

Notice of Decision

Registrant	Rena Winnifred Stevenson
Registration number	6015675
Part of Register	2 – Domiciliary Care Worker
Sanction	Warning to remain on your registration for a period of three years
Date of Effect	29 May 2018

This is a notice of decision of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Council).

Decision

The Council has decided:

1. that there is evidence that your Fitness to Practise is impaired by reason of misconduct, as defined in Part 1, Rule 4 of the NISCC Fitness to Practise Rules 2016.
2. to issue a warning and direct that a record of the warning should be placed on your entry in the Register for a period of three years.

Misconduct

That during the course of your employment as a Support Worker at Lighthouse Hostel, Ballymena you were involved in a physical relationship with Service User A who resided at the hostel.

Reasons

The reasons that this behaviour is considered to constitute impaired fitness to practise are:

- By engaging in a physical relationship with Service User A your actions seriously breached professional boundaries.
- The public has the right to expect that the social care workers, in whom it places its trust and confidence to work responsibly with service users, do not behave in a way, in work or outside work, which will call into question their suitability to work in social care services.
- Your behaviour has fallen below the standard expected of a person registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers

Standard 2: As a social care worker, you must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers. This includes:

- 2.1 Being honest and trustworthy.
- 2.8 Declaring issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice.

Standard 3: As a social care worker, you must promote the autonomy of service users while safeguarding them as far as possible from danger or harm. This includes:

3.7 Recognising and using responsibly with service users and carers, the power that comes from your work role.

Standard 5: As a social care worker, you must uphold public trust and confidence in social care services. In particular you must not:

5.4 Form inappropriate personal relationships with services users.

5.8 Behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to work in social care services.

Sanction

Having regard to the document '*Consensual Disposal Indicative Sanctions*' the Council decided that the appropriate sanction was the imposition of a warning on your registration for a period of three years.

Reasons for the Sanction

When reaching its decision the Council considered the following factors:

- You initially disclosed to Lighthouse management that you had very strong feelings for Service User A on 19 September 2017. At that time, you dishonestly failed to inform management that you had commenced a physical relationship with Service User A and only later reported this to Lighthouse management on 16 October 2017. The Council considers that this was an attempt to conceal the extent of your involvement with Service User A.
- The misconduct took place at work.
- Your actions directly involved Service User A who was genuinely affected by the relationship ending.
- Your actions were a direct breach of Standard 5.4 - forming inappropriate personal relationships with services users.

The following mitigating circumstances were taken into account in reaching this decision:

- You have offered mitigation in respect of your actions.
- You have no previous record misconduct with the Council.
- You have fully co-operated and engaged with the NISCC investigation and the regulatory process.
- You have demonstrated significant insight and remorse for your actions.
- You accept that your actions undermined public confidence in social care services.
- You have not minimised the seriousness of your actions and have acknowledged that your actions had a detrimental effect on Service User A.
- You have a previous good work history having been involved with Lighthouse Hostel since 2002. The Council is satisfied that you were a person of previous good character.
- The Council is satisfied that the risk of repetition of the behaviour is low.

Consent

Having been advised of the consequences, and having been recommended to take independent advice, you consented to the imposition of a warning on 21 May 2018. A record of the warning has been placed on your entry in the Register for a period of three years and does not affect your ability to practise.

Date of Effect

This warning comes into effect on 29 May 2018.

Rebecca Higgins

Director of Regulation and Standards

29th May 2018

Date