

Social worker: Simeon Walker

Registration number: SW134869

Fitness to Practise

Final Hearing

Dates of hearing: 18 May 2026 to 28 May 2026

Hearing venue: Remote hearing

Hearing outcome:
Fitness to practise impaired, removal order

Interim order:
Interim suspension order (18 months)

Introduction and attendees:

1. This is a hearing held under Part 5 of The Social Workers Regulations 2018 (as amended) (“the regulations”).
2. Mr Walker did not attend and was not represented.
3. Social Work England was represented by Mr Ed Carey, case presenter instructed by Capsticks LLP.
4. The panel of adjudicators conducting this hearing (hereafter “the panel”) and the other people involved in it were as follows:

Adjudicators	Role
Gill Mullen	Chair
Michael Branicki	Social worker adjudicator
Adenike Gustave	Lay adjudicator

Hearings team/Legal adviser	Role
Ruby Wade and Lauryn Green	Hearings officer
Liam Dixon	Hearings support officer
Dido Ofei-Kwatia	Legal adviser

Service of notice:

5. The panel was informed by Mr Carey that notice of this hearing was sent to Mr Walker by email to the address provided by Mr Walker (namely his registered email address as it appears on the Social Work England register). Mr Carey submitted that the notice of this hearing had been duly served.
6. The panel had careful regard to the documents contained in the final hearing service bundle as follows:
 - A copy of the notice of the final hearing dated 10 April 2026 and addressed to Mr Walker at the email address which he provided to Social Work England;
 - An extract from the Social Work England Register as of 10 April 2026 detailing Mr Walker’s email address;
 - A copy of a signed statement of service, on behalf of Social Work England, confirming that on 10 April 2026 the writer sent by email service to Mr Walker at the address referred to above: notice of hearing and related documents.
7. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to service of notice. Having had regard to Rules 44 and 45 of the Fitness to Practise Rules 2019 (as amended), (“the Rules”), and all of the evidence before it, the panel was satisfied that notice of this hearing had been served on Mr Walker in accordance with the Rules.

Proceeding in the absence of the social worker:

8. The panel heard the submissions of Mr Carey on behalf of Social Work England. Mr Carey, in summary, submitted that notice of this hearing had been duly served; no application for an adjournment had been made by Mr Walker and as such there was no guarantee that adjourning today's proceedings would secure his future attendance. Mr Carey submitted that there was no good reason to delay the hearing and therefore invited the panel to proceed in the interests of justice and the expeditious disposal of this hearing.
9. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser in relation to the factors it should take into account when considering this application. This included reference to Rule 43 of the Rules and the cases of *R v Jones [2002] UKHL 5*; *General Medical Council v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162*. The panel also took into account Social Work England's guidance 'Service of notices and proceeding in the absence of the social worker'. The panel was also reminded that in the event it decided to proceed in Mr Walker's absence, it must discharge its duty to take reasonable steps to test the evidence on his behalf as per the case of *McDaid v NMC [2013] EWHC 586 (Admin)*.
10. The panel considered all of the information before it, together with the submissions made by Mr Carey on behalf of Social Work England. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker was aware of today's hearing and had indicated that he would not be attending in an email dated 08 May 2026 in which he stated "...Also I will not be attending the hearing so can this be made know [sic] to the relevant persons..." He had not provided any reason for his absence. The panel, therefore concluded that Mr Walker had chosen voluntarily to absent himself from these proceedings and he had not sought a postponement. The panel had no reason to believe that an adjournment would result in Mr Walker's future attendance. Having weighed the interests of Mr Walker in regard to his non-attendance at the hearing with those of Social Work England, public protection and the public interest in an expeditious disposal of this hearing given the passage of time, the panel determined to proceed with the hearing as this could be done ensuring fairness.

Preliminary matters:

11. The panel was satisfied that parties had the same documentation presented in support of the final hearing, which consisted of;
 - Final hearing timetable – 5 pages
 - ID Key – 2 pages
 - Statement of case – 16 pages
 - Statement bundle – 66 pages
 - Exhibit bundle – 798 pages
 - Social workers response bundle – 15 pages

- Service and supplementary bundle – 146 pages

Allegations:

12. The allegation arising out of the regulatory concerns referred by the Case Examiners on 16 January 2025 is:

While registered as a social worker:

While working at Local Authority A:

1. *Between 1 November 2023 and 30 December 2023, with regard to Child A, you failed to complete one or more required Child Protection visits.*
2. *Between 1 November 2023 and 30 December 2023, you recorded on the case management system that you had completed a child protection home visit to Child A on one or more of the following dates, when you had not done so:*
 - a. *2 November 2023;*
 - b. *23 November 2023;*
 - c. *7 December 2023;*
 - d. *21 December 2023.*

While working at Local Authority B:

3. *Between 12 April 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child B you:*
 - a. *failed to carry-out a visit; and/or*
 - b. *completed a Child and Family Assessment which recommended that the case was closed with no further action, despite never having seen or visited Child B or their parents.*
4. *Between 18 January 2024 and 15 February 2024*
 - a. *with regard to Child C and/or Child D you did not hold a Child in Need review meeting as required; and/ or*
 - b. *you failed to visit Child D.*
5. *With regard to Child C and/or Child D, you recorded having carried out a Child in Need review meeting on or around 2 February 2024, when you had not done so.*
6. *Between 7 March 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child E, you did not hold a Child in Need review meeting as required.*
7. *With regard to Child E, you recorded having carried out a Child in Need review meeting on or around 23 May 2024, when you had not done so.*
8. *Between 2 April 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child F, you did not conduct Child in Need visits at the required frequency.*

9. *Your actions at paragraph 2 whilst working at Local Authority A, and/or paragraph 5 and/or paragraph 7 whilst working at Local Authority B, were dishonest.*

Admissions:

13. Rule 32c(i)(aa) of the Rules states:

Where facts have been admitted by the social worker, the adjudicators or regulator shall find those facts proved.

14. The panel noted that Mr Walker had not made any admissions and therefore considered all of the allegations to be in dispute.
15. In line with Rule 32c(i)(a) of the Rules, the panel then went on to determine the disputed facts.

Summary of evidence:

Social Work England

16. The panel read all the relevant documents including and not limited to the statement of case, statements bundle, exhibit bundle and Mr Walker's response bundle.
17. Mr Carey opened on behalf of Social Work England by summarising the statement of case. Oral evidence was given by the witnesses, who adopted their witness statements and (various exhibits) in chief as follows;
- a) Ms Bennett - (former Practice Development Manager at Local Authority A who conducted an informal investigation into the allegations relating to Child A);
 - b) Ms Martin - (former Consultant social worker at Local Authority A and Mr Walker's line manager);
 - c) Ms McKissick - (former Senior social worker at Local Authority A; social worker allocated to Child A's case prior to Mr Walker);
 - d) Parent 2 - (Child A's Father);
 - e) Ms Brown - (Former Team Manager (and Mr Walker's direct manager) at Local Authority B);
 - f) Ms Appiah - (Former Team Manager at Local Authority B who held a meeting with Mr Walker regarding the complaint made by Child C and Child D's mother);
 - g) Witness AD - (Child Protection Officer);
 - h) Parent 4 - (Child C and Child D's Mother);
 - i) Ms Khan (Production statement only).
18. Ms Bennett explained the management structure at the material period and confirmed that she was the line manager of Mr Walker's line manager at the material period. Ms Bennett said Child A was allocated to Mr Walker from 27 November 2024 to 29 December 2024. She explained that child protection visits were expected at least every 10 working days. Both parents of Child A (who lived separately) confirmed to Ms Bennett there had been no home visit by Mr Walker on any day. Ms Bennett confirmed

Mr Walker had however recorded visits to Child A on 2 November 2023, 23 November 2023, 7 December 2023, and 21 December 2023.

19. Ms Bennett gave context and an explanation of her exhibits. She explained that the risks of failing to visit are that the risk to the child would remain, there would be no professional going into their home or supporting the parents to make the changes set out in the Child Protection plan (“CP plan”). Ms Bennett explained that if a visit that had not taken place was recorded, it would seem as though the child had been visited and so it would appear as though the child was safe when in actuality there was no confirmation of this.
20. Ms Bennett said that in instances where visits were not carried out by social workers, she would meet with them and make a plan for the visits to be undertaken. Social workers were also reminded of the importance of recording in meetings they attended.
21. Ms Bennett said that in her view, false recording would affect a family’s ability to trust social workers, it would also cause embarrassment to any newly allocated social worker.
22. In response to questions from the panel, Ms Bennett indicated that practice standards were sent to all social workers within their first week by their manager. She said that at the material period Mr Walker’s manager was very competent and that she was confident the expectations around recording would have been made clear to Mr Walker.
23. Ms Bennett said that she was “fairly sure” that the standards indicated that contact with a child should be recorded within 48 hours. She noted that there could be compassionate circumstances where social workers were extremely busy and on such occasions a plan would be made for the visit to take place. Ms Bennett said that if visits were out of timescale, she would take note of them and follow up with the social worker.
24. Ms McKissick gave background about Child A and confirmed that she was the social worker allocated to Child A’s case immediately before Mr Walker. Ms McKissick said that, shortly before taking leave and then leaving Local Authority A, she had a discussion with Mr Walker about two cases that would transfer to him, one of which was Child A’s. Ms McKissick states that this was an informal handover. Ms McKissick provided Mr Walker with the CP plan, assessment and notes of her own visits.
25. She said that her expectation was that Mr Walker would complete one Child Protection visit (“CP visit”) while she was away and that, on her return, there would be a joint “goodbye” visit, at which Mr Walker would have formally been introduced as Child A’s social worker. Ms McKissick explained that she provided an appropriate email handover to Mr Walker at the time and that as far as she remembered this included the need for a CP visit. She said that she was unable to do a joint visit to the family with Mr Walker as they were both busy at the time and there were scheduling issues due to Child A’s after school activities.

26. Ms McKissick stated that she herself wrote up and uploaded her own visits before going on leave and that she did not ask Mr Walker to conduct or record any visits on her behalf, save for the single visit he was to cover while she was away. Ms McKissick said that Mr Walker's first case recording for Child A was on 2 November 2023 which was when he was providing annual leave cover.
27. Ms Martin in her witness statement explained her role at the material time and gave an account of her interactions with Mr Walker, including his induction and training, visits and recording. In oral evidence she said that with regard to visits and the recording, visits can be announced or unannounced and that recording should be carried out within 24 to 48 hours of the visit. She explained that new social workers would have access to the practice standards and that reference is made to the practice standards frequently in newsletters. Also, social workers could book themselves onto training and managers could also suggest training.
28. Ms Martin said that the main ways it would become clear a recorded visit did not actually take place was through a complaint, dip sample or audit. She said that you would trust a social worker to have completed a visit if it had been recorded.
29. In response to questions from the panel, Ms Walker said that once issues around Mr Walker's recording became apparent, she checked on him daily and that there was not a long lapse in time before he then resigned. She also explained that there was data that she would use to identify overdue cases and that then she would colour code them and draw up a plan with the social worker involved. Ms Walker said it was a weekly "flagging list".
30. Ms Martin confirmed that a social worker could input a recording into the system on behalf of a colleague, but in such instances, she would expect it to be explicit in the recording that this was the action being undertaken. She explained that it was ordinarily assumed that the social worker making the entry was the person that undertook the visit and as a result the social worker would not need to state their name as they were the only person with access to what they were filling in.
31. Ms Martin said that supervision was conducted monthly and this went for both formal and informal sessions.
32. Ms Brown explained the background of Child B and that the child was allocated to Mr Walker from 12 April 2024 until 17 June 2024. She said Child B formed part of Mr Walker's Child in Need ("CIN") caseload.
33. Ms Brown explained Mr Walker was tasked with carrying out a Child and Family Assessment (C&F assessment), which requires (among other things) contacting the child's family, visiting the child, obtaining agency checks from the school, obtaining health and housing information, doing direct work with the child, and then using all the information gathered to analyse and arrive at a conclusion regarding the intervention that the child needs. Ms Brown said that visits for Child B should have taken place at least every 20 working days, however she said in practice they were seeing the child

every 10 days within the team. She explained that visits were to be recorded within 72 hours unless a serious incident had occurred, in which case it should be recorded in 24 hours.

34. Ms Brown explained that a social worker new to the local authority would know of the requirements around visits as these were standards applicable across all practitioners. She said that Mr Walker would have been given an induction, a handbook and the opportunity to shadow staff. Ms Brown also said that although she was off when Mr Walker started work, she had no reason to believe that an induction did not take place.
35. Ms Brown explained that if Mr Walker was not able to reach Child B or Child B's Mother, he should have attempted contact through other means, such as phone calls, unannounced visits, educational visits, or speaking to other family members.
36. In response to Mr Walker recording a visit dated 21 May 2024, during which he stated that a message was left via the property's Ring doorbell system, Ms Brown said that she subsequently contacted Child B's mother, who confirmed she had no recollection of any contact or visit from Mr Walker. Ms Brown said that it was inappropriate of Mr Walker to recommend that the case be closed with "No Further Action" in these circumstances. Ms Brown in her evidence said that no Child in Need meetings ("CIN meetings) occurred, and both plans were closed in February 2024 without her knowledge or consultation.
37. Parent 2 said that Child A only met Mr Walker virtually on 12 December 2023 and that this was confirmed separately by both him and his wife who had separated at the time. Parent 2 explained that he had told Ms Bennett of this also and that Mr Walker had never visited him or Child A at home.
38. Ms Appiah said that on 13 June 2024 she met with Mr Walker to discuss a complaint made by the parents of Child C and Child D. Ms Appiah said that Mr Walker accepted that he never held a CIN meeting for the family and never met Child D at all.
39. In response to questions from the panel, Ms Appiah stated that she did not recall telling Mr Walker to close down the file of either Child C or Child D. She explained that she may however have been the manager that allocated him the case.
40. Parent 4 said that, in October 2023, Local Authority B's Safe Space Team became involved with her family following her requests for support for her children, both of whom were later placed on CIN plans. After initial involvement from another social worker, the case was transferred to Mr Walker from 18 January to 15 February 2024
41. Parent 4 said Mr Walker met her family on 23 January 2024 and subsequently met her husband on 21 February 2024 with family practitioner [PRIVATE] present on both occasions. Parent 4 explained that no CIN meetings occurred and both plans were closed in February 2024 without her knowledge or consultation.
42. Parent 4 stated they were contacted on 1 February 2024 regarding a proposed meeting for the following day, she said that she advised Mr Walker that they were unable to

attend due to the short notice. Parent 4 received no further communication from Mr Walker, and they were not informed that the cases had been closed.

43. Parent 4 confirmed that she made a complaint upon becoming aware that both of her children's CIN cases had been closed without her knowledge or consent.
44. In response to questions from the panel Parent 4 confirmed that no work was carried out subsequent to the meeting of 21 February 2024. She also said that she messaged Mr Walker in March after the meeting to give him an update and received no response from him.
45. Witness AD in response to the CIN meeting record which indicates that she was in attendance and is said to have reportedly stated she no longer had concerns regarding Child E being exploited or involved in criminal activity, said that no such meeting took place on or around 23 May 2024. Further, Witness AD in her witness statement confirmed that her safeguarding concerns regarding Child E remained live as of 23 May 2024 and so she would not have stated that there were no ongoing concerns.
46. In oral evidence Witness AD said that it was possible that she had no concerns about Child E in May 2024. However, when questioned further and after considering her witness statement, she clarified that there were no worries when Child E went into year 11, which was around September, but that there were concerns for his care in May 2024.
47. In closing Mr Carey made submissions in line with the statement of case. He also stated that the witnesses gave evidence that was clear and credible and supported by detailed, persuasive, contemporaneous records generated through social work practice. He said that there was a pattern of evidence from various sources that paints a compelling picture.
48. Mr Carey also invited the panel to consider the evidence in the round and to treat it as cross-admissible on the ground of propensity to the extent that it is fair and relevant to do so. He said that the evidence across the two local authorities is cross admissible because of similarity and goes to propensity, of Mr Walker acting in a certain manner. Mr Carey was clear that he was not submitting that finding one allegation proved must lead to a positive finding of a similar allegation, and he reiterated that each allegation must be considered separately on the balance of probabilities. Mr Carey said that the panel is entitled, when assessing whether a particular factual allegation is proved, to have regard to evidence relating to other allegations where there is sufficient similarity and connection between them, and where the evidence comes from genuinely independent sources such that collusion, contamination or can sensibly be excluded. He said that in the present case, the recurring pattern across the two local authorities namely, required safeguarding activity not being carried out, followed by records asserting that it had been carried out, is capable of adding cogency to the individual allegations and diminishing the likelihood that each incident is an isolated misunderstanding or recording error.

Mr Walker

49. Mr Walker on 06 June 2024 wrote a statement headed “Concern 1, 2, 3”, this was heavily redacted but the parts that were available for the panel to consider read;

“Child A was a handover case from a previous colleague in the team who conducted her last visit and this was what was written up for the first visit as she said this visit was done and gave me the info I have written up. I had also said I was leaving at the service at this point so it was said that the case would more than likely not be coming to me as it would not give consistency. As well as this it was not put on my case list. I had conversations with mum and then was asked to attend a review meeting which I was not aware of or had any dealings with the family. One of the Teachers gave information about Child A and conversations that they had had in detail and that’s where I believe I got information from and had come from school who see Child A and have those meaningful conversations. I updated this file before leaving to show there had been some oversight and give information so it could be handed over to the new worker. When I had the opportunity to speak with mum she explained that Child A had extra-curricular activities music I believe and that she was between her and dads which also contributed to a physical visit. I feel I was never the official allocated worker and on reflection should have put the last two visits as contacts but was this in no way to act dishonest...Both cases were handed over to a new social worker who I also feel has her own issues with me...I felt as a social worker with a massively challenging caseload I managed my families very well and am upset, angry and frustrated at my integrity and practice being questioned. I made sacrifices in my existing professional career to go forth and do my social work master’s degree to make positive change in the lives of young people and families and understand the professional requirements I needed to follow and possess”.

Finding and reasons on facts:

50. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser, who reminded the panel that where facts have been admitted they are to be found proved and where facts are in dispute the panel is required to go on to decide those facts. The burden to prove each allegation rests with Social Work England and the panel must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities. The panel was also given advice in line with case of *Ivey v Genting Casinos (2017) UKSC 67*, and it was set out that in approaching the allegation of dishonesty, the panel should first consider Mr Walker’s knowledge or belief as to the facts at the time and then decide the question of whether Mr Walker’s conduct was dishonest by applying the objective standards of ordinary decent people.
51. The panel was also addressed in relation to the cross admissibility of evidence in line with the case of *Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care v General Medical Council & Anor [2025] EWHC 318 (Admin)*. The panel was reminded that the only ground of cross-admissibility it was being asked to consider is the ground of

propensity. The significance of the distinction was that this required a finding to have been made to the relevant standard as a precursor to attaching weight to the cross-admitted evidence.

52. A distinction also had to be drawn between admissibility and weight. To be admissible, evidence must be relevant. This would be equally true of evidence that was capable of cross-admissibility. For evidence in respect of one allegation to be cross-admissible in respect of the other allegation, it must be relevant to that latter allegation, and its relevance would depend on whether there was a sufficient connection and similarity between the facts of the allegations. Once such evidence was admitted as being relevant, the question becomes one of weight. In deciding the weight to be attached to the cross-admissible evidence, the approach would come back to the first distinction. So, where propensity is being considered, a finding to the relevant standard of proof is required before weight is attached to the cross-admitted evidence.
53. In reaching its decision the panel carefully considered all of the documentary evidence relied upon by both parties and the oral evidence from the live witnesses. The panel found that the witnesses did their best to recall events that occurred approximately two years ago and accepted that there were some gaps in memory.
54. The panel noted Mr Walker's absence and did not draw any adverse inference from this.

Particular 1

While working at Local Authority A:

Between 1 November 2023 and 30 December 2023, with regard to Child A, you failed to complete one or more required Child Protection visits.

55. Ms Bennett in her witness statement said that Child A was allocated to Mr Walker from 27 November to 29 December 2024 and this is corroborated by Ms McKissick. Mr Walker's first case recording for Child A was on 2 November 2023 which was when he was providing annual leave cover for Ms McKissick.
56. Ms Bennett says that CP protection visits were expected at least every 10 working days as confirmed by Ms Brown.
57. Ms McKissick's evidence was that she was the social worker allocated to Child A's case immediately before Mr Walker and that shortly before taking leave and then leaving Local Authority A, she had a discussion with Mr Walker about two cases that would transfer to him, one of which was Child A's. Ms McKissick states that this was an informal handover and she provided Mr Walker the CP plan and assessment. Ms McKissick said her expectation was that Mr Walker would complete one CP visit while she was away and that, on her return, there would be a joint "goodbye" visit, at which he would be formally introduced as Child A's social worker. Ms McKissick said that she herself wrote up and uploaded her own visits before going on leave and that she did not ask Mr Walker to conduct or record any visits on her behalf, save for the single visit he was to cover while she was away.

58. Both parents of Child A (who lived separately) confirmed to Ms Bennett there had been no home visit by Mr Walker on any day. Parent 2 in evidence said Child A only met Mr Walker virtually on 12 December 2023. Child A's mother told Ms Bennett that she had never met Mr Walker in person. Ms Bennett asked her if Mr Walker could have visited on 23 November 2023 or 21 December 2023 (which were recorded visits), to which Child A's mother repeated that she had not met Mr Walker in person and that he had never visited her home. Child A's mother told Ms Bennett that she had assumed that children's social care was no longer worried about Child A.

Panel's evaluation

59. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Bennett and Ms McKissick that Child A was allocated to Mr Walker, and that Ms McKissick was the previous social worker. The panel also accepted the evidence of Ms Brown that CP visits were expected at least every 10 working days.
60. The panel was satisfied, that given the case allocation and the handover, albeit "informal", Mr Walker would have known that Child A required CP visits at least every 10 working days.
61. The panel noted the practice standards, and it was satisfied that CP visits were statutory and that Mr Walker had an obligation to carry out the visits within the required timeframe. The panel was also satisfied that Mr Walker had access to the practice standards and ought to have known the requirements around visits.
62. The panel also noted the CP plan as exhibited, which stated that "*Direct work to be completed by Social Worker with...to explore her wishes, lived experiences and feelings - To be done during the Child Protection Visits every 10 working days*".
63. The panel accepted the clear and concise oral evidence from Parent 2, who was unequivocal in stating that Child A only met Mr Walker virtually on 12 December 2023. Parent 2's evidence was further corroborated by Ms Bennett.
64. The panel was satisfied that there was no evidence to suggest that Mr Walker had carried out CP visits within the required timescales.
65. The panel concluded that Mr Walker had failed to complete one or more required CP visits to see Child A.
66. **The panel therefore found allegation 1 proved.**

Particular 2

While working at Local Authority B:

Between 1 November 2023 and 30 December 2023, you recorded on the case management system that you had completed a child protection home visit to Child A on one or more of the following dates, when you had not done so:

- a. 2 November 2023;
- b. 23 November 2023;

- c. 7 December 2023;
- d. 21 December 2023.

- 67. As exhibited Mr Walker had recorded visits to Child A on 2 November 2023, 23 November 2023, 7 December 2023 and 21 December 2023. Ms Bennett confirmed the entries had been made.
- 68. Both parents of Child A (who lived separately) confirmed to Ms Bennett there had been no home visit by Mr Walker on any day. Parent 2 in evidence said Child A only met Mr Walker virtually on 12 December 2023. And Child A's mother told Ms Bennett that she had never met Mr Walker in person. Ms Bennett asked her if Mr Walker could have visited on 23 November 2023 or 21 December 2023 (which were recorded visits), to which Child A's mother repeated that she had not met Mr Walker in person and that he had never visited her home. Child A's mother told Ms Bennett that she had assumed that children's social care was no longer worried about Child A.
- 69. Mr Walker claims that his first written record of a visit concerned an earlier visit undertaken by the previous social worker. The entry dated 2 November 2025 records the purpose of the visit as ensuring Child A's safety and introducing himself as her new social worker.
- 70. Mr Walker states that he was never formally allocated to the case and appears to suggest that, on reflection, he ought to have recorded the last two visits merely as contacts following a few conversations with Child A's mother.

Panel's evaluation

- 71. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Bennett, which was supported by the exhibits of Mr Walker's CP visit recordings.
- 72. The panel accepted the clear and concise oral evidence from Parent 2, who was unequivocal in stating that Child A only met Mr Walker virtually on 12 December 2023. Parent 2's evidence was further corroborated by Ms Bennett.
- 73. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the panel adopted its reasoning as set out Particular 1 above.
- 74. The panel concluded that there was nothing to suggest Mr Walker had completed CP home visits to Child A on one or more of the dates of 2 November 2023, 23 November 2023, 7 December 2023 and 21 December 2023.
- 75. **The panel therefore found allegation 2 proved.**

Particular 3

While working at Local Authority B:

Between 12 April 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child B you:

- a. *failed to carry-out a visit; and/or*

- b. *completed a Child and Family Assessment which recommended that the case was closed with no further action, despite never having seen or visited Child B or their parents.*

76. Ms Brown's evidence was that Child B was a CIN case allocated to Mr Walker who was tasked with carrying out a C&F Assessment.
77. Ms Brown also states in evidence that visits for Child B should have taken place at least every 20 working days, with CIN reviews held and the plan updated in accordance with Local Authority B's Practice Handbook and standard CIN timescales.
78. Exhibited case records of Mr Walker recorded several contacts and attempted visits on the system; including unannounced visits, sending correspondence and attempting calls and texts with no response. Mr Walker noted that a letter had been sent to the family's address, however no copy or record of this correspondence appears on Child B's file.
79. Mr Walker's C&F assessment states that Child B and his family did not engage and had not been seen.
80. Ms Brown said that if Mr Walker was not able to reach Child B or Child B's mother, he should have attempted contact through other means, such as phone calls, unannounced visits, educational visits, or speaking to other family members.
81. As exhibited, Mr Walker also recorded a visit dated 21 May 2024, during which he stated that a message was left via the property's Ring doorbell system. Ms Brown in evidence explains that she subsequently contacted Child B's mother who confirmed that she had no recollection of any contact or visit from Mr Walker and that there was no evidence on the Ring doorbell system of a visit having occurred.
82. Ms Brown also stated that it was inappropriate of Mr Walker to recommend that the case be closed with "No Further Action" in these circumstances.

Panel's evaluation

Particular 3a

83. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Brown that Child B was allocated to Mr Walker. It was satisfied that Mr Walker knew that he was supposed to visit Child B as per the attempts recorded.
84. The panel took note that the exhibited case records of Mr Walker had no entry to suggest that Mr Walker had actually seen Child B in person.
85. The panel also noted Ms Brown's exhibit of her note of a telephone call with Child B's mother and sharing her findings with Mr Walker. Ms Brown wrote "*I shared my findings with Simeon, who reiterated that he had made attempts to contact the family and had visited the home. He acknowledged the presence of the Ring doorbell but stated that there had been no direct contact with either the child or the parent*".

86. The panel concluded in the absence of any evidence that indicated Mr Walker had visited Child B, it was satisfied that no such visit had occurred. The panel gave limited weight in its decision to Mr Walker's own admission, as recorded by Ms Brown.

87. **The panel therefore found allegation 3a proved.**

Particular 3b

88. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Brown who in her witness statement said

“A Child and Family assessment / 45 day assessment is used to determine the needs of a child, and ascertains any support or intervention that is required. The outcome could be no further action, the decision for someone to visit the child's school, or statutory intervention, for example. To complete a Child and Family assessment, the social worker would complete things such as contacting the child's family, visiting the child, obtaining agency checks from the school, health, housing, or police, doing direct work with the child, and then using all the information gathered to analyse and arrive a conclusion regarding the intervention that the child needs. Following a Child and Family assessment, it can be concluded that the case can be closed, or it could be found that support is required. If support is required, the social worker would refer the child to the appropriate agency, give the family early help and statutory support, perhaps conduct a CIN plan, or possibly refer the child-to-child protection. The outcome of the Child and Family assessment is determined by the social worker, but with overall oversight by a manager who can disagree with a decision if it is needed. As referred to above, Child and Family Assessments should be completed within 45 days of from when contact from MASH is made”.

89. The panel adopted its reasoning at 3a above. It was satisfied that in completing a C&F assessment Mr Walker was required, amongst other actions, to contact Child B's family, visit Child B and undertake direct work with the child. The panel concluded that no such steps had been followed and it was satisfied that Mr Walker made a recommendation on the basis of no engagement.

90. The panel also saw no evidence to suggest a manager with overall oversight been given the opportunity to consider Mr Walker's actions and disagree with the decision. The panel accepted the view as expressed by Ms Brown that it was inappropriate of Mr Walker to recommend that the case be closed with “No Further Action” in these circumstances.

91. The panel decided that Mr Walker had completed a C&F assessment, recommending the case was closed with no further action, despite never having seen or visited Child B or their parents.

92. **The panel therefore found allegation 3b proved.**

Particular 4

While working at Local Authority B:

Between 18 January 2024 and 15 February 2024:

- a. with regard to Child C and/or Child D you did not hold a Child in Need review meeting as required; and/ or*
- b. you failed to visit Child D.*

93. Parent 4 confirmed that Child C and Child D and are her children and are siblings. She explained that, in October 2023, both her children were placed on CIN plans. The cases were transferred to Mr Walker from 18 January to 15 February 2024.
94. Parent 4 in her evidence said Mr Walker met her family on 23 January 2024 and subsequently met her husband on 21 February 2024, with family [PRIVATE] present on both occasions. She said no CIN meetings occurred and that both her children's plans were closed in February 2024 without her knowledge or consultation.
95. The case records exhibited indicated that on 26 January 2024, supervision was recorded on the file. The actions listed from this supervision were: "*SW to make contact with professional network and have final CIN review – by 31 Jan 2024*".
96. The exhibited CIN review document shows Mr Walker recorded that a CIN meeting took place on 02 February 2024, this noted the attendance of Child C and Child D's parents and referred to the basis upon which the children's cases were closed.
97. Parent 4 further explained that she was contacted by Mr Walker through text on 01 February 2024 regarding a proposed meeting the following day, she said she informed him they would be unable to attend due to the short notice. Parent 4 said she received no further communication from Mr Walker.
98. On 13 June 2024 Ms Appiah met with Mr Walker to discuss Parent 4's complaint as exhibited. Ms Appiah recorded that Mr Walker accepted that he never held a CIN review meeting for the family and never met Child D at all.
99. Under the practice standards as exhibited, CIN should be visited at least every 20 working days, and ideally within 10 working days following the referral.

Panel's evaluation

Particular 4a

100. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Brown that an initial CIN meeting was to be held within 10 working days of the C&F assessment being completed or within 10 days of the CP conference (not made subject/no longer subject to a plan) as per her exhibit. She further explained that a child's plan was then required to be reviewed at each meeting, at a maximum of every 10 weeks. When the child had been on a CIN plan for six months 'CIN Review Case Mapping' was to take place, focusing specifically on the progress of the child's plan. Ms Brown said that the timescales are standard guidance across the whole of social care and are mentioned in any sort of CP guidance. These periods should be basic knowledge to a social worker. She noted that whilst a local authority may tweak the timescales, they would not be able to increase the time limits.

101. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker had an obligation to carry out the CIN review within the required timeframe. The panel was also satisfied that Mr Walker had access to the relevant information and/or ought to have known the requirements around CIN review meetings.
102. The panel accepted the clear and concise oral evidence from Parent 4, who was unequivocal in stating that no CIN meeting took place and that she and her family only met Mr Walker on 23 January 2024. Mr Walker subsequently met her husband on 21 February 2024, and on both occasions family practitioner [PRIVATE] was present.
103. The panel took note of Parent 4's evidence that Mr Walker texted her on 01 February 2024 proposing a meeting for the following day, but she informed him that neither she nor her husband would be able to attend on such short notice. The panel further noted that this position was reiterated in Parent 4's complaint.
104. The panel was satisfied that neither of the contacts that took place on 23 January 2024 and 21 February 2024 can be described as CIN review meetings.
105. The panel was satisfied that there was no evidence that corroborated Mr Walker's entry that a CIN review meeting took place.
106. The panel concluded that Mr Walker failed to hold a CIN review meeting with regard to Child C and D as required.
107. **The panel therefore found allegation 4a proved.**

Particular 4b

108. The panel accepted Mr Walker was allocated to the case from 18 January to 15 February 2024. The panel noted the practice standards as exhibited and it was satisfied that CIN visits were statutory and that Mr Walker had an obligation to carry out the visits within the required timeframe. The panel was also satisfied that Mr Walker had access to the practice standards and ought to have known the requirements around visits.
109. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker had a statutory duty to visit Child C and D at least every 20 working days and ideally within 10 days following the referral. Mr Walker was allocated to the case from 18 January to 15 February 2024, a period covering 20 working days. During that time, a home visit was recorded on 23 January 2024 to see Child C, although Child D was at school and was not seen. There is no record of any further visit to Child D during this allocation period.
110. The panel considered the evidence in support of this and took note of Mr Walker's case record entry which read
111. *"We were unable to have direct discussion with you today as you were at the library in school but we have said that we will catch up next session"*. It also noted the corroborative case record entry of [PRIVATE] which said *"I attended your home for our weekly visit. On this occasion I wanted to introduce you to your new allocated Social Worker but you stayed at school in the library with your friend. I introduced Social*

Worker to mum and he explained what the next steps are". The panel was satisfied that both these entries were written on 24 January 2024, the day after the visit.

112. The panel also took note of the exhibited complaint discussion in which Ms Appiah recorded "*Simeon recalled that he had not held any CIN meetings for the family*".
113. The panel accepted the various contemporaneous evidence of the visit that did occur and was satisfied that there was no evidence of a visit to Child D during Mr Walker's allocation.
114. The panel concluded that Mr Walker failed to visit Child D as required.
115. **The panel therefore found allegation 4b proved.**

Particular 5

With regard to Child C and/or Child D, you recorded having carried out a Child in Need review meeting on or around 2 February 2024, when you had not done so.

116. The exhibited CIN review document shows Mr Walker recorded that a CIN meeting took place on 02 February 2024, this noted the attendance of Child C and Child D's parents and that they jointly agreed to the closure of the case children's cases.

Panel's evaluation

117. The panel adopted its reasoning at 4a above. Having concluded that Mr Walker failed to hold a CIN review meeting with regard to Child C and Child D as required, it was satisfied that Mr Walker's recording of the meeting was fabricated.
118. **The panel therefore found allegation 5 proved.**

Particular 6

Between 7 March 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child E, you did not hold a Child in Need review meeting as required.

119. Exhibited case records show Mr Walker recorded a CIN meeting for Child E took place on 23 May 2024. The record indicates that both Child E's mother and the school were in attendance.
120. Ms Brown's evidence is that the referral was received on 06 March 2024, Mr Walker was allocated on 07 March 2024, and that Mr Walker was to hold a review around every 6 weeks.
121. The school's safeguarding lead, Witness AD, is expressly referred to within the CIN meeting record. The document records that Witness AD reportedly stated she no longer had concerns regarding Child E being exploited or involved in criminal activity, noting such matters as "*past concerns*".
122. Witness AD's evidence is that no such meeting took place on or around 23 May 2024. Further, Witness AD confirms that her safeguarding concerns regarding Child E

remained live as of 23 May 2024. Accordingly, she would not have stated that there were no ongoing concerns.

123. Case notes of a telephone conversation dated 17 June 2024 between the newly allocated social worker and Witness AD records continuing concerns about risks to Child E.

Panel's evaluation

124. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Brown that an initial CIN meeting was to be held within 10 working days of the C&F assessment being completed or 10 days of the child protection conference (not made subject/no longer subject to a plan) as per her exhibit. She further explained that a child's plan was then required to be reviewed at each meeting, at a maximum of every 10 weeks. When the child had been on a CIN plan for six months 'CIN Review Case Mapping' was to take place, focusing specifically on the progress of the child's plan. Ms Brown said that the timescales are standard guidance across the whole of social care and are mentioned in any sort of child protection guidance. These periods should be basic knowledge to a social worker. She noted that whilst a local authority may tweak the timescales, they would not be able to increase the time limits.
125. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker had an obligation to carry out the CIN review within the required timeframe. The panel was also satisfied that Mr Walker had access to the relevant information and/or ought to have known the requirements around CIN review meetings.
126. Ms Brown stated that Mr Walker was allocated the case on 07 March 2024. She explained that the exhibited CIN review document records the CIN due date as 23 September 2024, but that this is because the system will populate a due date automatically which is around 6 months after the referral. However, as Mr Walker was to hold a review around every 6 weeks, in the event of which, the date to when the review is held would have been amended.
127. Mr Walker within the CIN review document indicated that the school and Child E's Mother attended the review. This is noted in the tick boxes under 'attended' in the meeting details section. Ms Brown explained further that this would have to have been manually ticked by the Mr Walker. The record also indicated that all significant people were consulted/involved in preparing for the review meeting and that Mr Walker explained that the case would be closing as there was no exploitation concerns highlighted.
128. The panel accepted the clear and concise oral evidence from Witness AD who stated that no CIN meeting took place on 23 May 2024, that she attended. Witness AD also stated that she had no records or calendar note to suggest any such meeting occurred.
129. The panel was satisfied that there was no evidence that corroborated Mr Walker's entry that a CIN review meeting took place.

130. The panel concluded that Mr Walker failed to hold a CIN review meeting with regard to Child E as required.

131. **The panel therefore found allegation 6 proved.**

Particular 7

With regard to Child E, you recorded having carried out a Child in Need review meeting on or around 23 May 2024, when you had not done so.

132. The exhibited CIN review document shows Mr Walker recorded that a CIN review meeting took place on 23 May 2024, this noted the attendance of Witness AD.

Panel's evaluation

133. The panel adopted its reasoning at 6 above. Having concluded that Mr Walker failed to hold a CIN review meeting with regard to Child E as required, it was satisfied that Mr Walker's recording of the meeting was fabricated.

134. **The panel therefore found allegation 7 proved.**

Particular 8

Between 2 April 2024 and 17 June 2024, with regard to Child F, you did not conduct Child in Need visits at the required frequency.

135. Exhibited records indicated that Child F had Youth Justice involvement and a requirement for at least twice-weekly reporting because of assessed risk.

136. Mr Walker's exhibited recordings show CIN visits for Child F on 08 April 2024, 01 May 2024, 02 May 2024 and 28 May 2024.

Panel's evaluation

137. The panel accepted Ms Brown's evidence that case was allocated to Mr Walker on 02 April 2024. The panel noted that as exhibited by Ms Brown there was an email chain dated 04 April 2024 in which Mr Walker was clearly informed by a youth justice worker of the following;

"Simeon, I have informed parents and [PRIVATE] about you as the newly allocated SW. I am on leave next week and [PRIVATE] needs a minimum reporting of twice a week, due to restrictions based on risks. I have been completing home visits only for now. Please let me know what date/ time you are completing your visit next week as I will be able to add this [PRIVATE] weekly reporting AND if you could also complete a check in (telephone) with him I would also be able to include this into his weekly reporting. Please let me know when these occur".

138. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker was notified of and aware of the need to undertake more frequent visits to Child F.

139. The panel noted there was no evidence to suggest that Mr Walker conducted more visits than he had recorded.
140. The panel concluded that on the evidence as recorded by Mr Walker, it was clear that he failed to conduct CIN visits at the required frequency as per the specific directions he had been given.
141. **The panel therefore found allegation 8 proved.**

Particular 9

Your actions at paragraph 2 whilst working at Local Authority A, and/or paragraph 5 and/or paragraph 7 whilst working at Local Authority B, were dishonest.

Panel's evaluation

Dishonesty in relation to Particular 2

142. The panel adopted its reasoning as set out at particulars 1 and 2 above. It was satisfied that Mr Walker knew that he had not completed CP home visits to Child A on one or more of the dates of 2 November 2023, 23 November 2023, 7 December 2023 and 21 December 2023 as he had recorded.
143. The panel found no support for Mr Walker's response that he was registering an entry on behalf of Ms McKissick. The panel accepted the evidence of Ms Martin that to do so would have been unusual in practice and in any event if an entry was being entered on another social worker's behalf, there would be an expectation that this would be reflected in the wording of the recording.
144. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker's actions were dishonest, as an ordinary person would have the impression that he had undertaken visits when he had not actually done so. In not carrying out accurate case recording Mr Walker was being deliberately deceptive in a bid to cover up actions he knew he had an obligation to undertake and should have actually been carrying out.
145. The panel decided that ordinary decent people would consider that a professional deliberately acting in the manner as set out above, was doing so dishonestly.
146. **The panel therefore concluded that the conduct at 2 was dishonest.**

Dishonesty in relation to Particular 5

147. The panel adopted its reasoning as set out at particulars 4a and 5 above. It was satisfied that Mr Walker had failed to carry out a CIN review meeting for Child C and Child D as required.
148. The panel accepted the evidence on Ms Brown who stated that:

"Within the CIN Review document, it is for the Social Worker to input the attendees of the meeting into the system, and then to select whether or not the

attendees were present, following the meeting. The 'present' option is auto-populated, although the Social Worker has to have chosen that option for it to show up. In the document the following was recorded: [PRIVATE] c. That all significant people were consulted/ involved in preparing for the review meeting...g. In terms of the Child and Family comments on the plan...Parents agree to the plan and the closure.”

149. The panel was satisfied from the evidence of Parent 4 and her subsequent complaint, that Mr Walker was aware of the fact that the parents of Child C and Child D would not be able to attend the proposed CIN review meeting.
150. The panel also noted exhibit of Ms Appiah’s interview with Mr Walker in which under the heading ‘Clarifying questions’ she wrote

“When did the final CIN review take place? Where was it held? Who attended? 2nd Feb 2024 - had a review meeting but it was not collaborative. Had spoken to a professional – then changed response and said that there was not a meeting. As it was not collaborative as there were no professional’s dad was not available and had a conversation with mum who could not attend. Simeon then said, “Shenell said that if cannot get everyone together get everyone’s views together and complete the review”. Minutes were not sent to family. Simeon again clarified that he had met with mum at introductory visit, and it was agreed case closure. She gave her views at the visit. Met with dad after case closure”.

151. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker’s actions were dishonest, as an ordinary person would have the impression from his recording that he had undertaken a CIN review meeting when he had not actually done so. In not carrying out accurate case recording Mr Walker was being deliberately deceptive in a bid to cover up actions he knew he had an obligation to undertake and should have carried out.
152. The panel decided that ordinary decent people would consider that a professional deliberately acting in the manner as set out above, was doing so dishonestly.
153. **The panel therefore concluded that the conduct at 5 was dishonest.**

Dishonesty in relation to Particular 7

154. The panel adopted its reasoning as set out at particulars 6 and 7 above. It was satisfied that Mr Walker knew that he had not undertaken a CIN review meeting on 23 May 2024 as he had recorded. The panel noted the evidence of Witness AD.
155. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker’s actions were dishonest, as an ordinary person would have the impression that a CIN review meeting had taken place when in fact it did not. In not carrying out accurate case recording Mr Walker was being deliberately deceptive in a bid to cover up actions he knew he had an obligation to undertake and should have actually carried out.
156. The panel decided that ordinary decent people would consider that a professional deliberately acting in the manner as set out above, was doing so dishonestly.

157. **The panel therefore concluded that the conduct at 7 was dishonest.**

158. The panel considered the cross-admissibility of evidence. It was satisfied its findings in relation to each separate allegation was based on the clear and direct evidence and therefore there were no additional cross-admissibility (propensity) matters that required separate and/or further consideration in its decision making.

Finding and reasons on grounds:

159. Mr Carey made submissions as outlined in Social Work England's statement of case and addressed the panel on the professional standards it believed Mr Walker had breached. The panel was invited to find Mr Walker's conduct was serious in nature and as such amounted to the statutory ground of misconduct.

160. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser. The panel was reminded that the question of misconduct is a matter for its judgement and 'that the standard of propriety may often be found by reference to the rules and standards ordinarily required to be followed by a practitioner in the particular circumstances' as per *Roylance v General Medical Council (No 2) 2000 1 AC 311*. In line with *Roylance* the panel was advised to decide for itself the professional standards it believed Mr Walker had breached.

161. The panel decided that Mr Walker had breached the following paragraphs of Social Work England's Professional Standards (July 2019):

As a social worker I will;

1.3 Work in partnership with people to promote their well-being and achieve best outcomes, recognising them as experts in their own lives.

2.1 Be open, honest, reliable and fair

2.4 Practise in ways that demonstrate empathy, perseverance, authority, professional confidence and capability, working with people to enable full participation in discussions and decision making;

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

3.2 Use information from a range of appropriate sources, including supervision, to inform assessments, to analyse risk, and to make a professional decision.

3.8 Clarify where the accountability lies for delegated work and fulfil that responsibility when it lies with me;

3.11 Maintain clear, accurate, legible and up to date records, documenting how I arrive at my decisions;

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.

5.3 Falsify records or condone this by others

162. The panel decided that Mr Walker's conduct both individually and collectively was so serious that it called into question his recognition and observance of fundamental tenets of social work. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker's conduct was a serious departure from the usual and accepted standards of social work practice.
163. Mr Walker's conduct was not isolated in nature, nor was it technical or momentary. Mr Walker's conduct amounted to a pattern of misinformation and fabrication across two local authorities and affected at least six children that had been allocated to him. His actions gave the sense that children who were particularly vulnerable and subject to CIN and CP plans, were being safeguarded, when in fact they were not. Mr Walker failed to undertake proper assessments in relation to the cases as explained in the panel's findings on fact above, and he failed to work collaboratively as was expected of him. This led to uninformed decision making which also impacted the delivery of clear safeguarding plans to support the children and families in his care.
164. Mr Walker failed to observe mandatory statutory safeguarding duties and compounded this by fabricating records thus giving the impression that the safeguarding duties had been carried out. Mr Walker's deliberate concealment of his inactions meant that other professionals could not step in to ameliorate his failures. Mr Walker's conduct negated and comprised all the checks and balances embedded into social work practice.
165. Mr Walker failed to observe the tenets of honesty, integrity and record keeping. Mr Walker's behaviour was attitudinal in nature as there was a wilful dereliction of duty. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker's conduct as assessed amounts to serious professional misconduct.

Finding and reasons on current impairment:

166. On the question of impairment, Mr Carey submitted Mr Walker's fitness to practise is currently impaired on both the personal and public grounds. He then outlined the serious conduct in question. Mr Carey stated that Mr Walker had demonstrated limited insight and that he had breached professional standards and brought the profession into disrepute. The panel was asked to find that Mr Walker's fitness to practise is currently impaired.
167. The panel heard and accepted the advice of the legal adviser, who referenced *Cohen v GMC [2008] EWHC 581 (Admin)* in that it should consider if the conduct is easily remediable, has already been remediated, and that it is highly unlikely to be repeated. Further, as per the case of *Council for Healthcare and Regulatory Excellence v NMC and Grant [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin)* the panel was reminded to consider the following questions; a) If Mr Walker has in the past acted and/or is liable in the future to act so as

to put a service user at unwarranted risk of harm; and/or b) has Mr Walker in the past and/or is he liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute; and/or c) has Mr Walker in the past breached and/or is he liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the profession; and/or d) has in the past acted dishonestly and/or is liable in the future to act dishonestly. Finally, the panel was also reminded of Social Work England's Impairment and Sanctions Guidance ('the Guidance').

168. The panel took note of paragraph 20 of the Guidance and was careful when assessing the actual harm caused by Mr Walker's actions and its impact on the seriousness of the case. It noted that whilst his actions had not appeared to have caused harm, they still represent an unacceptable risk of serious harm if repeated. The panel did not regard Mr Walker's conduct as any less serious because no evidence of actual harm was presented to it.
169. In deciding the question of Mr Walker's current fitness to practise, the panel first considered the personal element of impairment. The panel had no evidence to suggest that Mr Walker's behaviour was anything other than attitudinal. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker's misconduct was such that he exposed the families and children under his care to an unacceptable risk of harm by failing to carry out mandatory safeguarding duties.
170. The panel noted that the nature of the misconduct is such that it demonstrates a risk of harm to service users if repeated. The panel was mindful that the misconduct was sustained and repeated across Mr Walker's caseload. The panel was satisfied that such misconduct required evidence of full insight and remediation so it would be highly unlikely to be repeated.
171. The panel also noted that matters of dishonesty are not easily remediable and it considered that Mr Walker's dishonesty was multilayered in these circumstances. He failed to carry out statutory duties and fabricated records. He falsely recorded the attendance of other professionals and family members who were not present, and created a misleading impression that joint decision-making had taken place. The panel concluded that these actions compounded Mr Walker's dishonesty.
172. The panel took note that there was no suggestion Mr Walker had any previous Fitness to Practise concerns raised against him, however, his engagement in this process has been somewhat limited to date. The panel acknowledged Mr Walker's right to deny the allegations, but it concluded that he had failed to demonstrate any kind of insight into the issues raised.
173. Mr Walker's response demonstrated that he has to date failed to examine his own conduct or take any responsibility for his actions. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker had shown no understanding of, or reflection on, the impact his actions could have had on very vulnerable service users, colleagues and on cohesive multi-agency work. Mr Walker failed to demonstrate that he possessed the ability to critically evaluate his own performance.

174. Further, the panel concluded that Mr Walker had failed to demonstrate that he had remediated any of the shortfalls as identified. He had provided no evidence of work or continuing professional development undertaken since these events. The panel was satisfied that, in the absence of any evidence of remediation to consider, and given the circumstances as explained, Mr Walker poses a high likelihood of repeating his misconduct as it had nothing before it to suggest the pattern of behaviour displayed will not be repeated. The panel therefore concluded that Mr Walker's fitness to practise is currently impaired on the personal element.
175. On the public element of impairment, the panel was clear that Mr Walker in failing to carry out basic and statutory duties, breaching professional standards and fabricating records had brought the profession into disrepute. The panel noted that whilst Mr Walker's actions did not appear to have caused actual harm, they put service users at an unwarranted risk of harm.
176. The panel was satisfied an informed and reasonable member of the public would be concerned if there were no finding of impairment. Any such finding would substantially reduce the public's confidence in the social work profession. The panel concluded that the finding of public impairment was necessary to maintain the standards of the social work profession and uphold the public's confidence.

Decision and reasons on Sanction:

177. Mr Carey made submissions on sanction and asked the panel to refer to the Guidance when coming to its decision. He said that Social Work England seeks a removal order as this is the most appropriate sanction to protect the public and to maintain confidence in the profession and ensure that professional standards are upheld.
178. Mr Carey submitted the options of no further action, advice and a warning are not proportionate given the serious nature of the misconduct. He also explained that the misconduct coupled with the impairment finding on both elements, made a conditions of practice order unworkable and a suspension order insufficient to protect the public, given the findings of the panel. Mr Carey stated that because of Mr Walker's limited insight into his actions, their possible consequences and how widespread his misconduct was, a removal order is the only appropriate sanction.
179. The panel accepted the advice of the legal adviser who reminded it that the purpose of a sanction was not to punish Mr Walker but to protect the public and the wider public interest. The panel was reminded of the sanctions available and of the need to consider any aggravating and mitigating factors it sees fit. The panel was also asked to ensure that when considering sanctions, it begins with the lowest sanction and moves through all the available sanctions in ascending order of seriousness, before identifying the sanction it agrees is sufficient to protect the public and maintain confidence in the profession and uphold professional standards.
180. The panel was also advised in line with the cases of *Professional Standards Authority v The Health and Care Professional Council & Mohammed Ghaffar [2014] EWHC 2723*

(Admin) and Abbas v GMC [2017] EWHC 51 (Admin). These cases highlighted the importance of honesty in health and care professions, and that its importance is underlined by the fact that striking off may be an appropriate sanction under the indicative Guidance. Also, that a finding of dishonesty is of particular significance, especially if it is persistent and combined with a lack of insight. The panel was reminded that it would require compelling evidence of insight and a number of other factors upon which it could rely to be satisfied that the dishonesty in question appeared to be out of character or somewhat isolated in its duration or range, and that accordingly there was the prospect of Mr Walker returning to practice without the reputation of the profession being disproportionately damaged.

181. The panel carefully considered the guidance in coming to its decision.

182. Viewing the case as a whole and as canvassed in its findings above, the panel summarised the relevant mitigating and aggravating factors as follows;

183. The panel noted the following mitigation;

- absence of previous fitness to practise history

184. The panel identified the following aggravating factors;

- repetition of the concerns/pattern of behaviour
- lack of insight and remorse
- lack of remediation
- risk of harm to vulnerable families and children under his care

No action, advice or warning

185. The panel concluded that Mr Walker's fitness to practise impairment poses a current risk to public safety and the panel was satisfied there was ample evidence of this. In the circumstances it decided to exercise its discretion and move beyond the lower sanctions of no action, advice or a warning on this basis. It was satisfied that none of these outcomes would be sufficient to address the risk to the public, as they would not restrict Mr Walker's ability to practise. It would also send the wrong message about the seriousness of this misconduct and therefore not be in the public interest nor maintain public confidence in the profession.

Conditions of practice

186. With reference to the paragraph 114 of the Guidance the panel noted that a conditions of practice order may be appropriate in cases where all of the following are engaged;

- *“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”.*

187. Further the panel reminded itself of paragraph 116 which states;

“When considering public protection, decision makers must fully assess insight and the social workers past engagement with the regulator and any employer. This should help to determine whether the social worker can comply with conditions of practice.

188. The panel also took note of paragraphs 118 and 119 of the guidance which reads;

“118. Conditions of practice are less likely to be appropriate in cases of character, attitude or behavioural failings. They may also not be appropriate in cases raising wider public interest issues”.

119. For example, conditions are unlikely to be appropriate in cases of (any of the following):... dishonesty...”

189. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker not only fell short of the requirements of paragraph 114 of the guidance, but that was exacerbated by the very serious misconduct as outlined extensively above. Further, the panel had no evidence to suggest Mr Walker had any insight into his conduct. The panel decided that at present Mr Walker’s conduct could not be managed by a conditions of practice order as he had exhibited behaviour in which he deliberately fabricated case records whilst failing to safeguard the vulnerable service users allocated to him. The panel decided that a conditions of practice order would not address such practice, nor the behavioural issues that led to Mr Walker acting in the way that he did. The panel concluded that there were no workable conditions that could be formulated which would be sufficient to protect service users and the wider public interest given the unaddressed attitudinal failings. Such an order, at present, would need to be so restrictive it would be tantamount to a suspension order.

Suspension Order

190. The panel noted paragraph 138 of the Guidance which says;

“Suspension is likely to be unsuitable in circumstances where (both of the following):

- *the social worker has not demonstrated any insight and remediation*
- *there is limited evidence to suggest they are willing (or able) to resolve or remediate their failings”*

191. The panel was satisfied that Mr Walker had not demonstrated any insight or remediated his conduct. The panel noted that his dishonesty was spread across two local authorities, it was persistent in nature and wide in scope as it covered six service users. The panel noted it had no evidence of his current circumstances nor evidence to

suggest that he had practised in the intervening period or undertaken comparable work or any training. The panel also had nothing to suggest that Mr Walker was ‘willing and/or able to resolve or remediate his failings.’ The panel further considered that in Mr Walker’s limited written response, he took no responsibility for his actions. The panel has no evidence to suggest that Mr Walker is working towards remediation, has any insight or recognises the ramifications of his actions. The panel concluded that the imposition of a suspension order would not serve any useful purpose or be suitable in these circumstances.

Removal Order

192. The panel was clear that a removal order was the necessary and proportionate sanction in the circumstances. It was satisfied that as per paragraph 148 of the Guidance no other outcome would be enough to protect the public, maintain confidence in the profession and maintain proper professional standards for social workers in England.
193. In particular the panel noted Mr Walker’s persistent lack of insight into the seriousness of his actions and the fact that he appears unwilling and/or unable to remediate, given the lack of evidence to the contrary.
194. As per the cases of *Ghaffar and Abbas* (as referenced above), the panel decided that there were no reasons for it to depart from the Guidance. The panel took note of the case of *Bolton v Law Society [1994] 1 WLR 512*, and carefully considered Mr Walker’s interests but decided they were outweighed by the need to protect the public and the wider public interest. It was satisfied that the imposition of a removal order was necessary and proportionate to achieve this legitimate aim.

Interim order:

195. The panel next considered an application by Mr Carey for an 18-month interim suspension order to cover the appeal period before the final order becomes effective.
196. Having heard from the legal adviser, the panel next considered whether to impose an interim suspension order. It was mindful of its earlier findings and concluded that an interim suspension order is necessary for the protection of the public. The panel concluded that not to impose an interim suspension order, would be wholly incompatible with the very serious and widespread misconduct that it had found and its finding that Mr Walker’s fitness to practise is currently impaired.
197. The panel referred to paragraph 207 of the Guidance which highlighted that “an interim order may be necessary where the adjudicators have decided that a final order is required, which restricts or removes the ability for the social worker to practise...without an interim order, the social worker will be able to practise unrestricted until the order takes effect. This goes against our overarching objective of public protection”. The panel concluded the interim suspension order was the most prudent way to ensure the protection of the public.

198. Accordingly, the panel concluded that an 18-month interim suspension order is necessary for the protection of the public. When the appeal period expires, this interim order will come to an end unless an appeal has been filed with the High Court. If there is no appeal, the final order of removal shall take effect when the appeal period expires.

Right of appeal:

199. Under Paragraph 16(1)(a) of Schedule 2 of the regulations, the social worker may appeal to the High Court against the decision of adjudicators:

a. the decision of adjudicators:

- i. to make an interim order, other than an interim order made at the same time as a final order under Paragraph 11(1)(b),
- ii. not to revoke or vary such an order,
- iii. to make a final order.

b. the decision of the regulator on review of an interim order, or a final order, other than a decision to revoke the order.

200. Under Paragraph 16(2) of Schedule 2 of the regulations an appeal must be filed before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with the day after the day on which the social worker is notified of the decision complained of.

201. Under Regulation 9(4) of the regulations this order may not be recorded until the expiry of the period within which an appeal against the order could be made, or where an appeal against the order has been made, before the appeal is withdrawn or otherwise finally disposed of.

202. This notice is served in accordance with Rules 44 and 45 of the Social Work England Fitness to Practice Rules 2019 (as amended).

The Professional Standards Authority:

203. Please note that in accordance with section 29 of the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002, a final decision made by Social Work England's panel of adjudicators can be referred by the Professional Standards Authority ("the PSA") to the High Court. The PSA can refer this decision to the High Court if it considers that the decision is not sufficient for the protection of the public. Further information about PSA appeals can be found on their website at:

<https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-with-regulators/decisions-about-practitioners>.