 2 (a) and (b), 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 suspension order of 2 years' duration. If the social

worker does not agree to this proposal, or if the case examiners revise their determination, the matter will proceed to a public hearing.

The case examiners have considered all 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.

On 26 May 2026, the social worker confirmed that they accepted the terms of this proposal in full.

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.

Witness A	[REDACTED] senior social worker
Witness B	[REDACTED] social worker
Witness C	[REDACTED] principal social worker
Head of Service	[REDACTED]

The complaint and our regulatory concerns

The initial complaint

The complainant	The complaint was raised by the social worker's former employer, [REDACTED] (thereafter referred to as the local authority)
Date the complaint was received	10 August 2023
Complaint summary	<p>The local authority confirm that the social worker attended an in-person briefing event for social care professionals on 08 August 2023. During the meeting the social worker is alleged to have behaved in a disruptive and unprofessional manner.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

Regulatory concerns

Whilst registered as a social worker:

1. On 8 August 2023 you attended work [REDACTED] and disrupted a Team Meeting/Conference.
2. You have a health condition, as outlined in Schedule 1, which affects your fitness to practise.

Schedule 1

[REDACTED]

The matters outlined in regulatory concern (2) amounts to the statutory grounds of adverse physical or mental health.

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

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 and 2 (a) and (b) being found proven, that regulatory concern 1 could amount to the statutory grounds of misconduct and regulatory concern 2 (a) and (b) could amount to the statutory grounds of adverse physical or mental health, and that the social worker's fitness to practise could be found impaired.

Reasoning

Facts

Whilst registered as a social worker:

1. On 8 August 2023 you attended work [REDACTED] and disrupted a Team Meeting/Conference.

Local authority's evidence

The local authority confirm that the social worker was employed as an agency social worker from August 2021 to 09 August 2023. In an email, dated 14 August 2023, the local authority further states the following:

- The social worker attended the event [REDACTED]
- The social worker was taken out of the meeting and driven home by witness A.

An incident information index outlines the staff witness accounts of the social worker's inappropriate conduct during the event and of the local authority's response.

The regulator's evidence

Call logs between staff witnesses and the investigator on 09 December 2024 are as follows:

- Witness A describes the social worker shouting and increasingly becoming confrontational and making rude comments towards the Head of Service, who was leading the presentation. Witness A states that they and other professionals told the social worker to stop and attempted to de-escalate the situation.

- Witness B confirms that the social worker transported them to the event and that at the event they disclosed health matters to them.
- Witness C confirms that during the session the social worker constantly challenged the presenter, disputing and making sarcastic comments throughout. Some attendees at the event attempted to intervene without success.
- The Head of Service states that they were the lead presenter at the event where, from the onset, the social worker disrupted their presentation. They state that the social worker's behaviour became more frequent and erratic, which prevented the audience from listening. The Head of Service states that they stopped the presentation to manage the situation and brought the break forward to speak to the social worker. After the break, the disruptive behaviour carried on as before. [REDACTED]

The social worker's evidence

The social worker has not provided submissions but their responses, to both the local authority and regulator, indicates that they accept the alleged conduct.

The case examiners have had sight of the team manager’s email, dated 08 August 2023, requesting that the social worker does not report to work later that day or tomorrow. The social worker replies, “Many thanks for your email I will be directed by you and thank you for your support.”

The social worker confirms to the regulator that they have not practiced since August 2023.

Having carefully considered all the information above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is cogent evidence to indicate that, on 8 August 2023, the social worker did attend work [REDACTED] and disrupted a professional team event.

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

2. You have a health condition, as outlined in Schedule 1, which affects your fitness to practise.

Schedule 1

[REDACTED]

The local authority has confirmed that there were no previous issues in relation to any health conditions that impacted upon the social worker’s practice. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The social worker has provided consent for access to their medical records [REDACTED] and engaged in a UK independent medical (UKIM) assessment. The case examiners note the following information:

- A GP letter, dated 22 January 2024, confirms the following diagnoses:

- [REDACTED]
- The GP letter confirms that the social worker’s current health is likely to impact upon their fitness to practise as a social worker and is likely to continue to do so in the near future.
- GP records in relation to the identified health conditions appear to be longstanding and, at times, the social worker has required support [REDACTED]

- The UKIM report, dated 03 October 2025, provides a health diagnosis [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The report outlines the social worker's personal history and presenting illness which indicates a history of worsening health up to the incident occurring on the 08 August 2023. Since January 2024, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The social worker reports that they have no interest in [REDACTED] returning to the social work profession.

The independent assessor concludes that the social worker, in the absence of adverse personal or work stressors, currently appears to be managing their health conditions. However, the social worker's ability to maintain wellbeing has not yet been tested in professional practice. The assessor is of the opinion that the social worker is developing insight into the health concerns, but this is limited.

The report concludes that the social worker is medically fit to return to work with restrictions placed upon their registration and close monitoring. They consider that the social worker continues to be at risk of relapse [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which is likely to impact upon their ability to carry out social work duties.

The case examiners note that the social worker is not currently accessing any professional support.

The social worker's evidence

The social worker confirms that they have not practised since their employment with the local authority was terminated in August 2023.

They confirm that they have sought medical support and since the hospital admission in January 2024 they have remained [REDACTED]

The social worker confirms that they do not intend to return to practise [REDACTED]

Considering the information summarised above, the case examiners are satisfied that there is evidence to indicate that the social worker may have a health condition, as outlined in Schedule 1, which affects their fitness to practise.

The case examiners are satisfied that there is a realistic prospect of regulatory concern 2 (a) and (b) being found proven by adjudicators.

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 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.

As a social worker, I will:

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.

6.6 Declare to the appropriate authority and Social Work England anything that might affect my ability to do my job competently or may affect my fitness to practise, or if I am subject to criminal proceedings or a regulatory finding is made against me, anywhere in the world.

The case examiners have found a realistic prospect of adjudicators finding a regulatory prospect of regulatory concern 1 proven. They have outlined the background to the concern raised and have considered the social worker's account.

The case examiners acknowledge the importance of professional conduct. The case examiners recognise that a social worker causing what appears to have been a

significant disruption to an organised professional event is likely to negatively impact upon public confidence in the profession.

In addressing the grounds of misconduct, the case examiners have considered the mitigating factors which includes evidence of a health condition that may have impacted on the social worker's conduct at the professional event they attended. The medical evidence provided, includes the GP and independent medical assessors' health diagnoses, [REDACTED]. Whilst the case examiners acknowledge that at the time, the social worker may not have sufficiently appreciated the potential impact their [REDACTED] health could have on their professional conduct and practise, they do not consider that the health concerns justify or excuse the misconduct identified at regulatory concern 1.

The case examiners consider the alleged conduct, if found proven, is a significant departure from the professional standards identified above.

The case examiners are of the view that there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find the statutory grounds of misconduct to be engaged.

Adverse physical or mental health

The case examiners have concluded that the social worker is suffering from health conditions, as listed in schedule 1, which may affect their practice. The case examiners acknowledge that the [REDACTED] independent medical report support some recovery of health since January 2024. However, at the time the concerns were raised, the evidence suggests that the social worker's health had the potential to adversely impact on their fitness to practise had they continued to practise; there is also evidence that the social worker's health conditions may continue to do so. The social worker has explained the circumstances that led to their alleged conduct; has subsequently sought medical support; and appears to continue to do so.

The case examiners are of the view that there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find the statutory grounds of adverse physical or mental health to be engaged.

Impairment

Assessment of impairment consists of two elements:

- The personal element, established via an assessment of the risk of repetition.

- 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 consider that the concerns raised can be remedied in the following ways:

- Sustained recovery together with improved insight into the health concerns listed as schedule 1, and the impact these have [REDACTED]
- Continued engagement with GP and professional support services with a view to optimising self-management of the conditions [REDACTED]
- Insight and reflection into their alleged disruptive conduct, and the impact this may have had on colleagues and public confidence in the profession.

Insight and remediation

The case examiners consider that the social worker has engaged effectively with the regulatory investigation, given the continuing health concerns appearing to impact on their wellbeing. The social worker accepts the concerns raised and indicates that they are not fit to return to work and indicates that they do not wish to return to social work practice.

The case examiners have indicated that they do not consider that the social worker's health justifies or excuses their alleged conduct at regulatory concern 1. To date, while providing some insight into why it occurred, the social worker has not provided any reflection regarding how their alleged disruptive and unprofessional conduct during the in-person event on 08 August 2023 impacted upon the attending professionals or of the reputational damage to the local authority.

In relation to their alleged health conditions, while the social worker has sought support and has engaged in remediation, the medical evidence indicates that the social worker's is not fit to practise without restrictions.

The case examiners note that the social worker has not worked since the incident. As such, the social worker has not been afforded opportunities for further remediation within their professional practice.

Risk of repetition

The case examiners have noted limited insight and remediation in relation to regulatory concern 1.

Further, when considering the risk of repetition in relation to regulatory concern 2, the case examiners note the independent assessor's conclusion that whilst the social worker has demonstrated some insight, this is limited in relation to their resilience to stress. The case examiners note that the nature of the health concerns is susceptible to further relapses in the event of personal and/or work stressors.

The case examiners therefore consider that the risk of repetition relating to both misconduct and adverse physical or mental health remains, notwithstanding that the social worker has clearly taken positive steps to address their health issues.

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.

Regulatory concerns relating to a social worker's professional conduct and suffering from adverse health that impacts upon their fitness to practise, are serious. A social worker acting as alleged at regulatory concern 1, and a social worker with unmanaged health conditions that have the potential to adversely impact on their judgement, behaviour and practise, presents a risk of undermining the public's trust in social workers.

The case examiners acknowledge the challenges presented to the social worker in the context of their adverse health and how this is likely to have impacted on them both personally and professionally. The case examiners consider that a fully informed member of the public would be reassured by evidence suggesting that, to date, any adverse impact on the social worker's practise has been prevented by prompt interventions at the time, and by the social worker not returning to work.

However, the evidence, including that from the social worker themselves, suggests that the social worker continues to suffer from a health condition which could relapse due to the work-related stressors of professional practise. As such, the case examiners consider that it is likely the public would expect a finding of current

impairment to be made by adjudicators, together with appropriate restrictions on practice at this time.

In considering both the personal and public elements, the case examiners have concluded there is a realistic prospect that adjudicators would find the social worker to be currently impaired.

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 social worker accepts the key facts and that their fitness to practise is impaired. They have sufficiently cooperated with the fitness to practise investigation.

The case examiners have several sanctions available to them to maintain standards and public confidence without the need for this to be examined within a hearing.

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 type="checkbox"/>
	Conditions of practice order	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Suspension order	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Removal order	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed duration	Suspension order (2 years' duration)	

Reasoning

In considering the appropriate outcome in this case, the case examiners had regard to Social Work England's sanctions guidance (December 2022). They have reminded themselves that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish the social worker, but to protect the public, albeit the sanction may have a punitive effect.

The case examiners have decided that it is not in the public interest to refer this matter to a final hearing and have chosen the least restrictive sanction necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest. They have started at the lowest possible sanction and worked up, testing the appropriateness of each sanction and the next sanction above it to confirm their decision is proportionate.

The case examiners have already determined that there is a realistic prospect that the social worker's fitness to practise would be found impaired. The sanctions guidance advises that if the personal element of impairment is found, "*a sanction restricting or removing a social worker's registration will normally be necessary to protect the public*". The case examiners are therefore led to consider sanctions which restrict the social worker's practice.

Further, the case examiners have already determined that due to the social worker's continued health concerns, they have not engaged in social work since the concerns arose, and as such have had no meaningful opportunity to demonstrate sufficient insight or remediation in a professional environment. This, together with limited evidence of insight with regards to their alleged conduct, and evidence that their

health conditions may continue to impact on their practise if they were to return to the profession, leads the case examiners to conclude that the sanctions of no further action, advice or a warning are considered inappropriate on the basis that these outcomes will not restrict practice and therefore not sufficiently protect the public.

The case examiners have next considered a condition of practice order. They take the view that there are currently no conditions of practice that would be workable or effective in this case. The social worker is engaged in treatment for their health conditions and appears to remain unfit for work with no clear timescales of when they may be able to return to practice. The social worker has also indicated that they do not intend to return to the profession. Therefore, the case examiners are unable to formulate conditions that are workable, proportionate or sufficient to protect the public.

The case examiners went on to consider the next available sanction, namely a suspension order. The case examiners take the view that this would be the most appropriate sanction in this case. A suspension order is appropriate in this instance because:

- The case examiners cannot formulate workable conditions to protect the public or wider interest.
- The social worker has demonstrated some insight, particularly into their health.
- There is evidence that the social worker is willing and able to resolve or remediate their health condition.

Should the social worker wish to return to social worker practice upon recovery of their alleged health condition, the case examiners consider that a suspension order will allow them the time and opportunity to continue in their treatment towards optimum health and wellbeing. Further, this recovery period will likely, in turn, lead to improved insight and awareness of the personal triggers that led to the relapse and future self-management of the conditio [REDACTED]

Further, a suspension order will enable the case examiners to make recommendations to assist the social worker in demonstrating how they can sufficiently remediate. It is open to the social worker to request an early review of the suspension order if they consider that they have achieved the recommendations prior to the expiry of the suspension order.

When considering the duration of the suspension order, the case examiners have had regard to the longstanding nature of the health conditions and time since the regulatory concerns arose in 2023.

The sanctions guidance states that a suspension order can be imposed for up to three years at a time. The case examiners note the mitigating circumstances relating to concern 1 (i.e. health) and have considered the protective factors of the GP involvement, compliance with treatment and of the partial insight demonstrated. In view of this, the case examiners feel that a duration of 2-years' duration is proportionate.

The case examiners consider the maximum duration period of 3-years' suspension order is disproportionate in all the circumstances of this case and given the evidence of the social worker already commencing remediation with regards to their health.

The case examiners next considered a removal order. While this is not a sanction available in relation to concerns relating to health, the case examiners were mindful that it should be considered in relation to the grounds of misconduct. However, given that the case examiners are satisfied that the alleged adverse health conditions as described in regulatory concern 2 provided a degree of mitigation for the social worker's alleged misconduct, they were satisfied that removal order was not appropriate in this case.

The case examiners have decided to propose to the social worker a suspension order of 2-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 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 make the following recommendations to the social worker with a view to assisting the panel members when reviewing this order.

In setting these recommendations, the case examiners anticipate that health professionals and any future employer will be able to support and enable the social

worker to meaningfully engage in their health recovery to optimise future opportunities for competent and safe practice.

1. For the social worker to provide any up-to-date information or reports relating to their health conditions.
2. For the social worker to provide evidence from their treating team and / or occupational health advisor (if employed in a non-social work role), should they be ready and able to return to work as a social worker.
3. For the social worker to provide a wellness recovery action plan which would enable them to practise safely in the future.
4. For the social worker to provide evidence of relevant continuing professional development, to demonstrate that they can return to practice safely.

Response from the social worker

Following communications from the social worker indicating that they wished to accept the proposed disposal, the social worker was asked to confirm that they agreed as follows:

*“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.”*

The social worker provided a response on 26 May 2026 confirming that they had *“read, understood and accept the findings”* and *“wish to proceed as proposed”*.

Case examiners’ response and final decision

Having been advised of the social worker’s response, which the case examiners are satisfied indicates the social worker accepts the terms of the proposed disposal in full, the case examiners have again turned their minds as to whether a suspension order of 2 years’ duration remains the most appropriate means of disposal for this case. The case examiners have reviewed their decision, paying 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 suspension order (2 years' duration) is a fair and proportionate disposal and is the minimum necessary to protect the public and the wider public interest.