

Notice of Decision

Registrant	Laura Norman
Registration number	3048766
Part of Register	Support Workers in Care at Home Services, Support Workers in Housing Support Services
Town of employment	Hawick
Sanction	Warning placed on their registration for a period of two years and condition imposed.
Date of effect	30 December 2020

This is notice of a decision of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Our decision

We decided:

1. that based on the facts found your fitness to practise is impaired, as defined in Rule 2 of Part 1 of the Scottish Social Services Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2016 (the Rules) as amended by the Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2017
2. to place a warning on your registration, on the part of the Register for Support Workers in Care at Home Service and Support Workers in a Housing Support Service, for a period of 2 years
3. to place a condition on your registration, on the part of the Register for Support Workers in Care at Home Service and Support Workers in a Housing Support Service, which you must meet within 6 months of the date the condition comes into effect

Findings of Fact

We decided that there is evidence that:

On or around 20 March 2020, while employed as a Support Worker by (Redacted) in Hawick, and during the course of that employment, you did:

1. in the presence of service users AA, BB & CC:
 - a. state to service user AA in an aggressive manner, "you are a fucking disgusting pig" or words to that effect
 - b. remove AA's disposable apron in a forceful manner in that you did pull AA's apron from the front, causing the apron straps around AA's neck to snap
 - c. escort AA out of the dining room in a forceful manner in that you did repeatedly push AA
2. by your actions as set out at allegation 1.a. to 1.c. above:
 - a. cause or contribute to service user BB being in a state of distress
 - b. cause or contribute to service user CC being in a heightened emotional state in that CC did shout, "AA is a fucking disgusting pig" or words to that effect

and in light of the above, your fitness to practise is impaired because of your misconduct as set out at allegations 1.a. to 2.b. above.

Reasons for the finding that your fitness to practise is impaired

1. Your fitness to practise is impaired because:
 - a. The behaviour is of you acting in a verbally and physically abusive manner towards vulnerable service user AA, which had detrimental impact on BB & CC who were present at the time
 - b. Social service workers are expected to communicate with and treat service users in an appropriate manner. They are also entrusted to work with vulnerable people and protect them from the risk of harm. You shouted and swore at AA in a hostile and aggressive manner. You removed his apron, forcefully pulling it from the front, causing the apron straps around his neck to snap. You removed him from the dining room in a forceful manner and repeatedly pushed him.

- c. Your behaviour caused or contributed to BB being in a state of distress and CC being in a heightened emotional state
- d. The SSSC considers your behaviour to sit at the higher end of the scale of seriousness. Such serious behaviour violates the fundamental tenets of the profession that social workers will protect vulnerable people from the risk of harm.
- e. Whilst it is accepted that this was an isolated incident, your behaviour is considered to be indicative of you having underlying values or attitudinal issues which is considered to increase the chance that you will repeat the behaviour. There is a lack of reasonable assurances for the SSSC to consider that such behaviour is capable of being easily remedied. As a consequence, it is considered that you do currently pose a risk to vulnerable people
- f. The SSSC has a duty to uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour from social service workers. Registration with the SSSC provides members of the public with assurances that the SSSC is satisfied that you are fit to practise. A finding of impairment is necessary to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the register and in the SSSC as a regulator.

You have failed to follow parts 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.10, 5.1, 5.7, 5.8 of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers in force prior to 1 November 2016.

The sanction

After referring to our Decisions Guidance, we decided that the appropriate sanction is to place a warning on your registration for a period of **2 years** and the condition set out below.

The condition

The condition placed on your registration is as follows:

1. Within 7 days of this condition coming into effect, you must provide evidence to the SSSC, countersigned by your employer, to confirm that they are aware of the conditions currently placed on your registration.

2. Within 4 months of this condition coming into effect, you must undertake training and/or learning which is focused on:

- Regulating your own emotions, including managing your anger and frustration, in stressful/heightened situations
- Effective Communication with service users
- Providing dignified and respectful care to service users
- Adult Support and Protection

You should discuss with your employer the most effective way to complete this training. It can be in the form of face to face or online training, mentoring, supervision and/or independent study. You could use the SSSC resource 'Making better decisions', or your employer may have their own training resources available.

3. Within 14 days of completing the training as detailed at condition 2, you must provide evidence to the SSSC, countersigned by your employer, that the training has been completed.

4. Within 1 month of completing the training detailed in condition 2 above, you must submit a reflective account to the SSSC. Your reflective account must be to the satisfaction of the SSSC and should specifically address:

- (a) How your communication and actions demonstrated a misuse of the power and influence you have as a worker and how that misuse of power can be felt by the vulnerable adults / individuals you work with
- (b) Your awareness of the triggers for your feelings of anger and frustration
- (c) Your personal coping strategies for dealing with feelings of anger and personal frustration and how you have applied these strategies in practice
- (d) How to work in ways that help vulnerable adults / individuals to feel safe and valued, and that respect and maintain their dignity
- (e) How to challenge your own attitudes and behaviour so that that they do not contribute to situations or behaviour that may be harmful or abusive
- (f) How to recognise and handle tensions or conflicts between your own values and those of individual service users, key people and others
- (g) How to work in ways that encourage positive behaviour from vulnerable adults / individuals and which allows vulnerable adults / individuals to understand their behaviour
- (h) Your responsibility as a social service worker to model professional practice including values

- (i) What you have learned since the incidents and what you would now do differently
 - (j) How the SSSC can be assured that you will not repeat your behaviours.
- 5. For a period of 6 months from the date this condition comes into effect, you must engage in formal supervision sessions provided by your employer at least every 4 weeks. During each session, you must specifically discuss:
 - Any concerns that have been raised about your communication with, or conduct towards, service users or colleagues and how these will be addressed.
 - Any gaps in your training/learning relating to your communication with service users or colleagues and how this will be addressed.
- 6. Within 14 days of each supervision session taking place, you must send a copy of the record of the supervision to the SSSC, countersigned by your employer.

Reasons for the sanction

When making our decision we considered the following factors:

Factors of concern

- Your behaviour is considered to sit at the higher end of the scale of seriousness.
- You have not accepted that your actions have had an effect on any other person and speak of the incident being exaggerated by witnesses.
- The behaviour involved physical and verbal abuse towards a vulnerable service user. Your behaviour took place at work, where you were charged to protect and ensure the safety of AA.
- Your behaviour caused or contributed to BB being in a state of distress and CC being in a heightened emotional state.
- You could have been reasonably expected to anticipate that AA (Redacted)
- You have not provided evidence of insight, regret or remediation for your behaviour.

- Your behaviour amounted to a fundamental failure to follow the Codes of Practise.

Factors in your favour

- Prior to the incident taking place, you were employed within the sector for a period of over 2 years. The SSSC is not made aware of any issues concerning your fitness to practise during this time.
- You have engaged fully with the SSSC Investigation into your Fitness to Practise.

Reasons why other sanctions are not appropriate

A warning alone is not considered the appropriate sanction because it would not address the seriousness of the behaviour, the medium to high risk of repetition and the SSSC's concerns about your level of insight and regret over the incident

A condition alone would not be an appropriate sanction because it would not adequately mark the seriousness of the behaviour to the worker or the wider public.

A warning and condition is the appropriate sanction in this case as it would be an appropriate way for the SSSC to satisfy its concerns about the limited insight and regret and an appropriate way to mark that the behaviour was unacceptable and must not happen again

Documents we have referred to

When making our decision, we referred to the documents:

- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.
- Scottish Social Services Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2016 (the Rules) as amended by the Fitness to Practise (Amendment) Rules 2017
- Decisions Guidance for Fitness to Practise Panels and Scottish Social Service Council staff.

Acceptance of the warning and condition

Having been advised of the consequences of accepting or not accepting the warning and condition, and recommended to take legal advice, you admitted that your fitness to practise is impaired and accepted the **warning and condition** on 14 December 2020.

Date of effect

The notice comes into effect on 30 December 2020.