

Notice of Decision

Registrant	Martin Gerard O’Kane
Registration number	1054234
Part of Register	Part 1 Qualified Social Worker
Sanction	Undertakings
Date of Effect	19th June 2025

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

Decision

The Council has decided:

1. that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a realistic prospect that your Fitness to Practise is impaired by reason of lack of competence, as defined in Part 1, Rule 4 of the NISCC Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2019.
2. to agree Undertakings with you.

Impairment

Your actions, as outlined below, amount to impaired fitness to practise by reason of lack of competence:

That whilst being registered as a Social Worker, and whilst employed as Band 6 Social Worker with the Northern Health & Social Care Trust:

- a. On various dates between June 2020 and June 2023, you failed to complete and maintain clear and accurate records applicable to organisational requirements.
- b. On various dates between June 2020 and June 2023, you failed to complete safeguarding processes and social histories to an adequate standard applicable to organisational requirements thereby placing service users at potential risk.
- c. Between June 2020 and June 2023, you failed to consistently prioritise and manage your work effectively.

Reasons

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

- As a social worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills. This includes meeting relevant standards of practice and maintaining clear and accurate records as required by procedures established for your work.
- As a social worker you must manage your role as a professional social worker, practising safely and effectively within the context of your organisation, requirements of legislation and scope of practice, prioritising and managing your work effectively and maintaining accurate, complete, retrievable and up to date records that comply with applicable legal and organisational requirements.
- As a social worker you must practise competently within your area of practice. This includes fulfilling statutory responsibilities.
- As a social worker you must be able to assess needs, circumstances, rights, strengths and risks in partnership with those involved and respond appropriately. This includes undertaking accurate comprehensive and person-centred assessments in line with agreed standards and procedures and making professional judgements about needs, risks and protective factors to inform planning.
- Your competency has fallen below the standard expected of a person registered as a Qualified Social Worker with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council

NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers

The Standards of Practice that your actions have breached are as follows:

Standard 1: Manage your role as a professional social worker. This includes:

Standard 1.1: Practising safely and effectively within the context of your organisation, requirements of legislation and scope of practice, being able to balance accountability and autonomy;

Standard 1.7: Prioritising and managing your work effectively;

Standard 1.8: Constructing professional reports that are analytical, coherent and appropriate to the intended audience;

Standard 1.9: Maintaining accurate, complete, retrievable and up to date records that comply with applicable legal and organisational requirements.

Standard 3: Develop social work practice through supervision, consultation, reflection and analysis. This includes;

Standard 3.5: Using feedback from supervision and other sources, including service users and carers, to inform reflection on and evaluation of social work practice.

Standard 6: As a social worker, you must be able to assess needs, circumstances, rights, strengths and risks in partnership with those involved and respond appropriately. This includes:

Standard 6.1: Undertaking accurate, comprehensive and person-centred assessments in line with agreed standards and procedures;

Standard 6.2: Assessing the nature, level, urgency and implications of any risks identified in compliance with legal and other requirements;

Standard 6.3: Making professional judgements about needs, risks and protective factors to inform planning, while balancing service users' rights and responsibilities.

Standard 7: Use social work interventions to manage risk and improve outcomes for service users. This includes:

Standard 7.5: Reporting and investigating harm or abuse in line with regional safeguarding procedures, using persistence and assertiveness where required.

Sanction

Having regard to the document '*Indicative Sanctions for Consensual Disposal*' the Council decided that the appropriate course of action was to agree undertakings with you. An Undertaking is an agreement between you and the Council, setting out limits within which you must practise.

Agreed Undertakings:

1. Within 14 days of accepting any social work post, you will provide NISCC with the name/contact details of the employing organisation.
2. That within 6 months of entering a social work role which requires registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council you will:
 - i. Provide a report from your Line Manager confirming that you have engaged appropriately in regular formal and informal supervision and that no concerns have been identified regarding your practice. The report should address the standard of

your performance in the following areas in particular - meeting relevant standards of practice and maintaining clear and accurate records that comply with applicable legal and organisational requirements, prioritising and managing your work effectively, fulfilling statutory responsibilities, undertaking accurate comprehensive and person-centred assessments in line with agreed standards and procedures and making professional judgements about needs, risks and protective factors to inform planning.

ii. Provide confirmation of completion of relevant induction training to include training around applicable legal and organisational requirements for record keeping, risk management and care planning.

iii. Provide a written reflective account, the content of which must be to the satisfaction of NISCC. Your reflective account should specifically address the areas of concern in your practice outlined in section 1 of this Notice 'Impaired Fitness to Practise'.

3. That after 12 months (and before the expiry of 14 months) of entering a social work role which requires registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council you will:

i. Provide a report from your Line Manager confirming that you have engaged appropriately in regular formal and informal supervision and that no concerns have been identified regarding your practice. The report should address the standard of your performance in the following areas in particular - meeting relevant standards of practice and maintaining clear and accurate records that comply with applicable legal and organisational requirements, prioritising and managing your work effectively, fulfilling statutory responsibilities, undertaking accurate comprehensive and person-centred assessments in line with agreed standards and procedures and making professional judgements about needs, risks and protective factors to inform planning.

4. That you will inform the following parties that you are subject to Undertakings under the NI Social Care Council's fitness to practise procedures, and disclose the undertakings listed above, to them:

i. Any organisation or person employing, contracting with, or using you to undertake social work.

ii. Any agency you are registered with or apply to be registered with (at the time of application).

iii. Any prospective employer (at the time of application).

iv. Any educational establishment at which you are undertaking a course of study connected with social work, or any such establishment to which you apply to take such a course (at the time of application).

Reasons for the Sanction

When reaching its decision, the Council considered the following factors:

- Your shortcomings were recognised and monitored by your employer over a substantial period of time and involved a number of cases.
- Despite support, your standard of work did not improve to a satisfactory level and your actions had the potential to put service users at risk.

- Your practice has demonstrated a serious disregard for the NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice.

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

- There is no evidence of direct harm caused to service users.
- There have been no previous concerns raised to the Council.
- You have engaged with the Council.
- You have reflected and accepted your shortcomings and are willing to engage with the Undertakings process to improve future practice.

Agreement

Having been advised of the consequences, and having been recommended to take independent advice, you agreed to the Undertakings detailed above. A record of the Undertakings has been placed on your entry in the Register. Other than the restrictions detailed in the Undertakings, your ability to practise is not affected.

Duration of undertakings

The Undertakings will continue indefinitely. However, under Rule 13 (12) you can apply to be released from an Undertaking, and the Council will consider your request at that time.

Consequences of non-compliance with an undertaking


Under Rule 13 (13), if the Council receives information that you have not complied with an undertaking, or you fail to provide information to confirm compliance when requested, the Council may:

- (a) Refer the original allegations to the Preliminary Proceedings Committee; and
- (b) Treat the failure to comply with an Undertaking as a separate allegation of impaired fitness to practise and refer this allegation to the Preliminary Proceedings Committee.

The onus is on you to provide any information or documentation to the Council outlined in the Undertaking. You must ensure that this is provided within the stipulated timeframe. Failure to provide agreed documentation on time will be treated as a failure to comply with the Undertaking, and may result in you being referred to the Preliminary Proceedings Committee.

Date of Effect

The undertakings come into effect on **19th June 2025**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter Maicher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

19th June 2025

Co-Director of Regulation and Standards (Interim)

Date