



**Notice of Decision of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's Fitness to Practise Committee
SUSPENSION ORDER REVIEW HEARING**

Name: Sarah Aimee Montgomery

SCR No: 6038034

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the Fitness to Practise Committee of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, at its meeting on **11 March 2026**, made the following decision about your registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council:

The Committee found that your fitness to practise remains impaired;

The Committee decided to make an Order for removal of your registration from the Register ('a Removal Order').

Procedure

The review hearing was held under the fitness to practise procedure.

Preliminary Issues

The Suspension Order review hearing was held remotely by way of video-link. The Registrant was not in attendance and was not represented. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council ('the Council') was represented by Ms Anna Price, Solicitor, Directorate of Legal Services.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Chair confirmed with the Committee that none of the Members had any conflict of interest with this case.

Service

Ms Price advised the Committee that a Notice of Review Hearing and hearing bundle were sent to the Registrant's registered email address on 29 January 2026, and that an electronic delivery receipt was received on the same date.

The Committee heard and accepted legal advice from the Legal Adviser. It adjourned to review all of the documentation Ms Price referred to. Having considered the documents relating to service, the Committee was

satisfied that the Notice of Review Hearing had been served in accordance with Rule 3 and Paragraph 33 (5) of Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2019 (the Rules’).

Proceeding in the Absence of the Registrant

Ms Price invited the Committee to proceed with the hearing in the Registrant’s absence. She told the Committee that the Committee Clerk had called the Registrant’s registered mobile telephone number on 04 March 2026. She said that the Clerk received an automatic message to say that the call could not be completed as dialled. She said that, on 06 March 2026, the Committee Clerk sent an email to the Registrant’s registered email address, confirming that the hearing would now be heard remotely by way of video-link. She said that there was no response received from any of the communications to the Registrant.

Ms Price submitted that the Registrant was clearly advised of the hearing, has voluntarily absented herself, and that it is the Council’s view that it is entirely appropriate to proceed in her absence. She said that the current Suspension Order expires on 15 March 2026 and that it must be reviewed before expiry to avoid the risk of the Registrant being restored to the Register unrestricted.

The Committee heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser, who reminded the Committee that the decision to proceed in the absence of the Registrant should be exercised with the utmost care and caution. The Committee was satisfied that the Registrant had been served with the Notice of Review Hearing, which notified her of the date, time and venue for the hearing and her right to attend the hearing.

The Committee took into consideration the details in the Notice of Review Hearing. The Committee noted that there has been no contact from the Registrant, no request for a postponement or adjournment, and there has been no information provided as to the reasons for the Registrant’s absence. In all of the circumstances, the Committee was satisfied that the Registrant had voluntarily waived her right to attend the hearing, and that no useful purpose would be served by adjourning the hearing to a future date to enable the Registrant to be in attendance and / or be represented. The Committee acknowledged that the Registrant may be disadvantaged in not attending the hearing today. However, it decided that any potential disadvantage to the Registrant is outweighed by the public interest in the expeditious disposal of the case. In reaching its decision, the Committee noted that this was a review of a Suspension Order which is due to expire on 15 March 2026. In these circumstances, the Committee decided that it was fair, appropriate and proportionate to proceed in the absence of the Registrant.

Background and Council’s Submission

Ms Price told the Committee that this is a review of a Suspension Order that was imposed by a Fitness to Practise Committee on 16 June 2025, following a finding of impaired fitness to practise by reason of her conviction. The Suspension Order was imposed for a period of nine months and is due to expire on 15 March 2026.

By way of background, Ms Price said that the Registrant was registered on Part 2 of the Register. Ms Price told the Committee that the Registrant had been prosecuted for causing grievous bodily injury by driving a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road without due care and attention. She submitted that the Certificate of Conviction proved that, on 04 December 2023, the Registrant pleaded guilty to the offence and, on 13 February 2024, was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment, suspended for two years. She said that the Registrant was also suspended from driving for two years, and that this was in place until February 2026.

Ms Price said that the original Fitness to Practise Committee was held in June 2025 ('the 2025 Committee'), by way of video-link. She said that the Registrant was in attendance but was not represented. She said that that Committee found the following Particulars of the Allegation proved:

That, whilst being registered as a social care worker under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 (as amended), you were convicted on 04 December 2023 of the following offences at the Crown Court:	
1.	Defendant [You] on the 19 th day of December 2020, caused grievous bodily injury [REDACTED] by driving a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road, namely Cullybackey Road, Ballymena, without due care and attention, contrary to Article 11A of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
And your actions as set out above show that your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your conviction in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence as per Rule 4 (1) (d) of the Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2019.	

Ms Price said that the 2025 Committee found the Registrant's fitness to practise to be impaired by reason of her conviction on public protection and public interest grounds. Further, the 2025 Committee imposed a Suspension Order on the Registrant's registration for a period of nine months.

Ms Price said that the 2025 Committee concluded that the events which led to the conviction were capable of remediation, and it noted that the Registrant had expressed regret and remorse, and had apologised for her actions. However, the 2025 Committee was not provided with evidence of how she had remediated her behaviour in the five years since the incident took place. Ms Price said that the 2025 Committee read the written reflective piece submitted by the Registrant and considered that it demonstrated insufficient insight. Having heard oral submissions from the Registrant, the 2025 Committee considered that her insight was developing, but that there was insufficient evidence from the Registrant to demonstrate that she had developed full insight. The 2025 Committee considered that, in light of the absence of full insight, there existed a risk of repetition. The 2025 Committee determined that suspension for a period of nine months was proportionate to the seriousness of the facts found proved, and that it would provide an adequate opportunity for the Registrant to demonstrate full remediation and insight and that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired.

Ms Price told the Committee that the Council wrote to the Registrant on 16 December 2025, inviting her to provide information which would address the issue of whether or not her fitness to practise remains impaired. Ms

Price told the Committee that no response has been received from the Registrant, nor has she provided any information and / or documentation demonstrating that she has satisfactorily addressed the concerns regarding her conviction and, therefore, there has been no information forthcoming which demonstrates that the Registrant's fitness to practise is no longer impaired by reason of her conviction.

Decision on Current Fitness to Practise

This is the first mandatory review of a nine-month Suspension Order made against the Registrant at a fitness to practise hearing on 16 June 2025.

The Committee heard and accepted the legal advice from the Legal Adviser. He referred the Committee to the case of CHRE v NMC & Grant. He referred the Committee to Paragraph 33 of Schedule 2 of the Rules. He reminded the Committee that its task was not to review the findings made by the Fitness to Practise Committee which made the original Order, but instead that it was required to conduct a review of the evidence before the Committee at the review hearing, and to exercise its independent judgement as to whether the Registrant's fitness to practise remains currently impaired. He advised the Committee that it should consider any evidence or information before it going to the issues of remediation, insight and the risk of repetition. The Committee was also reminded of the need to take account of the wider public interest, which includes upholding standards and maintaining confidence in the regulatory process.

The Committee gave careful consideration to the submission from Ms Price on behalf of the Council, and all of the documentary evidence. The Committee reminded itself that impaired fitness to practise describes those circumstances which call into question the suitability of a registrant to remain on the Register, or to be registered at all. In that regard, the Committee noted the findings made by the 2025 Committee on 16 June 2025 in relation to the question of the Registrant's current impairment. That Committee stated as follows:

'The Committee was of the view that the Registrant's criminal behaviour fell significantly below the standards of conduct expected of a registered social care worker.

The Committee addressed itself to the Registrant's insight and remediation. The Committee concluded that the events which led to the conviction are capable of remediation. The Committee noted that the Registrant has expressed regret and remorse, and has apologised for her actions. However, the Committee has not been provided with evidence of how she has remediated her behaviour in the five years since the incident took place. The Committee read the written reflective piece submitted by the Registrant and considered that it demonstrated insufficient insight. Having heard oral submissions from the Registrant, the Committee considered that her insight is developing but that there is insufficient evidence from the Registrant to demonstrate that she has developed full insight. The Committee noted that the Registrant pleaded guilty to the offence of driving a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road without due care and attention. The Committee considered, in light of the absence of full insight, that there is a risk of repetition.

Although these events occurred outside of the workplace, because of the serious nature of the offences, along with the risk of harm to herself and others, as a result of the Registrant driving without due care and attention, leading to Grievous Bodily Injury which resulted in a severe brain injury and long term hospitalisation, the Committee concluded that a finding of current impairment was necessary to protect the public.

The Committee also concluded that a finding of current impairment of fitness to practise was necessary in the public interest. It was considered by the Committee that public confidence in the social care workforce and the Council as its regulator would be undermined if a finding of impaired fitness to practise in these circumstances was not made.

Therefore, the Committee concluded that the Registrant's fitness to practise is currently impaired by reason of her criminal conviction.'

In reaching its decision in respect of current fitness to practise, the Committee gave full consideration to the background of the Registrant's case, and to the 2025 Committee's decision and findings.

The Committee noted that, whereas the Registrant engaged in the hearing before the 2025 Committee, and provided evidence, including a reflective statement, she has not engaged in this review hearing and she has not provided any submissions or documents to this Committee regarding issues of insight, remorse, remediation or risk of repetition. As such, the Committee determined that there was no evidence before it which demonstrates that the Registrant has continued to address these matters since the 2025 Committee imposed its sanction. In those circumstances, the Committee considered that the concerns of the 2025 Committee, as outlined in its determination, remain. The Committee considered that the only significant change in circumstances since the 2025 Committee hearing is that the criminal sentence imposed upon the Registrant appears to have now expired.

In the absence of engagement and further evidence from the Registrant on the issues referred to above, the Committee determined that a risk of repetition remains. Taking all of the available evidence into account, the Committee determined that the Registrant has not discharged the persuasive burden upon her to demonstrate that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. It determined that it remains necessary to make a finding of current impairment on public protection and public interest grounds. The Committee considered that a failure to make such a finding in circumstances such as these, in which the Registrant had failed to put before the Committee evidence of insight and remediation, would fail to declare and uphold proper standards and would undermine the public's trust and confidence in the social care workforce.

For these reasons, the Committee found that the Registrant's fitness to practise remains impaired.

Sanction

Having found that the Registrant's fitness to practise remains impaired, the Committee proceeded to consider what sanction, if any, it should impose. The Committee noted the powers as set out in Paragraph 33 (8) of Schedule 2 of the Rules, and took into consideration the NISCC Indicative Sanctions and Use of Interim Orders:

Guidance for Fitness to Practise Committees 2017 ('the Guidance'), bearing in mind that the decision on sanction is one for the Committee's independent judgement.

Ms Price noted that the original Suspension Order was imposed for a period of nine months. She told the Committee that it was the Council's position that the Suspension Order should not be allowed to lapse, and that a Conditions of Practice Order would be insufficient in the circumstances, and would not protect the public or be in the public interest. She said that, with the Registrant having failed to provide the Council or Committee with any evidence of insight, remorse or remediation, there is nothing to suggest that the Registrant would take any action to address the concerns of the 2025 Committee during a further period of suspension, or to further remediate the matter which brought her to the attention of her regulator. Ms Price submitted that, accordingly, in the absence of evidence of insight and remediation, the Council views the appropriate sanction in this case to be that of a Removal Order.

The Committee heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser. He referred the Committee to its powers as set out at Paragraph 33 (8) of Schedule 2 of the Rules.

The Committee took into account the need to act proportionately, and it reminded itself that the purpose of a sanction is not to punish a registrant, albeit that a sanction may have a punitive effect.

The Committee had regard to the findings of the 2025 Committee, to include its views as to aggravating and mitigating factors. The Committee noted that the 2025 Committee determined that a period of nine months would be sufficient time for the Registrant to address the concerns and to demonstrate full remediation. The Committee noted that, as things stand, the Registrant has disengaged from the regulatory process. The Registrant has not provided any evidence of having addressed the concerns as outlined by the 2025 Committee. She has not provided evidence of having availed, during her nine-month suspension, of the opportunity to develop full insight and fully remediate, despite being given clear guidance by the 2025 Committee as to what would assist any further Committee when reviewing this case. The Registrant has failed to provide this Committee, for example, with any reflective work or character references, relevant to her remediation.

Allow existing Order to expire - taking into account the findings of the 2025 Committee, and its concerns with regard to issues including insight, remediation, and the risk of repetition, together with the Committee's own findings at impairment stage, the Committee did not consider it appropriate to allow this Order to expire. It considered that this would not protect the public or be in the public interest.

Conditions of Practice Order – the Committee considered whether to impose a Conditions of Practice Order to commence on the expiry of the current Suspension Order on 15 March 2026. In all of the circumstances, as outlined above, the Committee determined that an Interim Conditions of Practice Order would not be appropriate in this case. In the absence of engagement from the Registrant, and no further evidence of remediation, the Committee determined that it could not formulate workable conditions that would protect the public or be in the public interest, and it had no evidence that the Registrant would comply with any conditions posed.

Suspension Order - the Committee next considered whether to impose a further Suspension Order to take effect at the expiry of the existing Order. The Committee considered that the Registrant's conviction is serious. It noted that the 2025 Committee outlined the following as regards the sanction of suspension:

'Although the Committee considered that the Registrant's criminal conviction was serious, it did not consider it so serious as to justify removal from the Register. In particular, the Committee noted that the incident took place outside the workplace, with no risk of harm to service users. The Committee determined that the Registrant's behaviour is not fundamentally incompatible with continuing to be a registered social care worker in the long term. Suspension will give a clear message to the Registrant, the public and the profession that the Registrant's conduct was inappropriate for a social care worker. There have been no other complaints raised with the Council in respect of the Registrant. The Committee noted that a Suspension Order would be reviewed at the conclusion of the period of suspension, and that the Registrant would have the opportunity to present evidence of the steps which she has taken to further remediate her criminal behaviour and provide evidence of full insight. This would address the risk of repetition identified. The public would be sufficiently protected in the meantime by a period of suspension.

The Committee carefully considered the potential impact that a Suspension Order could have on the Registrant. It noted that the Registrant is currently working, but had no further information as regards the nature of her employment. However, it concluded that any consequences for the Registrant are outweighed by the need to protect the public and maintain public confidence in the social care workforce.

The Committee determined that suspension for a period of nine months would be proportionate to the seriousness of the facts found proved, and would provide an adequate opportunity for the Registrant to demonstrate full remediation and insight and that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. The suspended sentence that the Registrant is currently subject to will expire before the end of this period.'

The Committee noted that the period of suspension was designed to provide the Registrant with the opportunity to reflect on her conduct, fully develop insight and to provide sufficient reassurance that the behaviour would not be repeated in the future. However, the Registrant has not provided any further evidence of her development of insight, or steps which she has taken to address the concerns of the 2025 Committee or to reassure this Committee that there is no risk of repetition. In circumstances in which the Registrant has disengaged, and has not acted on the guidance provided by the 2025 Committee, the Committee saw no useful purpose in imposing a further Suspension Order. It determined that there was nothing to suggest that the Registrant would take any positive action to further remediate during an additional period of suspension.

Removal Order – after careful deliberation, the Committee determined to revoke the Suspension Order and impose a Removal Order in accordance with Paragraph 33 (8) (h) of Schedule 2 of the Rules. The Committee concluded that, as things stand today, removal from the Register is the only appropriate and proportionate sanction. The Committee concluded that the Registrant's conduct, compounded by her failure to engage and to take the opportunity to fully develop her insight and to demonstrate full remediation, was incompatible with

remaining on the Register as a registered social care worker. The Committee further concluded that any lesser sanction would fail to protect the public, would fail to declare proper standards of conduct and would seriously undermine the public's trust and confidence in the social care workforce, and the Council as a regulator, in the circumstances as outlined.

The Committee considered the potential impact of a Removal Order on the Registrant, but concluded that public safety and the public interest outweigh any potential impact on the Registrant.

The Committee determined that a Removal Order is the suitable, appropriate and proportionate sanction, which will be imposed on the Registrant's registration with immediate effect, and the Suspension Order is revoked.

You have the right to appeal this decision to the Care Tribunal. Any appeal must be lodged in writing within 28 days from the date of this Notice of Decision.

You should note that the Fitness to Practise Committee's decision takes effect from the date upon which it was made.

The effect of this decision is that your entry in the Register has been removed.

You are prohibited from working as a social care worker in any of the following positions:

1. A member of care staff at a:
 - a.) Children's home;
 - b.) Residential care home;
 - c.) Nursing home;
 - d.) Day care setting;
 - e.) Residential family centre.
2. A person who is supplied by a domiciliary care agency to provide personal care in their own homes for persons who by reason of illness, infirmity or disability are unable to provide it for themselves without assistance.
3. A manager of a:
 - a.) Residential care home;
 - b.) Day care setting;
 - c.) Residential family care centre; or
 - d.) Domiciliary care agency.

It is **compulsory** for the above social care workers to be registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in order to work. This is pursuant to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Workers Prohibition) and Fitness of Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Social Care Workers Prohibition) and Fitness of Workers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017.

In accordance with Schedule 3, Paragraph 9 of the NISCC Fitness to Practise Rules, you may not apply to be restored to the Register within five years from the date of removal. This does not affect your right to appeal the Committee's decision to the Care Tribunal. You are prohibited from working in a social care role until a successful application for restoration onto the Register has been made to the Council.

J. Adams

13 March 2026

Hearings Officer
(Clerk to the Preliminary Proceedings Committee)

Date